

# The Role of Dong Character in School Education and Social Fields

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**Abstract:** Since the implementation in the 1950s, the Dong character has experienced “two ups and two downs” in its development. Over the past sixty years, it has made significant contributions and played an irreplaceable role in areas such as literacy education, bilingual training, bilingual teaching, inheritance of national cultural heritage, enrichment of Dong texts and reading materials, development of Dong music, promotion of radio, film and television. And with the promotion and use of Dong character, the Dong language itself has also developed and gained new vitality.

**Keywords:** Dong character, school education, inheritance of national culture, role

## 1 Introduction

The Dong ethnic group, one of the ethnic groups with a long history in China, mainly inhabit the vast areas adjoining Guizhou, Hunan, and Guangxi provinces (districts), as well as the mountainous areas in western Hubei. Before the founding of the People's Republic of China, the Dong ethnic group had not developed a character that was compatible with their language due to the historical reasons. Although the folk method of “using Chinese characters to remember the Dong sound” had preserved and spreaded Dong oral literature to a certain extent, it had not been able to accurately express the Dong language and facilitate communication, and therefore it failed to develop into a genuine character for the common use of the Dong ethnic group. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, in order to help the Dong ethnic group to create their own language, China organized relevant experts to form a minority language survey group, the Dong language Working Group of the First Task Force, who carried out a survey of the Dong dialect and native language across 14 counties in Guizhou, Hunan, and Guangxi, covering 22 specific locations in three routes from 1956 to 1957. Based on the language census and collation research, a “Scientific Seminar on Dong character and Writing Problems” was held in Guiyang City in August 1958, in which the delegates agreed that the Dong language belonged to the Dong-Shui branch of the Zhuang-Dong language family of the Sino-Tibetan linguistic, consisting of two main dialects-the southern and northern dialects-each with three local varieties. This classification was deemed to accurately reflect the realities. The members of the Seminar agreed to use the southern dialect, which has a larger population, as the base dialect and the Zhanglu dialect of Rongjiang County in Guizhou as the standard pronunciation, and formulated the *Scheme of the Dong character* (draft). This *scheme* was also adopted at the forty-second meeting of the Guizhou Provincial People's Committee on 2 September and was approved by the Central Ethnic Affairs Commission for pilot implementation in December.

The Dong character is an phonetic language. It has formed a phonetic system of 32 consonants, 64 rhymes and 9

consonants based on 26 Latin alphabets. Since its pilot implementation, the Dong character has gone through four stages approximately: the preliminary pilot stage (1958-1959), the stagnation stage (1960-1980), the restoration and development stage (1981-1995), and the adjustment stage (1996-present)<sup>[1]</sup>. Over the past six decades, at different historical periods, the Dong character has been applied in various fields such as adult literacy, bilingual education in schools, Dong folklore creation and academic research, and the collection, collation and recording of Dong character and cultural heritage, which helps to inherit and carry forward the excellent traditional national culture, and has achieved satisfactory results, playing an irreplaceable social role.

## 2 The role of the Dong character in education and teaching

### 2.1 The Dong character has accelerated the pace of literacy

After the *Scheme of the Dong character* (draft) was approved by the Central People's Committee, departments at all levels stepped up their pilot implementation of the Dong character, and opened Dong character teacher training course and evening classes for adult literacy, which became a major feature of the work of the Dong character at the end of the 1950s. At the beginning of the establishment of the Dong character, the Guizhou Provincial Ethnic Languages Steering Committee sent Long Mingyao and other comrades to Zhangluzhai in Chejiang Commune, Rongjiang County, to run a "Dong character teacher training course", which was attended by more than 70 male and female students from Guizhou, Hunan and Guangxi provinces (districts), most of them in-service teachers in primary and secondary schools. At the same time, an evening class in the Dong character was opened in each of the two production brigades of Zhanglu and Yuezhai, enrolling more than 60 male and female members of the community, most of whom were illiterate. The working group taught during the day at the teacher training course, and at night went to the production brigades to conduct pilot teaching. "Judging from the effectiveness of the teaching, all illiterate learners who do not know or half know Chinese can generally learn the Dong character after 50-70 hours of teaching and use it to write colloquialisms, letters, poems, and daily applications."<sup>[2]</sup> Those who had studied the *Scheme of the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet* learned the Dong character much faster. The pilot implementation of the Dong character had been warmly embraced and strongly supported by the local cadres and masses, who expressed their desire to learn and use the national character properly to develop their national culture, learn Chinese and improve their Chinese language skills.

