

Re: SI units (was: Expressing fractions)

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.lang/2005-01/1240.html>

From: Lee Sau Dan (danlee_at_informatik.uni-freiburg.de)

Date: 01/10/05

Date: 11 Jan 2005 01:11:38 +0800

>>>> "Jordan" == Jordan Abel <jmabel@purdue.edu> writes:

Jordan> ["Followup-To:" header set to alt.usage.english.]

Jordan> On 2005-01-10, Lee Sau Dan <danlee@informatik.uni-freiburg.de> wrote:

>> *Of course, we use European-Arabic numbers and Latin letters for*
>> *the numbers and units in _technical_ documents to achieve that*
>> *purpose. But what do you expect in a novel? Bumps and lurps*
>> *of a foreign script here and there, or a purely native script*
>> *for the language being used? (Local newspapers do refrain from*
>> *using Latin letters. This is partly because they're set*
>> *vertically, making the Latin-scripted words difficult to read*
>> *and recognize.*

Jordan> Japanese fonts, on the other hand, seem to have a _lot_ of

Jordan> SI units set in square cells so that they run with the

Jordan> text

Yeah. So do fonts for the big5 encoding (for traditional Chinese characters).

Jordan> - I would assume [but don't know] that vertical text

Jordan> would use these

No. Most fonts you see are designed for horizontal text. (For Japanese, check what the little <ya>, <yu>, <yo> and <tsu> look like. If they look like subscripted (i.e. shifted down), then it's for horizontal text. For vertical writing, these should be shifted right.)

Most computer software for both Japanese and Chinese display text horizontally, in the same direction as the Latin script. However, when it comes to printing, many software are armed with "vertical versions" of fonts, which is nothing but normal fonts with each character rotated 90 degrees counterclockwise. The text-processing software need to do no extra work. They just need to use these vertical fonts and the printout will be vertically set -- when you rotate the printout 90 degrees clockwise. (But some punctuations,

sci.lang: Re: SI units (was: Expressing fractions)

such as a dash or the parenthesis, should not be rotated for vertical printout. So, they have the same appearance in both the vertical and normal versions of a font.)

Jordan> But, then, Japanese text tends not to be shy about using
Jordan> european/arabic numerals and latin letters in general,
Jordan> which you've indicated isn't the case for chinese.

No. I think it's the same case.

What I said was that in technical writings, we are more open to using the Western numerals and SI unit symbols. I have no experience with Japanese technical writings. So, can't comment on them. But doing this in Chinese has the advantage of making it easy to locate such quantities in running text. :)

For non-technical text, we are as shy as the Japanese in the use of Latin letters and Western numerals. Both because many people are not familiar with Western languages, and because they look strange in the matrix of Chinese characters. (To make them look a bit neater, Latin letters in such texts are usually set with fixed-width fonts rather than proportional fonts. The width is the same as a Chinese characters, or half of that. So, it appears to align a bit neater with the rest of the text.)

--

Lee Sau Dan

§õ|u'°

~{@nJX6X~}

E-mail: danlee@informatik.uni-freiburg.de

Home page: <http://www.informatik.uni-freiburg.de/~danlee>