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## DESCRIPTIONS AND PRESCRIPTIONS IN THE CHINESE WENYAN AND BAIHUA CODIFICATION TRADITION

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This article analyzes in detail the mechanisms and concepts of the codification of the language norms of the ancient Chinese language in the historical perspective in the light of the problem of coexistence, interaction, development of several immanent linguistic categories. The ratio of descriptive and prescriptive approaches in the processes of codification of the ancient Chinese language, the study of dominant and peripheral approaches to the fixation of linguistic phenomena, the analysis of extralinguistic factors influencing the formation of the language, allow us to understand and explain the linguistic phenomena of the modern Chinese language. The formation of a speech norm through codification processes was caused by a whole range of factors: a political factor (the need for the consolidation of society, the formation of statehood and national identity); socio-economic (urbanization, communication and, as a result, social mobility of the population);

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cultural (correspondence of the processes of formation and selection of language norms to the ideas of the ruling ethical and philosophical trends, linguistic ideology and the aesthetic canon of their time). In this article, the terms “prescription”, “language codification” are considered in the context of the Chinese philological tradition, primarily in their relationship with the term’s “description”, as well as “language norm”. The codifiers of the ancient Chinese language are represented by various types of dictionaries, and most linguistic studies were carried out to reveal the original meaning of a certain hieroglyph, and not to establish the role of the processes of description and prescription in the selection of linguistic phenomena for the formation of a speech norm. In particular, the study carried out in this article aims to fill this gap and offer answers to questions about the factors of influence and methods for selecting the language norm in the Old Chinese language.

**Keywords:** description, prescription, codification, wenyān, bǎihuā, linguistic ideology

## **1. Introduction**

When describing and analyzing the system of codifications of linguistic norms of the modern Chinese language, it is of great importance to study the language in its historical perspective from the angle of the problem of coexistence, interaction, and the development of a number of immanent linguistic categories. In particular, the analysis of approaches to codification such as Wenyān and Bǎihuā makes it possible to explain the current situation in a society’s attitude to language. The processes of language standardization are among the main directions of research in modern world linguistics, but the vector of development of the above mentioned processes depends on both linguistic and extralinguistic factors. It is possible to trace back the processes of language standardization at different stages of the language historical development through codification. “Codification” as a linguistic concept means the selection and fixation of linguistic phenomena for the process of forming linguistic norms. If we consider the linguistic planning model of Einar Haugen, then codification is the second step in language planning, with the first one being the selection of linguistic material, which depends on the influence of extralinguistic factors. Such a model of language planning stipulates that codification fixes not on randomly selected linguistic material but on that purposefully chosen and belonging to a certain historical period.

Another well-known linguist Heinz Kloss views codification as an integral part of corpus language planning, and also defines it as the second step of language planning. However, it remains uncertain whether linguistic phenomena will be selected and codified by the linguistic norm, or in other words whether the second step will be successful, to a large extent depends on the criteria of the approach to the selection of linguistic material. This article will attempt investigating the relationship between prescriptive and descriptive approaches to describing a language in the Chinese linguistic tradition from the moment of the first dictionaries appeared; this research will explore the dynamics of the development of prescriptive and descriptive approaches to codification using the example of the written languages Wenyan and Baihua. Based on the material of early dictionaries and other carriers of the Chinese language codification, the author explores the trends in the codification of the linguistic norm from the angle of the historical aspect. The Chinese tradition of codification that first appears on the pages of dictionaries in the 3<sup>rd</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, and bearing the imprint of the close intertwining of a number of factors (individual-personal, social, cultural), is the subject of the particular interest for researching it with the help of the selected approaches to codification: prescriptive and descriptive ones. In this study based on the material of early Chinese dictionaries, an attempt is made to characterize the historical dynamics of the codification processes of Wenyan and Baihua.

Despite their prevalence, such terms as “language normalization”, “prescriptions” and “prescriptive” require definite clarification, primarily in their relation to the terms “description”, “descriptive”, as well as “norm”, “normative” and “normalization”.

The term “prescriptivism” denotes an active position to the codifier, which provides for the establishment and clear definition of the linguistic norm, intervention in the linguistic usus, critical assessment of the use of linguistic material from the criteria of being true or false; it is important to point out that in modern linguistics this term often has a negative meaning, in particular it is so because of the establishment and the rigid definition of what a linguistic norm is. The opposite meaning is put into the term “descriptivism”, which is considered as an objective scientific description of linguistic practice; it is the

whole variety of linguistic variations without true or false statements; therefore, it is perceived very positively by linguistic science.

In fact, even an objective description of lingual phenomena without critical rethinking of them, can contribute to the normalization of the language, since the recipient perceives the linguistic phenomena and examples described by the author as an example of correct use. Therefore, in this particular research work the terms prescriptivism and descriptivism are used without any negative or positive bias. They are utilized to clarify the relationship between description and prescription in the context of the entire normative tradition of the Chinese language, as well as within the framework of a specific codification carrier (dictionary, reference book, etc.), which contributed to the establishment of the linguistic norm or its interpretation. The carriers of the codification in the light of definition and description of linguistic norms can be based either on description or prescription. Finding the solution of the above-mentioned question is an urgent task of linguistic historiography within the framework of the history of each individual language.

The prescriptive approach to language, as the history of linguistics shows, is mandatory for the formation of a linguistic norm at a certain cultural and historical stage. Establishing language standards by reducing variation eventually forms a literary language. Prescriptive approach is aimed directly at limiting variability, and this approach becomes a must when linguistic variation begins to be perceived as an obstacle to effective communication.