From 1981, the pilot implementation of the Dong character has been in full swing. In the second half of 1981, the Guizhou Provincial People's Committee held pilot classes of the Dong character in Chezai of Rongjiang and Shidong of Tianzhu, with 82 trainees. At the end of 1981, the pilot classes of the Dong character were held in Chejiang Commune of Rongjiang, and after the classes started, there were still a lot of people standing outside the classrooms to listen to the lessons because of too many enrolments. In 1982, 39 literacy classes were held in Qiandongnan Prefecture, with 1,494 trainees. In 1982, 39 literacy classes were held in Qiandongnan Prefecture, with 1,494 trainees. According to incomplete statistics, as of 1995, 857 Dong character rural social literacy classes were held in Guizhou Province, with 31,742 trainees, 26,346 of whom were illiterate, a literacy rate of 83%; a total of 34 evening classes in Dong character were held in Sanjiang County, Guangxi, with more than 1,000 trainees; and four Dong literacy classes were held in Tongdao office, Hunan Province, with more than 300 trainees.<sup>[3]</sup> After the masses learnt the Dong character, they used it to keep records, write letters, write couplets, write poems, write and organize and collect national folklore and so on. The role of Dong literacy education among the masses in popularising the Dong character and expanding its influence is irreplaceable.

After the 1990s, China's economy entered a new period of rapid development, and the Dong regions were integrating from a monolingual society into a multilingual society, which in a sense was a relative contraction of the Dong character. For various reasons, "after 2000, the education department stopped using Dong character for literacy."<sup>[4]</sup> Overall, the Dong character has served better as an effective tool for adult literacy, and using it to develop literacy teaching materials, conduct teacher training, create literacy training courses or evening schools, and set up literacy offices, etc. made the public learn the innovative language with high motivation. The Dong character has achieved great results in adult literacy in the Dong regions. Compared with literacy in Chinese, Dong character, although a phonetic language, is close to the language of the Dong ethnic group and has the characteristics of being easy and quick to learn and quick to get rid of illiteracy, all of which are benefits brought

about by the Dong character.

## 2.2 Dong character is effective in bilingual education in schools

The beginning of the Dong character in school education was marked by the official implementation of experimental teaching of the Dong character at Chejiang Middle School in Rongjiang County. In September 1981, commissioned by the Institute of Guizhou Ethnic Studies and agreed to by the Education Bureau and the Publicity Department of Rongjiang County, Qiandongnan Prefecture, The Dong character class was introduced in the first grade of Chejiang Middle School and was included in the teaching programme, which was tried out as a regular subject. According to the *Summary of the Work of Trial Implementation of Dong character in Chejiang Middle School of Rongjiang County*, a total of 95 students participated in the pilot teaching. The advantages of adding Dong character lessons in schools include: firstly, it effectively consolidates students' knowledge of Chinese Phonetic Alphabet; secondly, it expands students' knowledge of learning Chinese characters and strengthens their ability to recognise Chinese; thirdly, it can effectively prevent and correct the speech defects that often appear in students' Chinese texts, and improves their linguistic expression and writing ability; fourthly, it is also beneficial to the learning of English; and fifthly, it strengthens the national self-respect and self-confidence.<sup>[5]</sup>

In August 1983, the Guizhou Provincial Ethnic Affairs Commission and the Guizhou Provincial Department of Education jointly issued a document entitled *Notice on the Experiment of Teaching Ethnic Languages in Ethnic Schools* (Qiandong Tongzhi No. 150, Qiandi Zi [1983] No. 40), and the focus of the trial of the Dong character was shifted from the rural areas to the schools. Since then, Qiandongnan has begun to carry out bilingual teaching of Dong character and Chinese language in the lower grades of primary and secondary schools in the areas inhabited by the Dong ethnic minority in batches, in a planned and step-by-step manner.

