PinyinType will fulfill a niche in the Chinese language learning market by emphasizing character recognition through the typing of pinyin, the Romanization of Chinese words. Because of its core mechanic, the platform will enforce recognition and pronunciation in a more efficient manner than traditional methods.

PinyinType takes inspiration on the one hand from a website called typing.io and a number of Chinese language learning websites on the other. It exploits the Chinese keyboard pinyin input standard on many OSs to guide language learners with sentences that give instant feedback as to whether the correct character was typed or not. Typing.io is a typing accuracy web app that focuses on programming languages, allowing the user to type along a "track", notifying him of when a typographical error is made. PinyinType will utilize its core feedback mechanism--not for speed--but to "gamify" the learning process and provide instant, motivational cues to Chinese learners.

Learning Chinese is hard, and it's made harder from the fact that, traditionally, in order to recognize characters, the student must first learn to write them, recalling them every time. This makes the process of learning to recognize the numerous characters for reading the newspaper (a common benchmark for Chinese proficiency) very cumbersome, as the student is limited in recognition by the number of characters he knows how to write/recall: the student learns to recognize as slowly as he learns to recall. With the advent of the pinyin keyboard, however, writing need not be the fundamental fulcrum by which a non-native speaker learns Chinese.

Nowadays, most individuals (in China and the West) communicate via typing, but typing on a pinyin keyboard is not emphasized current curriculums, often relegated to tertiary status. If the majority of learners are already inclined to use the keyboard to communicate, why not use the keyboard as the primary learning facilitator?

Writing Chinese will always be a first integral step to learning (and appreciating) Chinese. However, there is currently no intermediate learning step that emphasizes character recognition (and knowing the concurrent pinyin) to expedite learning for non-native learners, who typically just want to read and speak the language in an efficient time frame.

Content-wise, I hope to use articles from Chinese Wikipedia. Everyone has an inherent interest in certain subjects over others, and learning a language in subjects that correspond to those only makes sense. Duolingo does a good job of allowing people to practice upon content of their choosing. With PinyinType, I hope to take this a step further by allowing the customization of curriculum by choosing subjects of interest.