To determine the language norm as such the following definition of the norm is adopted as the main one “...as a linguistic phenomenon proper and codification, as a phenomenon external to the language itself” [Ammon 2004, 276]. The distinction between the concepts of linguistic norm and codification was first adopted by the Prague Linguistic Circle in 1929 [Camden 1993, 75]. Also in this study, language standardization is considered as a two-component process: one component is the normalization “...as a spontaneous language process”, and the other one is codification [Finegan 2007, 129]. Normalization is understood both as the unregulated constant development of the language and the purposeful activity of native speakers, namely philologists, writers, lexicographers, “which leads to the consolidation of

linguistic norms” in authoritative sources – in other words, it leads to codification [Haugen 1966, 83].

It is logical to ask a question, what influences the selection of an approach to the establishment of a language norm? What approaches and in what ratio were used to create the linguistic norm and the allowed variability of its forms? What approaches have been chosen to implement the codification of the language norm?

The hypothesis is that the ratio of descriptive and prescriptive approaches depended on historical, ideological and cultural factors. The choice of literary texts, from which the written language norm was formed, depended on the political ideology of old China. Attempts of establishing correlations between the approaches to material selection, forms of codification and political ideology raise a number of questions, and to find the answers researches require diachronic perspectives.

Literature review is done in section 2 of the article (section 2 was written by O. Valigura). Section 3 reviews research methods used to solve the question raised in the article (section 3 was written by O. Valigura). Historical, ideological, cultural backgrounds and factors of influence on the choice of approaches to the linguistic norm codification are discussed in Chapter 4 (section 4 was written by I. Kostanda). Section 5 is devoted to the discussion and interpretation of the results (section 5 was written by I. Kostanda). Section 6 sums up and summarizes the results of the research work.

## **2. Prescriptive and descriptive approaches to codification and linguistic norm of ancient Chinese Wenyan and Baihua**

All the world’s linguistic traditions have been built on a normative approach to language. The bearers of the norm, in most cases, were authoritative texts; so in the European tradition it was the Bible in Latin and Greek languages, in the Arab tradition – the Koran, in the Chinese tradition – canonical Confucian texts, etc. Traditional key texts formed and codified language norms; linguistic norms were also advocated by dictionaries and grammars (e.g. authorship by Panini in the Indian tradition, Pristin in the European tradition).

The analysis of the processes of formation of the linguistic norm provides for the historical, social and linguistic study of the phenomena of the literary language norms. Since the problems of the

formation and functioning of the linguistic norm, as well as the study of approaches and criteria for the choice of the linguistic norm are relatively new directions of modern linguistics, which reflect modern views on the above problem, the research interests of this article cover the problems of the linguistic norm formation and the ratio of prescriptive and descriptive approaches in the ancient Chinese languages Wenyan and Baihua; therefore, the phenomena considered in this research work are already formed processes that reflect the approaches characteristic for the past times and views to the formation of the linguistic norm. As a result, for this study it is important to briefly show the history of the emergence of normative linguistics as a separate trend; we are also to consider the key definitions of linguistic phenomena that will be analysed in this article. The concepts of determining the linguistic norm and modern views on the choice and the linguistic norm formation will be considered only on the condition that the reflection of such attitudes and concepts took place in the processes of the formation of the linguistic norm in the Wenyan and Baihua languages.

The language norm, the culture of speech and the processes through which the functioning of the culture of speech is realized were studied for the first time in the Prague Linguistic Circle. Let us briefly consider the main provisions on the nature of the linguistic norm in the studies of the Prague Linguistic School (see: [Schwarzkopf 1970, 25–28]). The Chinese linguistic tradition, first of all, preserves and studies written speech and the formation of the language norm obtained from literary written texts, therefore, the following conclusions of the Prague Linguistic Circle on the norms of the literary language are important for this study:

1. The objective nature of the norm, that is, as noted by B. S. Schwarzkopf: “The development of the concept of norm and its delimitation from the concept of codification is one of the most outstanding achievements of the new theory and at the same time one of the most fruitful working concepts related to the study of issues of modern literary language” [Schwarzkopf 1970, 25].

2. Connection of the linguistic norm with the literary language: compare “theoretic understanding of the modern literary language that is its existing norm” [Schwarzkopf 1970, 26]. It resulted in the in-depth understanding that there is a difference between the norms of

the literary language and the “norms of the folk language”, which are formed spontaneously.

3. The Prague school asserted “...the adoption of the principle of variability of linguistic means in accordance with the norm of the literary language”, as well as “the development of the norm occurs precisely because of the variants; they, as a rule, are transitional forms from one quality to another”. Such a concept is typical for ancient Chinese like Wenyan and Baihua.

Let us bring up such quotations of Schwarzkopf as an illustration of views on the linguistic norm and literary language [Schwarzkopf 1970, 26]:

1. “The norm of the literary language differs from the norm of the national language ... by its means of coming to life (emergence and development)” – and, first of all, by the fact that “linguistics interferes in the creation of the norm of the literary language and in its stabilization”;

2. “The norm of the literary language is more conscious and more obligatory than the norm of the national language, and the requirements for its stability are more persistent”;

3. The norm of the literary language “is a more complicated complex of linguistic means than the norm of the folk language, since the functions of the literary language are more developed and more strictly delimited than the functions of the folk language”; the norm of the literary language “is richer and more differentiated in its functions, not only in the sense of the stock of linguistic means, but also in the sense of their different use” (cited in [Schwarzkopf 1970, 26]).