In terms of bilingual teaching in primary schools, from 1981 to 1995, there were a total of 57 Dong-Chinese teaching sites in primary schools in Qiandongnan Prefecture, mainly located in eight Dong-inhabited counties, such as Liping, Congjiang, Rongjiang, Jianhe, Jinping, Tianzhu, Sansui, Zhenyuan, and so on, with 103 schools and 522 classes, and a total number of 17,992 students.<sup>[6]</sup>

After 2000, Dong character teaching was mainly carried out in Liping County's Yandong Primary School, Sanlong Primary School, Zhongluo Primary School, and Rongjiang County's Gashuo Primary School.<sup>[7]</sup> Since 2000, the Institute of Southwest Minority Languages and Cultures of Guizhou University and the Institute of World Minority Languages implemented a Dong-Chinese bilingual pilot project at Gasho Primary School in Zaima Township, Rongjiang County, to provide training in the Dong character. In 2004, the project was extended to four villages in the township, namely, Lidong, Gaodong, Quiliu, and Miaolan. The teaching practice of Dong-Chinese bilingualism has proved that it is not enough to teach the Dong character in schools, but that a broader social base is needed for its successful promotion.

In secondary specialised school education, according to statistics, Dong language classes were offered at the Qiandongnan School of Ethnic Administration and Management, the Kaili Ethnic Teacher Training School, the Liping Ethnic Teacher Training School, and the Rongjiang Ethnic Teacher Training School, with a total of 864 students being taught.<sup>[8]</sup>

About higher education, The Central Institute for Nationalities (now Minzu University of China) opened a junior college class specialising in the Dong character in 1985, with 11 students; from 1989 to 1995, it enrolled three master's degree students majoring in Dong language and writing and in Dong character and computers. The Guizhou Institute for Nationalities (now Guizhou Minzu University) has offered a major in Dong character since 1985, with 110 junior college students and 9 undergraduates from 1995.<sup>[9]</sup> In 2007, The Guizhou Institute for Nationalities began to recruit master's degree students majoring in Chinese minority languages and literature, and up to now, there are more than 10 master's degree graduates in the Dong language literature research. In 2012, the Guizhou Provincial Ethnic Affairs Commission, the Examinations and Admissions Authority of Guizhou Province, and Guizhou Minzu University recruited Chinese minority language and literature majors and resumed interviews in ethnic languages, recruiting a total of 30 undergraduates from the ethnic groups of Miao, Buyi, Dong, Yi, Shui, and Yao each year, with a total of 94 students of the Dong language by 2024.

The implementation of Dong character into schools has not only served to eradicate illiteracy in the lower primary grades, but also to help ethnic minority students consolidate and improve their learning of Chinese in the middle grades. In terms of the work of implementing bilingual teaching, the implementation of Dong character into schools has promoted the local community's understanding and support of the Dong-Chinese bilingual teaching pilot in schools, and thus its significance and impact are manifold. About higher education, it has produced a number of senior Dong language specialists who are able to work in the education and cultural departments of ethnic minorities and related units in teaching, research, editing, translation, journalism, literary creation and other aspects of ethnic minority languages, character, literature and documents.

