



What are the differences between Chinese Simplified and Chinese Traditional.

By [Wallace Gu](#). (Originally posted at Translators Café)

This article is a comparison between **Simplified Chinese** and **Traditional Chinese** in the context of **English to Chinese translations**. It's only intended to provide basic information to people who are looking for Chinese translators but do not know much about the differences between the two variations.

Simplified Chinese (or Chinese Simplified):

Simplified Chinese refers to the *written* text of Chinese that is used in mainland China and among people of Chinese origin in Singapore today. This written form mainly evolved and was adopted after the end of the civil war and the establishment of today's P.R. China in 1949, so you may also call it a relatively modern form of Chinese text. The Chinese government developed this writing system as a way of "simplifying the writing method, easing the effort in writing, and encouraging more people to become literate."

Traditional Chinese (or Chinese Traditional):

Traditional Chinese is the *written* text of Chinese that is used in Hong Kong and Taiwan today. As its name indicates, this is a traditional version that had been written by Chinese people for thousands of years. Although people in Mainland China and Singapore began to adopt the Simplified text after 1949, people in HK and Taiwan continued to use the "old" traditional text due to the political separation between the countries.

Mandarin and Cantonese:

These languages are two *spoken* styles/dialects of the Chinese language. As an official spoken "dialect," Mandarin is widely used in Mainland China, Taiwan, and Singapore. In the translation industry, Cantonese is specifically targeted to the Hong Kong audience only. (This article is mainly about a comparison between Simplified Chinese and Traditional Chinese. For a better understanding of this subject, please read our article, "[Mandarin vs. Cantonese](#).")

The Difference:

Theoretically and in the beginning, there were no differences between Simplified and Traditional Chinese except for the writing method of the Chinese characters. Simplified Chinese (SC) characters have fewer strokes and are easier to write than Traditional Chinese (TC), which is why it's called "Simplified" and is the *only* difference when the SC writing system was first developed.

However, the rapidly changing world has brought with it more and more new words (such as "internet," "software, etc."), and these new words may have different local versions in Mainland China, HK, and Taiwan. The first concern when a specific version (either SC or TC) is specified as the target translation language is to use the proper terms for the targeted readers. Secondly, the political isolation between P.R. China, HK, and Taiwan for several decades has created slight variations in the style and wording of language, which are naturally reflected in their written forms. You might associate it with the difference between U.S. and British English.



To conclude:

The above information may sound a little bit complicated to non-Chinese-speaking people. To make things simple, let's put it this way:

For mainland China and Singapore readers, translate into Simplified Chinese text, Mandarin style.

For Hong Kong readers, translate into Traditional Chinese text, Cantonese style.

For Taiwanese readers, translate into Traditional Chinese text, Mandarin style.