Let us also take into account Vakhek’s statement on the features of the literary language: “The culture of speech is understood as a clearly expressed tendency towards the development in the literary language (both colloquial and book) of the qualities necessary for its special function” [Vakhek 1964, 15]. There are three such qualities: 1) stability; 2) clear, accurate and easy transfer of a wide variety of shades; 3) the originality of the language. The characteristics provided by Vakhek in the quotation given above of definition of the literary language general qualities coincide with those of the literary languages Wenyan and Baihua.

We have to investigate the relationship between descriptive and prescriptive approaches in establishing a linguistic norm in this article,

but first of all we need to define and describe the origin of the terms ‘prescription’ and ‘description’ in linguistics. The processes of language standardization, as well as key aspects of rethinking the essence of the language norm, become objects of many research works in the 20–30<sup>s</sup> of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, although until now, over the centuries, approaches to the codification and implementation of the linguistic norm have already been defined: namely the prescriptive and descriptive approaches.

The prescriptive approach is based on the prescription how to speak. This approach is opposed to the descriptive one, according to which all manifestations of language are described and investigated [Pinker 2008, 351–384]. Prescriptive linguistics, which is also called normative or attributional, is included in theoretical linguistics.

Descriptive linguistics (English “descriptive”, late Latin *descriptivus* “written down”) appeared as a direction of American linguistics in 1920–1950.

L. Bloomfield is considered the founder of descriptive linguistics. Important for the definition of literary language is his following statement: “Differentiating literary, or ‘correct’, speech is a by-product of certain social conditions ... A persistent explorer comes to the conclusion that one first needs to learn the language, and then tackle these problems” [Bloomfield 1984, 123].

The work of Chen Chunfeng (陳 春風), Zhang Tao (張濤) titled “On the explanation of the loan meaning of common words in ‘Erya’” [Chen and Zhang 2008], as well as the work Jiang Rentao (姜仁濤) titled “Researching ‘Er Ya’ synonymous” [Jiang 2006] presents outstanding contemporary research on Er Ya vocabulary.

Study by Chen Jianchu (陳建初) entitled “Study of ‘Shiming’” [Chen 2007], work by Wang Guozhen (王國珍) “Extended etymological commentaries on ‘Shiming’” [Wang G. 2009], as well as the works of Wang Runji (王閏吉) “On the nature of ‘Shiming’” [Wang R. 2002a] and “Analysis of the origin of types of ‘Shiming’ justifications” [Wang R. 2002b] reflect modern research works done on the “Shiming” dictionary.

Work by Hua Xuecheng (華學誠) entitled “History of the Dialects Study under Zhou, Qin, Han, and Jin” [Hua 2007], Paul Serruis’s cornerstone work “The Chinese Dialects of Han Time According to ‘Fangyan’” [Serruys 1959], and “Five Lexicological Studies Based

on “Fangyan”: The dialect words for ‘tiger’” [Serruys 1967] show a modern cutting edge of the study of the “Fangyan” (方言) dictionary.

“Ancient Chinese Written Signs” edited by Xu Qian (徐潜) [Xu 2014] and “Modern Explanations of Chie Wen Jie Tzu Dictionary” by Tang Kejing (汤可敬) [Tang 1997] can be noted as leading works in modern studies of the dictionary “Shuowen Jiezi”.

Most of the codification works on the ancient Chinese language were dictionaries of various types, and most of the research was carried out in order to identify the initial meaning of a certain hieroglyph, and not to determine the criteria and factors for the selection of linguistic phenomena for the linguistic norm formation, equally it was as not dedicated to the relationship between descriptive and prescriptive approaches for describing and forming a linguistic norm. Therefore, this study aims at filling this gap and offers answers to the question of the ways and means of selecting the linguistic norm in ancient Chinese written languages.

The research work on this problem can answer the question of the ratio between descriptive and prescriptive approaches in the formation of the linguistic norm in Wenyan and Baihua, it can show tendencies in the formation of the main principles of the selection of linguistic material for the linguistic norm formation.

### **3. Methods and methodology**

As it was noted above, this article examines the relationship between descriptive and prescriptive approaches in the history of ancient Chinese codification. Therefore, the basic definition and methodological basis of our research is the statement of L. Bloomfield: “Appearance of literary, or ‘correct’, speech is a by-product of certain social conditions...” [Bloomfield 1984, 163]. This statement perfectly characterizes the choice of approaches and explains the motives for codification decisions in ancient Chinese like Wenyan and Baihua. This study is dedicated to the substantiation of this statement, as well as the study of the relationship between descriptive and prescriptive approaches to codification, as well as the influence of extralinguistic factors on the descriptive and prescriptive approaches to the codification of linguistic phenomena. An important aspect in the study of descriptive and prescriptive approaches is the choice of methods of analysis.

To consider descriptive and prescriptive approaches to the codification of linguistic phenomena, as well as to study the influence of linguistic ideology on the processes of codification and change in the concepts of codification, important works and concepts in the history of Chinese codification were considered; and key works from Chinese codification, namely the first Chinese dictionaries are chosen:

1) Explanatory dictionary “Er Ya” (“尔雅”), the first explanatory dictionary that came down to us [Qian 2006]. The dictionary was mentioned for the first time during the Han dynasty (汉朝, 206 BC – 220 AD) [Kruger 2006, 94].

2) Dictionary “Shuowen Jiezi” (“说文解字”). The beginning of work over this dictionary dates back to year 100 AD, and the afterword states that the dictionary was represented to the Emperor in year 121 AD.

