EDITORIAL

Usage and Development of Contemporary Hanyu Pinyin

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1. Forward

Hanyu is a type of language that is based on the Beijing phonetic system and has four distinguishable tones. As a result to date, the tool designed for the pronunciation of this Chinese language whether it is the past National Phonetic Alphabet or the contemporary Hanyu Pinyin, there is always the need to add the tone marks in order to distinguish the four tones. However, to add a symbol for the sake of pronunciation spells inconvenience, because Hanyu Pinyin is essentially composed of Latin alphabet. Unless there is a special facility, no ordinary English computer keyboard can manage to add tone marks together with typing at the same time. Hence, the tone marks can only be chosen from the symbols set in the computer (if any) or added manually after all typing has been completed. It is not only time consuming but also involves a lot of work and many a time, the tone mark is either wrongly added or omitted. If there is a way to write Hanyu Pinyin (— ˊ ˇ ˋ) without the use of tone marks and yet be able to differentiate the four tones, it will save the trouble of having to add tone marks for the correct pronunciation. This new method may also help in making typing more convenient.

In fact, this form of phonetic notation with differentiation in tones has already been included as one of the secondary forms of Chinese Romanized Pronunciation Method pronounced earlier during the 21st year of the Republic of China (A.D. 1932). However, that set of Pinyin method presented a very complicated way of handling the differentiation of the four tones. So, it was unworkable. Here are some examples of the Romanized words with four tones:

1st tone	2nd tone	3rd tone	4th tone
(1) 抛 (pau)	袍 (paur)	跑 (pao)	炮 (paw)
(2) 灰 (huei)	回 (hwei)	毁 (hoei)	会 (huey)
(3) 乎 (hu)	胡 (hwu)	虎 (huu)	户 (huh)
(4) 宣 (shiuan)	玄 (shyuan)	选 (sheuan)	眩 (shiuan)

In comparison, the contemporary Hanyu Pinyin is rather terse and refined, but using it to type Chinese words in the computer is still a problem as there are a lot of words with the same tones.

Due to this, over twenty years ago, I had a rough concept forming in my mind of using the contemporary Hanyu Pinyin as the basis to study the differentiation of the four tones by using certain letters of the English alphabet. I present my idea as follows:

2. The Treatment of the Four Tones

(1) Clear off the tone marks on the top of any contemporary Hanyu Pinyin to symbolize the1st tone.

E.g. ma. bo. qi. zhu. zhong and etc….

(2) For syllables with vowels at the end (except nasal vowels), "h" and "l" are added behind to respectively symbolize the 2nd and 3rd tone.

E.g. 2nd tone: ah. yeh. duoh. shih and etc….

3rd tone: meil. wol. yaol. tuil and etc….

(3) For syllables with the "a, o, e, ao, ia, ie, ua, uo, üe"and "iao" vowels at the end, "v" is added behind to symbolize the 4th tone.

E.g. shev. baov. xiav. zuov and etc….

(4) If the terminal of a syllable is the vowel "i", a "y" is added behind as the 4th tone.

E.g. ziy. laiy. meiy. duiy and etc….

(5) If the terminal of a syllable is the vowel " u " , a " w "is added behind also as the 4th tone.

E.g. wuw. ouw. iuw and etc….

(6) For nasal vowels, an "h" is added in front of "n" and "ng" to symbolize the 2nd tone.

E.g. qiahn. tohng and etc….

(7) For nasal vowels, an "r" is added in front of "n" to symbolize the 3rd tone.

E.g. qiarn. torng and etc….

(8) For nasal vowels, another "n" is added at the end of "n" as the tone mark for the 4th tone.

E.g. qiann. kann. zhenn and etc….

(9) For nasal vowels, "ng" is changed to "nk" to symbolize the 4th tone.

E.g. tonk. pank. chank and etc….

(10) A dot " . "is added before the syllable to represent a neutral tone.

E.g. .ma, .ne, dong.xi, duiy.buw qul, and etc….

(11) The retroflex ending "r" is handled in the same manner as the contemporary Hanyu Pinyin.

E.g. zhevr, liaohtianr, chankger and etc….

Note: Items 10 & 11 are only applied in conversational Chinese and no concern of typing Chinese words in the computer.

The abovementioned rules are not really complicated. To help you get a clear understanding of them, a simple table summarising the four tones is shown as follows:

(1)ma, shou, zi, tian, peng	(1st tone without tone mark)
(2)mah, shouh, zih, tiahn, pehng	("h "as 2nd tone mark)
(3)mal, soul, zil, tiarn, perng	("l "and "r "as 3rd tone mark)
(4)mav, shouw, ziy, tiann, penk	("v, w, y, nn, nk "as 4th tone mark)

3. The Advantages of Typing by Using the Above Pinyin

3.1 Using an English Computer Keyboard for Typing Chinese Words

As the abovementioned Pinyin system is comprised of lettered tone marks, no sign marks are to be placed on the top of Hanyu Pinyin. When you write them out, you do it just as if you are writing English words. Even when you spell each Pinyin verbally, it is also not necessary to tell what the tone is. As the letters of h, l, and v are mainly used to symbolize the tone marks, I simply call this new Pinyin System the "HLV Pinyin System". (Interestingly, the letters "HLV" may also stand for High Logic Vision). At present it can be used as an audio-visual method of typing Chinese words in the computer just like Hanyu Pinyin, but with greater accuracy.