### 3 The role of the Dong character in the social fields

#### 3.1 The implementation of the Dong character facilitates the preservation of national cultural heritage.

The promotion of Dong character is a necessity for the inheritance and the carrying forward of the traditional culture of the Dong ethnic group. The Dong regions were known as "the hometown of poetry and the ocean of songs". Dong folk literature and art are varied, with a wide range of subjects and rich ethnic cultural resources, which are precious materials for the study of the history, language and customs of the Dong ethnic group and have high literary and artistic value and practical significance. Dong character is used to collect ancient folk songs, words and stories, etc., so that these literary materials can be passed on to other places and future generations, playing an irreplaceable role in inheriting and carrying forward the national culture. After the Chinese eleventh CPC Central Committee Third Plenary Session, Dong literature works have sprung up, mainly including: *The Origin of Humankind*, *We Used to Establish the Grand Kuan (a Large-Scale Traditional Dong alliance)*, *Liudong Kuan Covenant(Six-Dong Alliance Code)*, *Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group*, *Folk Songs of the Dong Ethnic Group*, *Pipa Songs of the Dong Ethnic Group*, *Poetry*, *Spending Lyrics*, *Stories*, *Dong Opera*, *Narrative Songs and the Pipa Songs of the Dong Ethnic Group*, and so on. This works were included in the first, fifty-fourth, fifty-sixth, fifty-seventh and fifty-eighth volumes of *Folk Literature Materials* compiled by the Guizhou Branch of the China Folk Literature and Art Research Association in 1982. In 1984, *Selected Traditional Literature of the Dong* edited by Ou Hengyuan and Zhang Shiliang was compiled and printed by the Guizhou Ethnic Affairs Commission. It includes character stories, life stories, myths, animal stories, grand songs, pipa songs, wine songs, river songs, niu tuiqin songs, wooden leaf songs, flute songs, songs in the Cai Sheng Hall, recitations, and nursery rhymes, etc, which greatly promoted the development of the literature of the Dong ethnic group. *The Dong Ethnic Literature Materials*(Volume 1) collected and collated by Zheng Guoqiao, Yang Quan, and others, *the Dong Ethnic Literature Materials*(Volume 5) compiled and translated by Zhang Yong in May 1985, *the Dong Ethnic Literature Materials* (Volume 6) compiled and translated by Shi Qingzong and Zhang Sheng, and *the Classic Pipa Songs of the Sanbao Dong Ethnic Group* compiled and translated by Xiang Ling and others in 1988, were all were compiled and printed by the Folk Literature Research Association of the Guizhou Provincial Federation of Literary and Art.<sup>[12]</sup>In 1988, the *Dong Kuan*, edited by the Hunan Minority Ancient Books Office and translated and collated by Yang Xiguang, Yang Xie and Wu Zhide, was published by the Yuelu Book Society. The publication of these materials played an important role in the recording, transmission and protection of national culture.

In 1994, *Selected Folk Literature of the Dong Ethnic Group* collated by Shi Jinhong, Pan Yongrong and others was published by Guizhou Nationalities Publishing House, which included narrative songs, love songs, ye songs, myths, legends, fairy tales, raps, proverbs, riddles and so on, making up for the lack of reading material in Dong literature and promoting the development of Dong culture.

Since 21st century, the Dong character has played an important role in compiling, translating and collating large-scale series of ancient songs and books, etc. In 2003, *The Grand Songs of the Dong Ethnic Group* edited by Guizhou Minority Ancient Books Collation Office was published by Guizhou Ethnic Publishing House; in 2007, *Jinhan Liemei* collated by Pan Yongrong, Zhang Renyi, etc. was published by Guizhou People's Publishing House; in 2009, the *Kuan Songs of the Dong Ethnic Group* (first and second volumes), edited by Wu Hao and Liang Xingyun, was published by Guangxi Nationalities Publishing House; in 2010, *Zhulang Niangmei*, edited by Yin Yongming and Deng Minwen, was published by Guizhou Nationalities Publishing House; in 2012, *Ancient Songs of the Dong Ethnic Group* (first and second volumes), compiled and translated by Zhang Min,

Zhang Yong, and Yang Chengxing, was published by Guizhou Nationalities Publishing House; and in 2012, *Translations and Notes on Ethnic Group Narrative Poetry with Han Themes*, -Dong, Shui, Miao and Bai Volume, edited by Long Yaohong, contained excerpts of Dong folk stories with Han themes, such as *Once Upon a Time There Was a Girl* (i.e. *Butterfly Lovers*), *Song of the Gate Dragon*, *Mao Hong and Yu Ying*, and *Songs of the Confucius*. In 2013, *River Songs of Dong Ethnic Group* compiled by the Dong River Songs Editorial Committee was published by Guizhou Ethnic Publishing House; in 2016, *Sacrificial Sa Songs* and *Pipa Songs of Sanbao Dong Ethnic Group* compiled by Yang Chengxing were published by Guizhou Ethnic Publishing House, and so on. These ancient songs and series of ancient books have been circulating in folklore for a long time, and are the crystallisation of the wisdom of the Dong ethnic group. However, with the development of the society, very few people can sing to them, so using the Dong character to collate and publish them has enriched the reading material of the Dong character, playing an important role in inheriting and carrying forward the national culture.