3) Dictionary “Fangyan” (“方言”, full name “輶 轩 使者 绝代语 释别 国 方言”), written by Yang Xiong (杨雄, 53 BC – 18 AD).

4) “Shi Ming” dictionary (“释名 “literally” Explanation of names”), Liu Xi (刘熙) at the end of the reign of Han dynasty.

The choice of the above dictionaries is not accidental, they are selected due to the following facts:

– these dictionaries were the first (especially the dictionary “Er Ya”), which founded not only the Chinese tradition of codification, but also the tradition of Chinese philology;

– these dictionaries were of great importance and great influence on the Chinese philological tradition: they began forms of codification that existed for centuries;

– the periods of the emergence of these dictionaries coincided with the periods of historical changes, and as a result, changes in linguistic ideology; therefore, the connection between codification and linguistic ideology, viewed on the example of these dictionaries, looks more obvious.

Also, for each stage of the study, the following methods were involved: options for content analysis and for the separate study of written languages Wenyan and Baihua, as well as for creating a general picture of linguistic scripts. Descriptive method, inductive analysis, and statistical analysis were used to explain the hypothesis put forward.

First, the history of the codification of the Wenyan language was reviewed; extralinguistic factors that influenced the selection of linguistic material were identified and analyzed; key concepts were considered, and the relationship between prescriptive and descriptive approaches to the codification of the Wenyan language was investigated together with extralinguistic factors that influenced the choice of approaches to the codification of the Wenyan language. Also at this stage, due to the peculiarities of the forms of codification, the choice of approach for creating works on codification was explained.

The study of prescriptive and descriptive approaches in the codification of Wenyan and the analysis of the influence of extralinguistic factors on codification was performed in the following stages:

a) consideration of the first dictionaries as the first carriers of codification;

b) analysis of the historical, cultural background and research of the ideological concepts of ancient China;

c) investigation of the influence of Confucian ideology, as the main extralinguistic factor, stipulated the approach to the codification of Wenyan.

At the second stage of the study, the history of the emergence of the Baihua language was considered, the relationship between the prescriptive and descriptive approaches to the codification of the Baihua language was investigated.

The ratio of prescriptive and descriptive approaches in the codification of Baihua was carried out in the following stages:

a) analysis of the history of the emergence of the Baihua language: historical, cultural and social preconditions for the emergence of Baihua;

b) Confucian ideology as a key obstacle to the codification of the Baihua language.

The third stage of the study involves a comprehensive analysis of the development of codification processes like Wenyan and Baihua in the context of prescriptive and descriptive approaches and their dependence on changes in political ideology, determining the dynamics of development and the interdependence of codifications of approaches to the codification of Wenyan and Baihua. At this stage, a descriptive method was used, as well as comparative analysis for

identifying the difference and similarity between the fixed features of the codification approaches in the Wenyan and Baihua languages.

#### **4. Wenyan codification history**

As the history of the Chinese philological tradition shows, the relationship between Prescription and Description has undergone certain fluctuations. Dictionaries “Er Ya”, “Fangyan”, “Shi Ming”, “Shuowen” can be considered as the first carriers of the concepts and mechanisms of codification. The “Er Ya” dictionary is officially considered the first Chinese dictionary [Qian 2006], for the first time this dictionary was mentioned in the “Chronicles of the Han dynasty” (“汉书”) in the section “Treatise about literature” (“艺文志”), in modern historiography of China it is believed that “Er Ya”, in its original form, was formed at the end of the Zhanguo era (5<sup>th</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC). In the dictionaries “Er Ya”, “Shuowen Jiezi”, “Fangyan”, “Shi Ming” and others, which are universal, independent works on codification, an interpretation of the vocabulary of the Confucian canons is collected and provided.

With the coming to power of the Han dynasty, Confucianism becomes the main ideology of the country, Confucian canons become the official carriers of the language norm. During this period, there is a transition from Confucianism as an ethical and philosophical doctrine to Confucianism as a functioning ideology of the country; in the foreground such categories as “names” and “ritual” appear. Dong Zhongshu (董仲舒) became the theorist of new ideas of Confucianism of the Han dynasty. The question of “correcting names” (“正名”) was defined by Confucius. So, in “Lun yu” (論語) there is such an example:

Zi Lu asked, “The Wei ruler intends to involve you in running the state. What will you do first of all?”

The teacher replied, “You have to start by correcting the names”

Zi Lu asked, “You start from afar. Why do I need to fix names?”

The teacher said, “How ignorant you are, Yu! A noble husband is careful about what he does not know. If the names are wrong, then the words have no basis. If words have no basis, then deeds cannot be carried out. If things cannot be done, then ritual and music will not flourish. If ritual and music do not flourish, then punishments are not applied appropriately. If the punishment is not applied properly, the

people do not know how to behave. Therefore, a noble person, giving names, must pronounce them correctly, and what he says must be done correctly. There should be no flaws in the words of a noble husband”. (「正名」语出《论语·子路篇》, 所指的是一个人的身分或地位, 要和行为或作为相符合. 原文是: 「子路曰: 「卫君待子而为政, 子将奚先?」子曰: 「必也正名乎!」子路曰: 「有是哉? 子之迂也, 奚其正?」子曰: 「野哉! 由也. 君子于其所不知, 盖阙如也. 名不正, 则言不顺; 言不顺, 则事不成; 事不成, 则礼乐不兴; 礼乐不兴, 则刑罚不中; 刑罚不中, 则民无所措手足. 故君子名之必可言也, 言之必可行也. 君子于其言, 无所苟而已矣!」)

It is clear from this quote that, according to Confucius, the first step to governing a state is choosing the right name. The meaning of this teaching was that the status and personality of a person should correspond the behavior and actions, and, moreover, be reflected in words accordingly.