Suppose you type the Hanyu Pinyin "ma". You will have 17 Chinese words to choose as follows:

ma: 妈，抹，蚂，摩，吗，麻，嫫，马，犸，玛，杩，蚂，码，骂，杩，蚂，禡

If you type an HLV Pinyin, you will have fewer words to choose.

ma	（妈，抹，蚂，摩）— 4 words
mah	（吗，麻，嫫）— 3 words
mal	（马，犸，玛，杩，蚂，码）— 6 words
mav	（骂，杩，蚂，禡）— 4 words

As HLV Pinyin inherently contains a tone, this greatly reduces the choices by as much as 75%!

If HLV Pinyin is typed as a group of words, it is mostly accurate enough to directly convert into the Chinese phrases. See the following examples:

Yizhih	一直
Yizhiy	一致，医治
Yihzhih	移植
Yihzhil	遗址
Yihzhiy	遗志
Yilzhiy	以致，以至
Yiyzhil	意旨，抑止
Yiyzhiy	意志，抑制

In comparison, if Hanyu Pinyin is used to key in "yizhi", it will present all the above Chinese phrases for choice.

3.2 Using HLV Pinyin in Conversational Chinese Teaching

The HLV Pinyin System can be treated as Latinized words instead of using Chinese words in teaching conversational Chinese. This is a bold attempt.

(1) To compile teaching material for teaching foreigners, the target group of learners are English-educated people inclusive of westerners who want to learn to speak Putonghua (Conversational Chinese) only in a short period of time.

(2) Directly as an internet communicative language and handphone messaging without having to convert into Chinese words.

From the following conversation, you can appreciate its clarity of vision:

Nil haol .ma?	How are you?	(你好吗？)
Wol hern haol. Nil .ne?	I am fine. And you?	(我很好。你呢？)
Wol yel hern haol.	I'm fine too.	(我也很好？)
Xiev.xiev.	Thank you.	(谢谢。)
Buw kev.qiy.	Don't mention it.	(不客气。)
Nil mahng.ma?	Are you busy?	(你忙吗？)
Wol buw mahng.	I'm not busy.	(我不忙。)

In general, those who know Hanyu Pinyin would require only 20 to 30 minutes to master the tones of the HLV Pinyin System.

Following the first success of Pinyin with English lettered tone marks, further research should be continued. Up to this point, it has not been developed to represent each Chinese word by each Pinyin, but I am sure it has great potential to be developed into Latinized Chinese. If we develop the system further, it is quite possible to make Latinized Chinese become realistic. Conceptually, it requires a special code, called "radical", to be added to each HLV Pinyin. Thus, it enables the following features:

3.3 Characteristics of HLV Pinyin

When you type a Pinyin with the special code, it will directly convert to a Chinese word. And there will be almost no words with the same tones for choice.

I present an example for illustration:

(1) "ta" is the 1st tone in Hanyu Pinyin for the ten Chinese words (他，她，它，祂，铊，踏，塌，遢，褟，溻) with same tones.

(2) "ta" is also the 1st tone in HLV Pinyin like Hanyu Pinyin. The radical codes for the first three words (他，她，它) are specially designed to be placed at the front of "ta" for convenience, that is, rta (他) (r to represent 人), nta (女) (n to represent 女), gta (它) (g to represent 宀).

(3) As for the rest of the other words shown above, radical codes are designed to be placed at the end of the Pinyin "ta", such as tasp (祂) (sp to represent 礻旁), tajp (铊) (jp to represent 金旁), tazp (踏) (zp to represent 足旁) and etc….

(4) As for the different tones of Chinese words, if a word itself is a radical such as: 车，革，火，斤，口，力，米，木，牛，日，月，手，页，舟，and etc…, you only type the HLV Pinyin with the right tone, it will convert to a Chinese word that you want. For examples: che 车，geh 革，huol 火，koul 口，liy 力，muw 木，riy 日，zuh 足 .

As a matter of fact, it is an educational input method for it will ensure your accuracy of Chinese pronunciation and also strengthen your knowledge on Chinese words via familiarising with correct radicals. As to the "radicals", students who study in school have already learned them for the purpose of looking up new words in the dictionary for their meaning and pronunciation.

As an effective and audio-visual Chinese input method, it is certainly the equal if not the superior of any make at present on the market. In this sense, it is really a great revolution in the domain of Chinese input method.

In future, if this theoretical System is accepted to be developed further by the Government of China, it can be taken as real Latinized words placed side by side of the Chinese words in the textbooks. But the major premise is that it must be done through education in schools. I estimate that after 1 to 2 decades, when this form of Pinyin is fully developed and widely accepted by the general public, users can type Chinese words fluently without needing to stop and choose every time. It will be as simple as just like typing English words. By that time, we would view Chinese characters and Pinyin as complementary of each other, just like father and son.

4. Conclusion

The application of the aforesaid Pinyin with lettered tone marks will help more foreigners to learn Putonghua (Conversational Chinese) without first learning Chinese characters. This will be a big stride forward towards making Putonghua becoming widely accepted by the international community. At the same time, it will make typing Chinese text on an English keyboard become so easy and straight-forward!

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