### 3.2 The implementation of the Dong character has enriched the creation of Dong texts and reading materials.

Since the founding of the PRC, Dong language textbooks have also continued to develop. As early as 1953, Yang Quan, Long Mingyao, and Zheng Guoqiao wrote the *Guangxi Sanjiang Dong language Textbook*, the first Dong textbook after the founding of New China, which laid a good foundation for the later official creation of the Dong character. In 1982, Yang Quan, Shi Zongqing, and Zhang Shiliang edited the first and second volumes of the *Dong language Textbook*, which took into account all aspects of the traditional society of the northern and southern dialects of the Dong ethnic group, and helped beginners of the Dong character to consolidate the Dong character and understand the cultural practices. In order to improve the ethnic group's culture and adapt to the needs of dual-language teaching in ethnic areas, the Guizhou Provincial Education Commission and the Guizhou Provincial Ethnic Affairs Commission wrote a six-year primary school *Dong and Han Textbook* (Volumes 1-7) in the 1980s and 1990s, which was successively published by the Guizhou Ethnic Publishing House in 1989, 1990, and 1993, respectively. In 1985, Shi Zongqing and Chen Changbi edited *Lecture Outlines on the Basics of the Dong language*, which was reviewed by the Ethnic Affairs Committee of Rongjiang County, Guizhou Province, and printed by Zhijiang County Printing House, Hunan Province.

Beginning in 2000, the Institute of Southwest Minority Languages and Cultures of Guizhou University and the World Institute for Minority Languages and Literatures conducted a nine-year bilingual Dong-Chinese teaching project in Zaidang Village, Zaima Township, Rongjiang County, producing 55 Dong textbooks for pre-schools and for grades one to six of primary school. These teaching materials included *Language*, *Mathematics*, *Ideology and Morality*, *Learning the Dong character by Looking at Pictures*, *Songs of the Ethnic Group*, and *Hearing Stories*, etc. Through the pilot implementation of the Dong character in preschools and primary schools, it has been proved that the learning of the Dong character by schoolchildren not only does not impede the learning of the Chinese language by the pupils but also greatly facilitates the learning of the Chinese language by the pupils, and produces a good social effect. In addition to these teaching materials, the project also produced a Dong character Training Textbook, *Children of the Dong Ethnic Group Learning Dong character*, which has been used many times in Dong character training in Dong areas, producing good social effects. "It can be said that this textbook is the most practical Dong character textbook for children of the Dong ethnic group to learn Dong character in a short period of time nowadays." [10]

### 3.3 The implementation of Dong character contributed greatly to Dong music

After the founding of the PRC, numerous works on Dong music have been published. However, there are not many musical works that document Dong songs using the Dong character. Mainly, in 2003, *The Grand Songs of the Dong Ethnic Group*, edited by Guizhou Minority Ancient Books Collation Office, and collected and collated by Zhang Yong and others, was published by Guizhou Ethnic Publishing House, which contains "Oho Ding", "Gan Saji", etc. There are 97 songs, a total of more than 600,000 words, which is the largest volume of a Dong music book since the founding of the PRC; In 2004, *Dong Song Grand View*, edited by Lu Zhongwu and Wu Bingsheng, published by the Ethnic Publishing House, is one of the achievements of *China-Hunan-Channel Dong Cultural Heritage Integration*; in 2005, *Harmony between Man and Nature - Grand Songs of the Dong Ethnic Group*, selected and edited by Zhang Yong, and reviewed by Deng Minwen, was published by the Guizhou Ethnic Publishing House, with 30 Dong songs, most of which are classics that have been passed down



for a long time; *Growing Up to be a Good Singer*, edited by Zhang Yong, Shi Jinhong and Yang Fang, was published by Guizhou Ethnic Publishing House in 2000, featuring 100 Dong songs suitable for students from primary school to junior high school, with lyrics in the Dong character. The lyrics are recorded in Dong character, which promotes the development of Dong music. <sup>[11]</sup>