With the transition of Confucianism to the level of state ideology, the words of Confucius about the correctness of names (孔子对曰: 「君君, 臣臣; 父父, 子子.」) became the basis for governing the country, and at that time discrepancy between the name and concepts, name and true state of affairs was believed to be the cause of chaos and disorder. And if the name did not correspond to reality, then all other political measures were considered ineffective.

However, the concept of “name correction” occupies a significant position not only in political doctrine, but also forms an attitude towards the language and the philological tradition of ancient China. The indication of the “name” as the basis and beginning of “correctness” contributes to the fact that codification in the Chinese philological tradition begins not from grammars (as opposed to the European one), but from lexicographic studies of “names”: researches and interpretations of the vocabulary of the Confucian canons.

Starting from the Han dynasty and almost until the 90<sup>s</sup> of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the concept of the linguistic norm remains unchanged for the Wenyan language – it is the grammatical, lexical, and stylistic standard of the Confucian canons. Let us consider in detail what kind of literature was attributed to the Confucian canons. During the reign of the Han emperor Wu-di (汉 武帝, 140–87 BC) the term “Five canons” (书 经) appeared: “Canon of history” with its most famous

chapter “Big Law” (洪范); “Shijing” (诗经) “Canon of Songs” – a collection of songs and poems created in the 11<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC; Zhou I (“I Ching”, 易经) “Zhou change” (“Book of Changes”) is a fortune-telling system adopted by the Confucian tradition in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC; Li Ji (礼记) “Book of Rituals” / “Notes of Decency” – contains a description of the ideal Confucian model of the social mechanism dated 4<sup>th</sup>–1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC; Chun Qiu “Springs and Autumns” (春秋) (The text is a part of the three canonical commentaries) – the oldest Chinese text of the annalistic plan, covers the period from 722 to 479 BC; Yue Jing “Canon of Music” (乐经) lost in 212 BC (the history of the formation of Confucian canons).

During the reign of the Tang dynasty (唐朝, 618–907) the following works were added to the Confucian canons:

1. Lun Yu “Conversations and Reasoning [Confucius]” (论语);
2. Zhou Li (周礼) “Rituals of the Zhou dynasty”;
3. Xiao Jing “Canon of filial piety” (孝经);
4. “Er Ya”;
5. I Lee “Exemplary Ceremonies and [Rules of] Decency”.

In the 12–13<sup>th</sup> centuries the canons included the treatise “Mengzi” (孟子) and this way the Confucian canon acquired its final form.

However, during the reign of the Song dynasty (宋朝, 960–1279), the Neo-Confucians compiled their own set of canonical literature, which included four works, this collection of works was called “The Four Canons” and consists of:

1. “Lunyu”;
2. Meng Tzu “Records of conversations and discourses of the philosopher Meng Tzu about politics, morality, philosophy, education, information about his activities (4<sup>th</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC);
3. Da xue (大学) “Great Doctrine” – a chapter from “Li Ji” (礼记) that is addressed to high-ranking officials, since it “expounds an extensive teaching suitable for exercising government” (created in the 5<sup>th</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC);
4. Zhong yong (中庸) “The midway and the unchanging” – a chapter from “Li Ji” formed the basis of Chinese education from 1313 to 1905.

In other words, the overwhelming majority of dictionaries in the history of the Chinese language codification were focused only on the interpretation of the Confucian canons; however, different approaches

were envisaged to interpretation, methods and concepts of codification, which could significantly change the dynamics of the development of the philological tradition. So, for example, the Song dynasty inherited the concepts and research works of previous periods, and during this period a large number of temple bells, utensils and other ancient sacred artifacts with inscriptions were collected from ancient graves, which significantly expanded the circle of knowledge about the content and interpretation of ancient words.

In the field of interpretation of the content of the Confucian classics, new directions and ideas did not appear at that time; so in particular, there was work of Ouyang Xiu (欧阳修) “*Shi ben yi*” (“诗本义”, literally “The original meaning of the verses ‘Shijing’”) following the mainstream. Subsequently, work of Wang Anshi (王安石, 1021–1086) “*Zi shuo*” (“字说”, literally “Interpretation of complex signs”) appeared, and it stated that all combinations of form (radical) and sound (phonetics) in hieroglyphic sign should be considered a deliberate message by content (会意字) rather than an accident that cannot be explained. For example, “that which is related to the town” (“与邑交”) means 郊 “suburb”.

Nevertheless, at the same time another scientist, Wang Zishao (王子韶) put forward the concept of “Explaining the meaning of the right component of the sign” (“文文说”), in which he argued that the sound component of a hieroglyph (phonetic) not only indicates how the sound goes, but it also expresses meaning. So, in accordance with his statement, most of the hieroglyphic signs with the same sound and tone share a common basic deep meaning: “戈” means “a little”, “a bit”, “small amount” [Yang 1985, 81–83]. Therefore, according to the hypothesis of Wang Zishao, “when there is ‘a little water’, this is ‘shallow spot’; when there is a ‘a bit’ of ‘gold’ it means ‘money’, and when we speak about ‘small amount’ of ‘value’ it becomes ‘cheapness’” (“水之小者曰浅,金之小者曰钱,贝之小者曰贱”) [Yang 1985, 89]. Before the Song dynasty, researchers’ knowledge of the differences between the old and modern sounds of hieroglyphic signs was rather blurred, and no relevant studies were carried out on this issue. Only during the period of the Southern Song dynasty (南宋, 1127–1279) did they begin to raise the issue and explore the features of the ancient sound through the study of the archaic rhyming system [Jiang and Wang 2008]. Interpretation of the

