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ABBREVIATION AS A RESULT OF THE UNIVERSAL CATEGORY OF INCOMPLETENESS: COMPARATIVE CHARACTERISTICS IN THE SLAVIC AND CHINESE LANGUAGES

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SUMMARY

The purpose of the article is to present the results of a study examining the manifestations of the praxeological category of incompleteness in Slavic and Chinese languages. The object of study is the methods of abbreviation in the Ukrainian and Polish languages compared with those in the Chinese language. The subject of this research is the structural specificity and functional commonality of Slavic and Chinese abbreviations. As a result of the functional, word-formation, graphic, and comparative analysis, the following conclusions are made. In the compared languages, abbreviation is one of the ways of realizing the praxeological category of incompleteness. All this determines the following functions of abbreviations in speech: the function of language evasion from verbosity in naming a holistic concept and the associated function of saving speech effort, time and writing materials; the function of cross-linguistic universalization of relevant concepts and internationally recognized systems; the function of encryption; the expressive function. Overall, there is a similarity in the methods of formation and functional identity of abbreviations. However, each language has systemic-linguistic and extralinguistic features determined by the possibilities of applying existing methods of abbreviation formation and use. A comparative study of Slavic and Chinese abbreviations reveals the problem of structuring

abbreviations as words or phrases, and for some models, even sentences.

Keywords: *incompleteness, praxeological category, abbreviation, acronym, linguistic universal, structure of a language, function, the Slavic languages, the Chinese language.*

Introduction. Statement of the problem

Praxeology (from the ancient Greek πράξις ‘activity, practice’ + λογία ‘science, teaching’, *literally* ‘knowledge of practice’) is the collective name for teachings on the effectiveness of human practical activity. Today, praxeology is viewed as a theoretical and systematic science of the practice of human life and activity. Typically, its categories and concepts form dichotomous unities such as *direct / indirect (mediated), true / false, necessary / unnecessary (needless), partial / whole, useful / toxic, complete / incomplete*, and many others. The obvious opposition of praxeological categories is caused by the practice of human life. These categories permeate all our activities, so it is impossible to doubt their existence. This area of knowledge and observation is usually considered within philosophy.

Every natural language system has both universals – that is, common features with other languages – and specific characteristics. Many linguistic categories are formed on the basis of praxeological categories. The category of **completeness / incompleteness** permeates all aspects of communicative activity and, consequently, all aspects of the language system (Stepanov, Wang 2025). Incomplete units are recognized and recorded, but linguistic theory currently lacks a unified concept of the relationship between the categories of completeness and incompleteness in language systems. Based on our previous studies, which show that the praxeological category of incompleteness influences the concealment of predicativity in a number of syntactic constructions that are classified in grammar as non-predicative (comparative turns; so-called predicative-adverbial phrases; objective phrases expressing the relationship between an action and its object; relative phrases expressing the relationship between an action and its qualitative, quantitative and adverbial characteristics) (Stepanov 2018); that this category underlies deixis as a linguistic universal (Fillmore 1975; Fillmore 1983), the mechanisms of whose functioning, as well as the deictic

relations between elements of the language system identified in connection with its study, are today attributed to the cognitive cluster of linguistics. Deixis and the antecedent-anaphoric (chain) textual relationship in the language system reflect certain aspects of the manifestation of the praxeological dichotomy ‘completeness’ / ‘incompleteness’ in syntax, morphology, semasiology, and other sections of the language system (Stepanov & He 2025; Wang & Stepanov 2023). In phonetics, any vowel reduction is associated with the law of economy of speech effort, and the law of economy of speech effort itself correlates with the category of completeness / incompleteness. At the lexical level, we observe the phenomenon of semantic incompleteness of expression. A separate research area of communicative linguistics and linguistic pragmatics in general, associated with the functioning of the category of incompleteness, is non-verbal and paraverbal communication. There are numerous studies describing the nature of abbreviations. However, a thorough cognitive analysis of the dichotomous categories of completeness / incompleteness influence on the formation and use of abbreviations is still lacking. Abbreviation is typically examined within the word-formation paradigm of linguistics. Our observations of abbreviation patterns in typologically homogeneous and heterogeneous, genetically related and unrelated languages attest to the inter-level nature of this phenomenon. The relevance of the choice of object and subject of the study, the results of which are presented in this article, is precisely related to the above-mentioned problems of the influence of incompleteness on the phenomenon of abbreviation.