### 3.4 The implementation of the Dong character has contributed to the development of radio, film and television.

Ethnic language is also a tool for translation, and an important medium for mutual learning and exchange of ideas among ethnic groups. <sup>[12]</sup> With these language, all ethnic groups can exchange their achievements in a timely manner through written translations, no longer unable to directly interact, understand and learn from each other due to the distance and the difficulty of learning. Language translation not only enriches the language, but also transforms other cultures into a part of one's own, which is an endeavour to expand the language itself. Translation of literary works can transplant new ideas, new literary interests, create new vocabularies, add new grammars, import new forms of literature, translate scientific and technological knowledge, films, television, news media, etc., which is conducive to the improvement of the cultural level of ethnic regions, enrichment of people's cultural life, thus making it popular among the masses.

The trial works in the Dong Character have promoted the development of Dong-language broadcasting, film and television, and audio-visual undertakings. According to incomplete statistics, a total of 146 Dong language translations have been recorded in the Dong regions, and radio programmes have been broadcast by county and township broadcasting stations in Liping, Rongjiang, Congjiang, Sanjiang, and Tongtong. The film company of Qiandongnan Prefecture, the Tu Ci Recording Station recorded a popular science video in the Dong language; the Guizhou Province Women's Federation produced two cassettes of *Knowledge of Life* in the Dong language in 1993. The Liping County Dong-language radio station won the third prize for excellent special programmes at the first county-level radio station in 1991, and the Dong-language feature film *The Burning Wedding Gown* won the Tenglong Prize for excellent ethnic-language translations at the first National Ethnic Minority Theme Film Competition. In recent years, the Ethnic Language Translation Centre of Qiandongnan Film Company, as the main unit of Dong language radio, film and television translation, has played an important role in promoting the Dong language and national culture. 1998, the Dong language feature film *Under the Blue Sky*, translated by the company was awarded the "Stallion Prize"; in 2002, the Dong-language science film *Cultivation of Fruit Sets* won the "Stallion Prize", "the Outstanding Translation and Production Award for Ethnic Minorities", and "the Comprehensive Technology Award". <sup>[13]</sup>

In recent years, films in ethnic languages have developed rapidly. 2010, *The Singer*, directed by Han Wanfeng and co-produced by Xiaoxiang Film Group Company and the People's Government of Tongdao Dong Autonomous County, Hunan Province, premiered nationwide. In the face of globalisation, it was the first Dong-language film to present the crisis of increasing assimilation and disappearance of the ethnic culture in public, reflecting the current plight of the Dong regions under the wave of globalisation, and playing a promotional role for the inheritance of the national culture and the Dong language and writing system. In 2011, *La rizière*, directed by Zhu Xiaoling, was released nationwide, which was based on the Sanjiang Dong Autonomous County in Guangxi, and was an original Dong-language film performed by local villagers, focusing on the growth story of Aqiu, a young girl left behind in the Dong ethnic group; in 2012, *Song and Moon*, directed by Wu Na of the Dong ethnic group of Rongjiang, was released nationwide, which was based on the Rongjiang County of Guizhou Province, focusing on the disappearing beauties under the current background of young Dong ethnic group going out to work. Through a classical love story, the film focuses on the disappearing beauty in the context of the current Dong youth migrating to work, and speaks of the painful cost of modern civilisation to the homeland. These films in Dong language, while responding to the theme of the times, have a greater impact on the promotion and dissemination of Dong culture.

## 4 Promoting the development of the Dong character itself

### 4.1 The implementation of the Dong character promotes the continuous development of the Dong language research in depth and breadth.

As one of the representative languages of the Dong-Tai language family, the Dong language has the

characteristics of the language structure in terms of phonology, vocabulary and grammar that are common to this language family.<sup>[14]</sup> The Dong character is not only a communication tool, but also a carrier of Dong culture. The Dong character has an important role in strengthening the study of the Dong language, exploring and examining the value of the Dong language in theoretical research and innovation in related disciplines.