content of the sign and the text as a whole as well as taking into account the ancient sound and rhyme, marked the beginning of the new research tradition of exegesis. Linguists of the Qing dynasty (大清, 1636–1912) highly appreciated the classical works of the Han dynasty. During this period, a large number of significant and less significant works on the interpretation of the classical Confucian canons appeared, but the main objects of multifaceted research works in this area were dictionaries “Er Ya” and “Shuowen Jiezi” [Tang 1997, 217]. The main direction and development of exegetical research of this period was closely associated with the study of ancient phonology, connections between the sound and the meaning of the sign, as well as the study of rhymes, and through them the sounds of the ancient Confucian canon “Yi Jing” (“易经”, “Canon verses”). For example, the outstanding work of Gu Yanwu (顾炎武, 1613–1682) “Yin xue wu shu” (“音学五书”, literally “Study of the phonology of the Five Canons”) is based on the material of “Shijing”, “Yi Jing” and other books [Jiang and Wang 2008].

From the theoretical point of view, the greatest contribution of Qing scholars to exegesis was in conveying the relationship between language (字) and text (文字) [Tang 1997, 227]. The following concept was developed: in order to understand the text as a whole and the meaning of individual signs, it is necessary to know the original sound of these signs; if the sound of the sign is unknown, then its graphic form will be incomprehensible, which means that the question of its content will also remain open. Since speech uses sound to express meaning, and words are only symbols for recording speech, so subsequently, one has to understand the sound of words and investigate the meaning of a sign based on sound [Jiang and Wang 2008]. Dai Zhen (戴震) put it this way: “Exegesis and phonology are inextricably linked – outside and inside, forming a single whole” (“训诂音声相为表里”) [Jiang and Wang 2008]. This important statement marked the beginning of the development of new approaches to exegesis. Later on, Wang Niansun (王念孙) expressed the following opinion: “The aim of exegesis is establishing the original sound, since hieroglyphs that sound the same but have different graphic form [still] have the same meaning, and although such hieroglyphs are divided into different groups, they are still similar in meaning and belong to the same group” (“窃以诂训之旨,本于声音.故有声同字

异,声近义同,虽或类聚群分,实亦同条共贯”) [Jiang and Wang 2008]. This quote became the benchmark for Qing scholars in their study of exegesis. During this period, exegesis becomes a discipline with systematic, theoretical and well-defined methods.

Let’s review the basic principles of executing exegesis during the Qing dynasty [Jiang, Wang 2008].

1. Determine the wrong / borrowed meaning of words through sounds.

To determine the original meaning of a hieroglyph, one can, as a rule, by carefully tracing the extended meanings of one hieroglyph. Based on the research of ancient dictionaries of rhymes and the analysis of rhyme, it is possible to identify which hieroglyphs had a similar sound form (or were homonyms), as well as to trace the historical changes in the sound of a particular hieroglyph; and later on, after comprehensively considering the textual meaning of a certain sign, to draw conclusions about its original meaning. This method solves many complex issues related to the interpretation of content in ancient books and the problems of exegesis. This is discovery which turned out to be very important for linguistics, was made in the study of exegesis.

2. The definition of the initial meaning of a hieroglyph is based on and is clearly traced from its acquired meanings in the process of functioning.

Polysemy is a very common occurrence in the Chinese language. Duan Yucai (段玉裁) states: “Each character has its original meaning and expanded meanings acquired over time. Those who advocate preserving the original meaning, but neglect the acquired ones, lose the core; and those who advocate preserving the obtained values, but neglect the original ones, lose their shell” (“凡字有本义焉,有引申假借之余义焉.守其本义,而弃其余义者,其失也固;习其余义,而忘其本义者,其失也蔽.蔽与固皆不可以治经”) [Zhao 1988, 173].

3. Compare and research various commentaries and explanatory texts to establish the original meaning and sound of the word.

4. Determine the original meaning of the hieroglyph (primarily) through the sounds.

Duan Yucai (段玉裁) in his commentary on the dictionary “What wen tse tzu” writes: “Sound and meaning have one source of origin,

therefore very often the part of the hieroglyph that indicates sound, in its meaning coincides or is very close to the meaning of the whole character” (“声与义同原,故谐声之偏旁多与字义相近”) [Wang L. 1984, 164].

Another important observation was that hieroglyphs with the same sound element do not have to have similar or the same meaning, while the similarity or closeness of sound form in different sound elements always indicates the same source of origin (“同从一个声符的字不一定只有一义,而不同声符音同或音近的也可以有同义的关系”) [Wang L. 1984, 169]. In addition, the concept of the correlation of the form, sound and meaning was created: sound form depends on the graphic form, and the content depends on the sound [Wang L. 1984, 172]. Therefore, unification of three important components of the word into one system (form, sound and meaning) opened new opportunities for scientific research.

Exegesis of the Qing dynasty reached a new level of scientific research. The focus of the researchers was not only on monosyllabic, but also disyllabic words; there were not only studies of significant words, but also studies of functional words; grammatical categories appeared; many new ideas were put forward for the interpretation of ancient books.

The authors of the first dictionaries already understood that their activity should lead to putting the usus to order. It can be stated that at this stage Prescription takes precedence over Description.

