### Typology of Writing Systems

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1. **“Logographic” – Chinese characters**
   - 1 character represents 1 syllable word/part word (can’t put syllables together into one sign) – represents word in meaning (so the pronunciation of the same syllable may be a different syllable in the different languages (not dialects!) in the same LAN groupe, using those symbols.
   - There’s a fixed order in which you write the sign. Some are very complex (e.g. biang character)
   - most complex – least successful (scientific research isn’t as advanced as it could be because many years in school are wasted with learning hundreds of signs (Victor Maer))

2. **“Syllabic” – the Japanese language’s writing system**
   complex mix:
   - Kanji (KANJI) – CHINESE CHARACTERS: used to write nouns, names, stems of adjectives and verbs
   - Hiragana (HIRAGANA) – SYLLABIC SYSTEM (1 symbol for each syllable; not many syllables): used to write inflectional endings for adjectives and verbs (determines grammar)
   - Katakana (KATAKANA) – SYLLABIC SYSTEM: used to write foreign words, names, animals, plants…
   - Latin alphabet: used to write acronyms and initialisms (e.g. NATO)…
   + exceptions!

3. **Abugida – typical one = Devanagari writing system (Indian Languages)**
   - based on consonant symbols with V notation obligatory but clearly secondary
   - sign of a – standing alone – and on a voiceless bilabial stop (C) in words. V indicate ways of pronouncing C
   - C-combinations (if 2 C merge their appearance changes)
   - ABC = from velar to labial (manner of articulation is the same in each row) = ancient Indians figured out loads about phonetics 3,000 years ago – ppl who created the ABC understood articulatory phonetics!
   - Mongolian = influenced by Indian writing system

4. **Abjad – typical one = Arabic writing system**

Each symbol stands for a consonant, with vowels optional, so that often the reader must supply the appropriate vowel by interpretation. 3-vowel basis

5. **Alphabetic – the Greek alphabet**, for example
   - small set of letters — basic written symbols — each of which roughly represents/ed a phoneme
   - the degree to which letters of an alphabet correspond to phonemes of a language varies greatly from one language to another

6. **Featural – Korean hangul**
   - Symbols don’t represent whole phonemes, but rather the elements (features) that make up the phonemes, e.g. voicing or place of articulation.
   - In hangul, the featural symbols are combined into alphabetic letters, these letters are in turn joined into syllabic blocks, so that the system combines 3 levels of phonological representation.
   - shapes for C and V – joined into syllabic blocks (make syllabic shapes by squeezing signs together ‘nicely’)

**Bibliography**

Peter T. Daniels and William Bright, eds. (1996) *The World’s Writing Systems*. Oxford University Press. 920 pages plus endpapers showing the IPA. A spectacular survey of the entire panoply of writing systems in the world; a major achievement, and the sort of book a linguist will buy even if limited to buying one book every five years.

Julie D. Allen et al., eds. (2007) *The Unicode 5.0 Standard*. Addison-Wesley. 1,420 pages. The complete presentation of the Unicode system of character encodings for all of the world’s scripts and symbol systems, embracing 1,114,112 ‘code points’, almost all available to encode characters â€” that may well be enough, even to include Chinese.