In 1980, *A Brief Record of the Dong Language*, edited by Liang Min, was published by the Ethnic Publishing House, which the first book introducing the Dong language since the creation of the language, and its contents include an overview, phonetics, vocabulary, grammar, dialects and characters, etc. In 1985, *The Dong Language of Sanjiang*, authored by Xing Gongvann, was published by the Nankai University Publishing House, and it created a precedent for the report on the investigation of the Dong character turning point in Dong areas. 1993, *A Collection of Dong Language*, edited by Shi Jinhong, published by Guizhou Ethnic Publishing House, includes the role and significance of the implementation, the norms, the language, the grammar, the translation and the practice, and the experience of bilingual teaching and learning, etc. It has been the first collection of essays written by Dong teachers, Dong workers and scientific researchers since the creation of the language, and it is especially important for the use and implementation of the Dong character. In 1997, “Comparative Study of Dong and Tai Languages” and “Comparative Study of Chinese Grammar and Dong Grammar” by the Dong scholar Shi Lin, were published, containing the Dong language, Dong culture, the status and role of the Dong language in the Dong-Tai language family, the study of sound and rhyme tones of the Dong character, Dong language dialects and earthy language, and the comparison between the Dong language and the Chinese language, which are of strong academic nature, and have an important role in the promotion and study of the character, phonetics and grammar of the Dong language.

*The Study on the Relative Words of Chinese and Dong language*, edited by Dong scholars Huang Yong was published in 2002. It uses eight places of Dong language dialect materials to construct a complete original Dong phonemes system, exploring the historical relationship between the Dong language and Chinese language, which is fundamental and constructive in the study of the Dong language. Based on years of teaching and researching the Dong language, Long Yaohong, a researcher of the Dong language, edited the book *Study of the Dong Language* in 2003. This work is very rich in corpus, focusing on the comparison of dialects and local languages and the comparison between the same language groups, which lays a solid foundation for the further study of the Dong language, and is an indispensable work in the research of Dong language and culture. In 2009, in his book *Studies on the Tongdao Dong Language*, Yang Tongyin used Scheufelein’s discourse model and LaBeouf’s six-part narrative system to describe the basic features of the Dong narrative discourse genre and to review its structural framework and the embedding of its various parts under a functionalist framework. This study includes an examination of phonological, syntactic, and discursive dimensions. The publication of these works on the Dong ethnic group, Dong language, Dong character, and their research provides an important reference value for the study of Dong language and culture.

#### 4.2 The implementation of the Dong character continues to enrich the language itself.

Character is created to remedy the limitations of time and space imposed on language. It is a written symbol that records language, aids and expands the communicative function of language, and it can preserve linguistic information and transmit it to a different place and time. The use of Character plays a great role in promoting the enrichment and development of language itself, which is not only an important tool for cultural accumulation and communication, but also for the development of culture.<sup>[15]</sup> With characters, there is a written language, and the language can be refined and processed into a literary language. The normative role of literary language in turn promotes and facilitates the development of language in the right direction of unity. It is conducive to various dialects with the unity and integrity of written language and its superiority in politics, economy, culture, and life, so that the dialects are gradually dissolved in the common language of the nation, making the common language gradually being formed and enriched. This will consolidate and enlarge the commonality and universality of the ethnic language.

The emergence of the Dong character led to the creation of a written Dong character, making the Dong national literature merge in the true sense of the word. The development of the Dong language into a literary language of the Dong ethnic group inevitably spread a large number of words and expressions into the spoken language,

making the oral language of the Dong ethnic group richer and more sophisticated, so that more new Dong language vocabularies can be created and derived.

Character, as a powerful tool, facilitates the accumulation, development and dissemination of culture. It is through the Dong character that we can understand and inherit the various experiences of our Dong ancestors, access the treasure trove of knowledge left for us by our predecessors, and inherit and develop the cultural heritage of our predecessors. Due to the lack of character in the past, the culture of the Dong ethnic group not only could not develop well, but also was declining and lost. Nowadays, the use of Dong character can better record and pass on the language and culture of our predecessors. In terms of language maintenance, it avoids the omission, misrepresentation and blackmail of information when the language is passed on through word of mouth. In language contact, a large number of Chinese prepositions and other vocabularies have entered the Dong society through the Dong character, which has led to the full development of the Dong character. Therefore, the development of Dong character has also contributed to the continuous development of the Dong character itself.