Official philological studies were recorded and directed to research the Wenyan language. Due to the constant references and turning to the language of the classical canons, Wenyan became a permanent language. The difference between written and spoken languages was growing. Despite the fact that all written works before the Northern Song dynasty (北宋, 960–1124) were written in the Wenyan language, the constancy of written speech no longer corresponded the needs of society. Simultaneously with the development of urban culture, secular culture emerged in society at the same time, and its values sometimes ran counter to what the Confucian canons prescribed. A new literary genre became a reflection of the views of the time and secular life: the huaben novellas (话本), which appeared in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. These novellas were written in colloquial language. The emergence of the huaben was a turning point: from that particular time in written

speech of certain genres elements of the colloquial language were used. Rapid development of drama during the Yuan dynasty (元朝, 1271–1368) brought spoken and written language closer together [Qian 1986, 120]: the main reason for that was the fact that the language of theatrical characters had to be understood by the audience. That is why during this period there was a need for less archaized and more modern written speech; such a society request eventually became the reason for the emergence of the new type of written speech – Baihua [Qian 1986, 126]. From the moment of its appearance in the 13<sup>th</sup> century until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Baihua speech became the language of such genres of literature as plays, short stories, and novels. However, even reflecting the development of speech contemporary to authors of fiction, Baihua speech retained linguistic elements from the Wenyan language [Yang 1985, 217]. In addition to that, due to the abundance of dialects on the territory of China (such a linguistic situation has existed for centuries), the Baihua language also reflected and absorbed the dialectal features of languages.

## **5. Discussion**

Viewing the Confucian canons as the bearers of an invariable linguistic norm alongside minimizing any influence of oral speech on the written one has formed a clearly-carved tradition of the prescriptive approach to language. Formed by tradition, prescriptivism has reduced linguistic variability. Its appearance took place due to a number of reasons.

1. Political reasons: emergence of Confucianism as a single political ideology of China during the Han dynasty led to the need of approving uniform linguistic norms (which were directly based on the Confucian canons themselves) in order to contribute to the consolidation of the country. Also, formation of a single norm contributed to the creation of the Chinese state supra-ethnic identity.

2. Socio-economic reasons: at first, a large number of dialects, urbanization, and increase of population led to the formation of open social chains, necessitated the establishment and implementation of a single linguistic norm for effective communication.

3. Reasons of an ethical and ideological nature: choosing a prescriptive approach is closely related to the ethic norm and the dominant

ideology of Confucianism of that time. As it was pointed out above, the concept of “name correction” comes to the fore, which in its turn influences the vector of development of philological research, and it remains unchanged until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: namely lexicographic works, search for correct definition (“names”) for existing realities, seeking correct interpretations of the Confucian canons vocabulary etc. Searching for correspondence of a word to the concept and discussions about this topic are not new for world philological research. For instance, in ancient philosophy, consideration of issues related to language occupies a very important place. Ancient theory of language is represented by two branches: the theory of naming and grammatical art. Naming theory refers to the direction of ancient philosophy that examines the nature of language. It should be noted right away that in all well-known ancient cultural traditions the theory of naming is the same in its core; its general meaning can be reduced to the fact that the word, providing the name (nomination) of the object, acts as a tool with the help of which, one can speak of an object named by a word in the world dominated by people’s activities [Qian 2006]. Word is the all-encompassing beginning of everything, and further correctness of human actions depends on it, therefore the word must be a right one. The main idea of naming theory is in establishing a reasonable harmonious order in society and, at the same time, in the entire world. Traditional concepts of naming theory are divided into two approaches: ontological and conventional. The first approach is based on the ontological predestination of the correspondence between the name and the object defined by it: “not everyone willing can form names (of things), but (only that one) who sees the mind and the essence of things” (Proclus on Pythagoras). Therefore, objects have names by their nature (phusei), that is why the possibility of correct or incorrect naming causes searching for and requiring the comprehension of the genuine / true meaning (etimon) of the name (hence – initially – “etymology”); and the correct name in its turn provides comprehension of the very core and essence of the subject (position of the Stoics).

The second conventional approach considers the process of naming things to be “an action of establishment, a convention” rather than a process that involves comprehending the nature of a certain

thing or deep understanding of its qualities. This approach can be seen in various linguistic traditions of antiquity. Following this logic, “by one lump of clay, everything made of clay can be recognized, (as) modification is only a name based on words; reality is but clay” (Upanishads). And we find similar ideas in Greek philosophy: “names by chance, not by nature” (Democritus) as well as in early Buddhism: “names are conditioned by consciousness” (early Buddhism).

As for the theory of naming in Chinese language, in accordance with Confucianism, when a name is chosen, one must act from the principle of “li” (ritual). “Li” literally means “ritual”, but in a broader sense for Confucianism 礼 “ritual” is the correct, rational beginning of any activity. Thus, the correct naming of things in Confucianism is the beginning to correct and harmonious society as well as the universe. Apart from this it should be noted that the theory of naming and the search for Nature in Greek and Indian linguistic traditions and philosophy were more of a research and cognitive nature. However, in China, with the establishment of Confucianism as the main ideology of the country during the Han dynasty, the following situation arose: the main ideology determines the attitude to the language; that is why the vocabulary of the Confucian canons and the “names” correctly chosen for its interpretation become the basis for the correct construction of a person’s world outlook, together with correct implementation of political measures and right construction of society. Such a socio-political concept forms an attitude towards language as a bearer of correct “names”, that is, a source of social stability; therefore, Chinese philological tradition, researching vocabulary of the canonical texts, chose a prescriptive approach for codification, which minimized the manifestation of linguistic variability. The idea of a language for which “it is enough that the words express the essence”, “all phenomena have the correct names”, the display of the order established by Heaven, resulted in the fact that the authors of dictionaries were, on the one hand, eager to achieve the accuracy of the definition of the word, and, on the other hand, they attempted to find the correct meaning of the “primal word”, thereby realizing a constant return to the “correct” antiquity, orientation towards the usus of the social (political) elite.