Furthermore, there's the problem of native speakers recognizing abbreviations as words, phrases, or sentences, as different languages have distinct ways of forming and using abbreviations. For example, in Slavic languages, abbreviations are compound words. However, their Chinese equivalents, from a Slavic perspective, are phrases and sometimes even predicative units when formed from sentences. We intend to explore this issue in our future research.

The article offers a comparative analysis of the methods of forming compound abbreviations in the Slavic and Chinese languages.

Research findings and discussions

Slavic abbreviations. We based the systems of compound abbreviations in both Slavic and Chinese languages on universally accepted classifications in linguistics, taking into account the abbreviation specifics of each language.

1. **Initial** (letter-sound) **abbreviations**, depending on the position of the signs, are pronounced using the first letters of the words of the motivating phrase or the roots of the motivating compound word, or are read as pseudo-simple words (acronyms). Let us consider the varieties of initial abbreviations based on the quality and arrangement of their letter components. These are abbreviations that include only consonants (1), consonants and one vowel at the beginning and sometimes at the end (2); units consisting only of vowels are rarely pronounced letter by letter (3). According to our observations, speakers of Slavic languages, using letter-sound graphics, more often form initial acronyms – abbreviations that can be read syllable by syllable, rather than letter by letter, emphasizing the vowel or one of the vowels included in such pseudo-simple language units along with one or more consonants (4). Compare:

(1) Ukrainian: *ДВВС* [de/ve/ve/es] – *дисципліни вільного вибору студента* (disciplines of the student's free choice); *ДСП* [de/es/pe] – *деревно-стружкова плита* (fiberboard); Polish: *RP* [er/pe] – *Rzeczpospolita Polska* (Republic of Poland); *WSP* [ve/es/pe] – *Wyższa Szkoła Pedagogiczna* (Normal University), etc. See also: (Abreviatury u polskii movi 2022; Григор'єв, Прихода, Зінкевич-Томанек 2023).

(2) Ukr. *СБУ* [es/be/û] – *Служба безпеки України* (Security Service of Ukraine); *АПК* [a/pe/ka] – *агропромисловий комплекс* (agro-industrial complex); Pol. *AGH* [a/ge/ha] – *Akademia Górnictwo-Hutnicza* (Mining and Metallurgical Academy); *USC* [û/es/tse] – *Urząd Stanu Cywilnego* (Civil Registry Office), etc.

(3) Ukr. *ЮЕ* [yъ/e] – *Юридична енциклопедія* (Legal Encyclopedia); *ЯЕУ* [ya/e/û] – *ядерна енергетична установка* (Nuclear power plant); Pol. *UE* [û/e] – *Unia Europejska* (European Union), etc.

(4) Ukr. *АБіА* [a/bi/á] – *Академія будівництва і архітектури* (Academy of Construction and Architecture); *ГАЕС* [ga/ers] –

гідроаккумуляційна електрична станція (pumped storage power plant); Pol. *PESEL* [per/sel'] – *Powszechny Elektroniczny System Ewidencji Ludności* (General electronic population identification system); *PUE* [pũr/e] – *Platforma Usług Elektronicznych* (Electronic services platform), etc.

In Slavic languages, the formation of predicative abbreviations is undesirable. *Predicative abbreviations* [our term – *Ie. S.*] used by the Slavs are, for the most part, modern Anglicisms, generally accepted Latinisms of written origin, or argotisms (e.g.: *IMU* – *I miss you*; *NB* – *Nota bene*); Rus. *АУЕ* – *Арестантский уклад един* (The prisoner's way of life is uniform)). A distinctive feature of Slavic initialisms is the ability to decline many of them, especially acronyms, according to case. Abbreviations with a final vowel are indeclinable.

If a motivating phrase contains a conjunction, preposition, or article, it or its first letter can be included in the initial abbreviation for euphony. Graphically, this can be either a capital letter (usually a consonant) or a lowercase letter (usually a vowel). Compare: Ukr. *АдН* – «*Альтернатива для Німеччини*» (Ukrainian name of a German political party *AfD* (“*Alternative für Deutschland*”)); *СіЧ* – «*Слово і час*» (name of the journal); *ПіК* – «*Політика і культура*» (name of the journal); Pol. *PiS* – *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* (the name of one of the Polish political parties).