#### 4.3 The implementation of the Dong character is conducive to the promotion of the standard language

The Dong character is based on the Chejiang Dong character of Rongjiang County, Guizhou Province. As the Dong character is phonetic, the writing of the character reflects the pronunciation of the Dong character. Through the promotion and popularisation of the character, the standard language of the Dong language has also been formed gradually. Although the living areas of the Dong ethnic group are administratively divided into three provinces (districts), they are geographically united. The ethnic groups have many commonalities in culture, art and living customs. Economically, they are also closely linked to each other. Linguistically, despite the formation of two dialects in the north and south, the languages are still relatively close to each other, and the dialects can generally talk to each other. Between different dialects, dialogue is also possible when they have been in contact with each other for a period of time. The Dong ethnic groups have formed an ethnic community with a common language, a common region, and common psychological qualities expressed in a common culture, and a fairly close internal structure in their long-term historical development. Although the local dialects of each region are not quite the same as the standard Chejiang Dong dialect in terms of pronunciation, they all have a neat correspondence in terms of sound, rhyme, and tone. With the popularisation of the Dong character, people have gained a basic understanding of the internal correspondence of the language, and those who have learnt the Dong character have basically learnt to speak the standard language of Chejiang tone, which is why “we believe that the Dong character can gradually become the unified written language of the Dong.”<sup>[16]</sup>

#### 4.4 The implementation of the Dong character promotes the development of language informatisation

At present, information technology is developing rapidly and has made remarkable achievements, and it is also a brand new subject to introduce information technology into language and character research. Through language information technology processing, with the help of network information technology media and storage advantages, it is possible to carry out vivid and true de characterion of minority languages, and comprehensively analyse and record from grammar, vocabulary, chapter and other aspects <sup>[17]</sup>.

At the same time, with the help of modern information technology, multimedia courseware and other forms of digital reserves to ethnic language characters and phonetics, the original appearance of the language is recorded most accurately through the form of sound. In recent years, relevant institutions, colleges and universities have strengthened to carry out the construction of Dong language audible database, so that the Dong character plays a new important role in the new period. The development of society makes the Dong character change constantly. Therefore, it is necessary to use information technology to record and preserve the national language in a timely manner, to carry out research on experimental linguistics, to collect, organize and protect the Dong language, in order to re-exploit the function of the Dong character in the construction of language informatisation.

### 5 Conclusion

Over the past sixty years, the pilot implementation and practice have proved that the overall design of the Dong character is scientific and reasonable, which is in line with the reality of the Dong language, achieving a high degree of unity between language and character. The Dong character has an accurate pronunciation, a beautiful



character shapes, which is easy to write, learn and understand etc., and has obvious advantages in printing and computer applications, deeply loved by the vast majority of people of the Dong ethnic group and other ethnic groups who love the language and culture of the Dong character and culture learners. Although there are still some shortcomings in the implementation of Dong character, such as the insufficient tool books and popular science books, and the unscientific standards for reading and writing, etc. However, the creation and implementation of Dong character has played an irreplaceable role in literacy education, breaking through the traditional education model, and rescuing and passing on the national cultural heritage. The success of the Dong character in Dong society over the past 60 years has also clearly proved that the implementation of the Dong character and the development of bilingual teaching are an effective ways to develop ethnic education, improve the quality of workers, inherit the national cultural heritage, protect the resources of the Dong language and promote the economic, social and cultural development of the Dong ethnic group.

Data sharing agreement: The datasets used and analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests: The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, author-ship, and publication of this article.

Funding:Guizhou Higher Education Philosophy and Social Science Laboratory “Informatization Laboratory for Southern Minority Languages”(Guizhou Education and Philosophy [2023] 06);Youth Project in Humanities and Social Sciences of the Ministry of Education: *Collation and Research on Migration Epics of Miao and Dong Ethnic Groups in the Guizhou-Hunan Border Region* [20XJC740005]; Guizhou Humanities and Social Sciences Special Project: *Promoting National Commonly-Used Language and character to Boost Rural Revitalization in Ethnic Regions: Case Study of the Migration Communities for Poverty Alleviation Relocation in Rongjiang County* [24RWZX015].

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