As it was mentioned above, one more branch of language development was the art of grammar. The main feature and characteristic of grammatical art was interpretation of each written sign. But interpretation could be different depending on the writing system. So hieroglyphic writing does not provide for a description of morphological changes in the sign, and since the sign remains unchanged, it does not affect the form of the signs that surround it; just as these signs do not affect its form. In contrast to this phenomenon, in phonetic scripts, the form of a word changes depending on which words it interacts with. Therefore, grammatical art analyzed in detail not only words as such, but also the way some words change under the influence of others. Grammatical art was characteristic of all linguistic traditions of antiquity, and descriptions of written signs resulted in making dictionaries. From the very beginning, such dictionaries were thematic and encyclopedic. But Chinese linguistic tradition, bound with its hieroglyphic writing, choose dictionaries as the main carriers of codification. And the Western European tradition, through descriptions and analysis of the interaction between words, goes to the creation of grammars. In the Western European tradition, grammars were the cornerstones of the start of language codification that over time transformed into lexical codification. Prescriptive nature of codification, which is typical for both Chinese and Western European traditions, contributes to the normalization of languages.

All these factors in synergy guaranteed stability of the Confucian teaching and the inviolability of the accepted linguistic norm till the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

As for Baihua language, it is more reflective of linguistic variability. It should also be pointed out that Baihua speech came from Wenyuan language, therefore it retained its grammatical forms and vocabulary. But due to the fact that Baihua is the language of “low literature”, and “low literature”, unlike the texts of Confucian ideology, did not contain the “correct names” required for laying the correct foundations for building an orderly society. No wonder dictionaries, grammars, textbooks and other carriers of codification of this form of language did not exist. Nevertheless, taking into account this state of affairs, texts of fiction can be considered to be carriers of the codification of Baihua; however, as these texts did not have the goal of describing and investigating linguistic phenomena, they did

not have special mechanisms and concepts of codification, they only preserved the language of a certain historical period of development.

## **6. Conclusions**

Reviewing approaches to codification of linguistic norms, and thorough analysis of the historical, ideological and cultural background allows us to come to the following conclusions:

1. The Confucian canons were carriers of literary language that were preserved and codified.

2. Prescriptive approach to determining what was to become a linguistic norm and was to be codified depended on the dominant political ideology, namely Confucianism.

3. In the Chinese tradition of codification, there is a clear prescriptive approach to codification of the linguistic norms of Wenyan language.

4. Baihua language has not been specially codified in dictionaries and other sources, except for the direct texts in which the language was used.

5. Disdainful attitude towards Baihua language is a manifestation of political ideology (Confucianism).

The history of Chinese linguistic tradition, the history of language rationing and codification, interaction of various vectors of development (historical, ideological, cultural, linguistic) in the context of the formation of the linguistic norm and approaches to its codification provides important material for understanding of formation of linguistic phenomena of the Chinese language. Detailed research of approaches to the codification of factors of influence on the formation of the linguistic norm, of the methodological concepts of the carriers of codification, their structure and build provides a solid background for new scientific research in the field of Chinese historical lexicology and lexicography, phonology and translation studies.

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*I. Костанда, О. Валігура*

**ДЕСКРИПТИВІЗМ І ПРЕСКРИПТИВІЗМ  
У КИТАЙСЬКІЙ ТРАДИЦІЇ КОДИФІКАЦІЇ МОВ  
ВЕНЬЯН І БАЙХУА**

У цій статті детально проаналізовано механізми та концепції кодифікації мовних норм давньокитайської мови в історичній перспективі у світлі проблеми співіснування, взаємодії, розвитку низки іманентних лінгвістичних категорій. Співвідношення дескриптивного та прескриптивного підходів у процесах кодифікації давньокитайської мови, дослідження домінуючих та периферійних підходів до фіксації мовних явищ, аналіз екстралінгвістичних факторів, що мали вплив на формування мови, дозволяють зрозуміти та пояснити лінгвістичні феномени сучасної китайської мови. Формування мовної норми через кодифікаційні процеси було викликано цілим комплексом факторів: фактор

політичний (необхідність консолідації суспільства, формування державності та національної ідентичності); соціально-економічний (урбанізації, налагодження сполучення та, як наслідок, соціальна мобільність населення); культурний (відповідність процесів формування та відбору мовних норм ідеям панівних етико-філософських течій, лінгвістичній ідеології та естетичному канону свого часу). У цій статті терміни “прескрипція”, “мовна кодифікація” розглядаються в контексті китайської філологічної традиції, насамперед, у їхньому співвідношенні з термінами “дескрипція”, а також “мовна норма”. Кодифікатори давньокитайської мови представлені різного виду словниками, а більшість лінгвістичних досліджень проводилася з метою виявити первісне значення певного ієрогліфу, а не встановити роль процесів дескрипції та прескрипції у відборі мовних явищ для формування мовної норми. Зокрема, дослідження, проведене у пропонованій статті, має на меті заповнити цю прогалину та запропонувати відповіді на питання про фактори впливу та методи відбору мовної норми у давньокитайській мові.

**Ключові слова:** дескрипція, прескрипція, кодифікація, веньянь, байхуа, лінгвістична ідеологія

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