In languages with digraphs, initial abbreviations typically use only the first elements. However, there are exceptions. For example, Polish has the digraphs **rz**, **sz**, **cz**, **dz**, and **ch**, but the **C** in these abbreviations is separated only from the **Z** (**cz** = [ch]) and is pronounced as **C** = [ts]. Words beginning with the digraph **ch** = [h] delegate the entire digraph to the initial abbreviation, where the first element is written in uppercase and the second in lowercase. For example: *ZChN* – *Zjednoczenie Chrześcijańsko-Narodowe* (People's Christian Association); *ChRL* – *Chińska Republika Ludowa* (People's Republic of China), etc.

2. **Syllabic abbreviations** in Slavic, as in other Indo-European languages, are formed from the first syllables of words that make up the motivic phrases from which the abbreviations are formed. Rarely, in addition to the first, does

a syllabic abbreviation contain another syllable or part of one. For example: Ukr. *сільмаг* – *сільський магазин* (rural store); *Соцінтерн* – *Соціалістичний інтернаціонал* (Socialist International); *спецкор* – *спеціальний кореспондент* (special correspondent); *тербат* – *територіальний батальйон* (territorial battalion); *ЛуГоСад* – *Лучук, Гончар, Садловський* (the name of the literary circle from the surnames of the founders: LuGoSad – Luchuk, Gonchar, Sadlovsky); *військкомат* – *військової комісаріат* (military commissariat), and others.

3. We call the third type of abbreviation **semi-abbreviations** (Stepanov, Wang 2025). They are formed by combining the initial part of a noun or adjective with the full form of the noun into a single word. Such abbreviations are common to Slavic languages, but are also rarely formed in languages of other groups. Compare: Ukr. *соцпартія* – *соціалістична партія* (Socialist Party); *інформбюро* – *інформаційне бюро* (information bureau); *гендиректор* – *генеральний директор* (general manager); Pol. *autokarawan* – *karawan automobiliowy* (car caravan), etc. The order of placement of the modifier after the word it defines in Polish prevents the formation of abbreviations of this type.

4. **Mixed-type abbreviations** are formed partly as elementary abbreviations and partly as syllabic abbreviations. Compare: Ukr. *РАТАУ* [ra/tá/ú] – *Радіотелеграфне агентство України* (Radio-telegraph Agency of Ukraine; To make this acronym sound euphonic, the syllable of the first word, the first letters of the second root of the compound word, and the first letters of the second and third words of the compound word were taken); *КрНУ* – *Кременчуцький національний університет* (Kremenchuk National University; The first two letters of the first word were taken to avoid confusion with one of the universities in Kyiv: *КНУ* – Kyiv National University); Rus. *АНИКС* – *Александр Никитин и сыновья* (Alexander Nikitin and sons; the name of a series of Russian pneumatic pistols and the company that produces them); Pol. *REGON* – *Rejestr Gospodarki Narodowej* (Register of national economic entities; enterprise identification number in the unified state register of Poland), etc.

It is generally accepted that **Chinese** sentences are composed of syntagmas rather than phrases, as in Slavic languages.

The method of sentence construction and the graphic tradition determine the characteristics of Chinese abbreviations. Furthermore, there are significant grammatical and lexical differences between spoken and written language, as well as their respective styles, which also influences the frequency of use of various types of abbreviations. Abbreviations are most often used in colloquial, professional, and corporate Chinese. The cognitive mechanism for forming Chinese abbreviations is that the speaker must preserve the meaning of the whole and the abbreviated part, selecting the element(s) / character(s) that carry key information and excluding elements that convey additional meaning. This is fundamentally different from the mechanism for forming Slavic abbreviations, the vast majority of which reflect all the significant words of their syllables. At the same time, in modern Chinese (especially in online communication), a growing number of abbreviations are being formed using Latinized pinyin, following the principles and mechanisms of Indo-European languages.

Observations allow to identify the following types of abbreviations in the Chinese language (Yuán 2002): hieroglyphic complex abbreviations (1), hieroglyphic truncated abbreviations (2), abbreviations of generalizing content (3), abbreviations with letters of non-Chinese alphabets (4), numerical abbreviations (5).

1. **Hieroglyphic complex abbreviations** 简称 (jiǎnchēng), literal translation: "abbreviation". This is an incomplete combination, from which elements (roots / hieroglyphs) that do not carry key information or convey contextually understandable information for recipients have been removed. Based on the relationship between the structure of the compositing combination and the abbreviation, four types of jiǎnchēng are distinguished. If we take ABCD as the compositing structure, then the first type of jiǎnchēng is the AC structure, the second is BD, the third is AD, and the fourth is BC. Compare:

1) ABCD → AC: (湖南)师范大学 – (Húnán) *Shīfàn Dàxué* (Hunan Normal University) abbreviated in the official name of the metro station located nearby to (湖南)师大(地铁站) – (Húnán) *Shī Dà* (Dìtiězhàn), and in oral speech speakers omit the name of the province, leaving only 师大 – *Shī Dà*. This university borders another university with a similar name

(several decades ago, it was a single university, recreated on the basis of the ancient Yuelu Academy): 湖南大学 – *Húnán Dàxué* (Hunan University). In informal speech it is called 湖大 – *Hú Dà*. A similar abbreviation structure is used for the names of many governmentandeducationalinstitutions. Forexample: (中国)矿业大学 – (*Zhōngguó*) *Kuàngyè Dàxué* (China Mining University) – shortened to (中国)矿大 – (*Zhōngguó*) *Kuàng Dà*; (中国)农业大学 – (*Zhōngguó*) *Nóngyè Dàxué* – (China Agricultural University) – shortened to (中国)农大 – (*Zhōngguó*) *Nóng Dà*; 上海合作(组织) – *Shànghǎi Hézuò (Zǔzhī)* – (SCO = Shanghai Cooperation Organization) – shortened to 上合(组织) – *Shàng Hé (Zǔzhī)*, etc. These abbreviations are similar to syllabic Indo-European abbreviations. Most are disyllabic, but some are trisyllabic. For example: 人民武装部 – *Rénmín Wǔzhuāngbù* (Ministry of People's Military Forces) – shortened to 人武部 – *Rén Wǔbù*.

2) ABCD → BD: In documents and on restaurant signs, you might see the full name: «北京风味» – *Běijīng fēngwèi* (food with Beijing flavor). However, in literature and colloquial speech, the abbreviation 京味 – *jīng wèi*, which can be translated as *Beijing flavor*, is most often used.

3) ABCD → AD: In today's resource-conscious environment, the full phrase 节约用水 – *jiéyuē yòngshuǐ* (to save water / water saving / Save water!) in written advertisements on household appliances, in newspapers, magazines, as well as in radio and television commercials, is usually transformed into 节水 – *jié shuǐ*. The same model is used in socially significant clichés about alcohol bans in a particular area or among a particular social group. The full version 禁止饮酒 – *jìnzhǐ yǐnjiǔ* (Alcohol is prohibited / alcohol ban) is used in official speeches, documents, and announcements. In colloquial and literary speech, the abbreviation 禁酒 – *jìn jiǔ* is used.

4) ABCD → BC: In documents and on signs for Sichuan cuisine restaurants in various regions of China, you can often read the following inscription: 四川菜肴 – *Sīchuān cài yáo* (Sichuan cuisine). In literature and colloquial speech, Chinese shorten this phrase by one character, using the abbreviation 川菜 – *chuān cài*. The same model is used in the names of comprehensive schools. For example: (长沙市) 第一中学 – (*Chángshā Shì*) *dì yī zhōngxué* – (Changsha First Middle School); (长沙市) 一中 – (*Chángshā Shì*) *Yī Zhōng* (First Middle).

2. **Truncated hieroglyphic abbreviations** are similar in their formation mechanism to those of the first type. They can be considered as the 5th and 6th varieties of hieroglyphic complex abbreviations. The difference between them is that in the process of abbreviation, the first or last few syllables (hieroglyphs) are removed from a full word or phrase, leaving the rest. They can be considered analogous to verbal abbreviations such as: *маг* ← *магнітофон*, *універ* ← *університет*, *сховище* ← *бомбосховище*, etc. Compare:

ABCD → AB: 复旦大学 – *Fúdàn Dàxué* (Fudan University) → 复旦 – *Fúdàn*. 非全日制 (研究生) – *fēiqúánrìzhì (yánjiūshēng)* (correspondence course for master's degree) → 非全 (研究生) *fēiquán (yánjiūshēng)*.

ABCD → CD: In applications and CV, Chinese Komsomol members provide full information about their membership in the Communist Youth League: 共青团员 – *gòngqīng tuányuán* (member of the Komsomol); in informal communication this combination is truncated to the last word: 团员 – *Tuányuán* (Komsomol). 中国人民解放军 – *Zhōngguó Rénmín Jiěfàngjūn* (People's Liberation Army of China) → 解放军 – *Jiěfàngjūn* (Liberation Army) – or 人民解放军 – *Rénmín Jiěfàngjūn* (People's Liberation Army).

3. In Chinese, **abbreviations of generalizing content** are distinguished, expressing a common feature of the primary association of words. In Slavic languages, such relationships are usually regulated by the relationship of a sum and its parts, correlating with the relationship of a heteronym and its hyponyms. Thus, the abbreviation 弟妹 – *dīmèi* (younger brother and sister) consists of the first syllables of the words 弟弟 – *dìdì* (younger brother) and 妹妹 – *mèimei* (younger sister). Generalization occurs based on the feature of belonging to younger relatives. Antonymous combinations 上下 – *shàngxià* (up and down), 前后 – *qián hòu* (front and back), and the like also belong to this group.

4. **Letter abbreviations** (字母词 – *zìmǔcí* = *literally* (letter word')) are formed under the influence of the English language [Spillner 1970] and in connection with the use of pinyin. We distinguish two models of *zìmǔcí*: *mixed abbreviations with hieroglyphs (kanji) and letters* and *abbreviations consisting only of pinyin letters*.

1) **Mixed abbreviations with hieroglyphs and letters** are typical for texts related to China's latest technologies and international relations. In these formations, the letter plays a symbolic role, serving as a kind of signature feature. For example, in advertising, the combination 美化照片 – *měi huà zhào piàn* (improved photo quality) is shortened to **P**照片, where **P** stands for the image-editing program *Photo-shop*, and 照片 stands for *zhào piàn* (photo). 奔驰**G**级系列车 – *bēn chí G jí xì liè chē* (Mercedes-Benz G-Class model range) is abbreviated to **大G** – *dà G*, replacing some words with 大 (big), denoting the high recognition of this car brand.

2) **Abbreviations containing only letters** are either Anglicisms or elementary abbreviated words based on pinyin. Most Anglicisms acquire hieroglyphic spelling variants during the process of assimilation (Lú 2024). Thus, there are already two pronunciation variants of **KFC** ← *Kentucky Fried Chicken*: purely English – [*key-ef-ci*] – and Chinese: 肯德基 – *kěndéjī*. The English acronym **IELTS** – *International English Language Testing System*, in addition to its usual use, has a Chinese designation: 雅思 – *yǎ sī*. Actually, Chinese initialisms, formed on the basis of pinyin (Sūn 2018), are intended to function in global information systems: **BJ** ← *Běijīng* (北京; Beijing); **RW** ← *ruǎnwò* (软卧; soft bed); **HSK** ← *hànyǔ shuǐpíng kǎoshì* (汉语水平考试; Chinese language proficiency test), etc. According to this principle, abbreviations of the following type (containing only letters) are formed and function in youth speech. For example: **XSWL** ← *xiào sǐ wǒ le* – 笑死我了 (laugh to death); **YYDS** ← *yǒng yuǎn de shén* – 永远的神 (a person who is very strong in something, a high professional) (Lú 2024), etc. It is noted that the cognitive consolidation of new formations passes through associations, conventionalization and schematization (Yáng & Wáng 2023). We believe that this method of forming abbreviations has already acquired systemic linguistic and socio-linguistic foundations in the Chinese language.

5. Chinese linguists call **numerical abbreviations** 数字密码 – *shùzì mìmǎ* (*literally*, "digital cipher"). They can include a digit and a hieroglyph(s) or a digit and a Latin letter(s). Thus, Sinologists consider formations like **3k** (三**k**) ← 3千 (三千) – *sān qiān* (three thousand), **8k** (八**k**) ← 8千 (八千) – *bā qiān* (eight thousand) to be

abbreviations of this group. The letter *k* is an abbreviation for *kilo*, which the Chinese associate with the number 1000. In the gaming discourse of China, there are variants of the mixed abbreviation 3A游戏 / 三A游戏 – *sān A yóu xì*. The motivator is the American phrase *A lot of money*, *A lot of resources*, *A lot of time*. This mixed abbreviation is an analogue of the Chinese advertising phrase: 高成本、高质量和高体量的游戏 – *gāo chéng běn, gāo zhì liàng hé gāo tǐ liàng de yóu xì* (Games with high budget, high quality and large scale).

Conclusions

A comparative analysis of the formation and functioning of abbreviations in several Slavic and Chinese languages revealed similarities in the methods of formation and functional identity of such units. In both cases, this phenomenon reflects the praxeological category of incompleteness. The exponent of the systemic-linguistic dialectical processes of the development of abbreviation as a linguistic universal is the function of language's avoidance of verbosity in naming of integral concepts. This function correlates with the function of saving speech effort, time, and writing materials, as well as the function of cross-linguistic universalization of relevant concepts (financial, industrial, sports, trade, transport, and other international brands, organizations, institutions, and individuals) and internationally recognized systems. Furthermore, we also highlight the function of encoding lingual units (specialized terms, socially and situationally limited units) and the expressive function of abbreviations in speech. Overall, there is a similarity in the methods of formation and functional identity of abbreviations in the compared languages. However, each language has systemic linguistic and extra-linguistic features determined by the possibilities of applying existing methods of abbreviation formation and their primary or peripheral use. A comparative study of Slavic and Chinese abbreviations reveals the problem of structuring abbreviations as words or phrases, and some of them as predicative units (sentences). Our observations of abbreviation methods in typologically homogeneous and heterogeneous, genetically related and unrelated languages indicate the inter-level nature of this phenomenon, the foundations of which are laid in the communicator's

pragmatic desire to optimize speech resources so that their number is sufficient and, at the same time, not excessive for a full understanding of the information being expressed.

Our further research can focus on the search for a single cognitive mechanism, in accordance with the action of which the variability of the functioning of manifold language means is manifested on the basis of the completeness / incompleteness of expression while maintaining the completeness of the content embedded in the communicative act.

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АБРЕВІАЦІЯ ЯК РЕЗУЛЬТАТ ДІЇ УНІВЕРСАЛЬНОЇ КАТЕГОРІЇ НЕПОВНОТИ: ЗІСТАВНА ХАРАКТЕРИСТИКА У СЛОВ'ЯНСЬКИХ ТА КИТАЙСЬКІЙ МОВАХ

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АНОТАЦІЯ

Мета цієї статті – представити результати дослідження особливостей прояву праксіологічної категорії неповноти у слов'янських та китайській мовах. Об'єкт вивчення – способи утворення абrevіатур української та польської мов у зіставленні зі способами абrevіації в китайській мові. Предмет дослідження – структурна специфіка та функціональна спільність слов'янських і китайських абrevіатур. Результатом проведеного функціонального, словотвірного, графічного, порівняльного аналізу слугують такі висновки. У зіставлених мовах абrevіація – один зі способів прояву праксіологічної категорії неповноти у мові. Це визначає такі функції абrevіатур: функцію ухилення мови від багатослів'я в іменуванні цілісного поняття та дотичну до неї функцію економії мовних зусиль, часу та матеріалів для письма; функцію міжмовної універсалізації актуальних понять і міжнародно визнаних систем; функцію шифрування; експресивну функцію. Взагалі, спостерігаємо подібність способів утворення та функціональної ідентичності абrevіації, проте кожна мова має системно-мовні та екстралінгвістичні особливості, спричинені можливостями застосування наявних способів утворення абrevіатур та їх

використання. Зіставне дослідження слов'янської та китайської абрєвіації розкриває проблему структурування абрєвіатур як слів і/або словосполучень, а в деяких моделях навіть як речень.

Ключові слова: неповнота; праксіологічна категорія; абрєвіація; абрєвіатура; мовна універсалія; мовна структура; функція; слов'янські мови; китайська мова.

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