

EAS205 -- REQUIRED/RECOMMENDED TEXTS FOR CHINESE LANGUAGE STUDENTS

I. Chinese English Dictionaries (*Han-Ying cidian* 汉英词典):

There is a dizzying array of choices when purchasing a Chinese dictionary. Many standard dictionaries are periodically revised, and new ones are constantly being published in China, Taiwan, and the United States. Before you can purchase a Chinese-English dictionary, you will have to make one preliminary decision: simplified or traditional characters. The simplification of characters was accompanied by a revision of standard dictionary organization. Not only was the order of the characters within the dictionary changed, but the methods of locating the characters have changed as well. We will discuss this in greater detail when we begin doing exercises on how to use East Asian dictionaries.

As a practical matter, the widespread use of simplified characters throughout mainland China and the fact that most students have study abroad experiences in the People's Republic of China make it advisable to begin with a simplified dictionary. Be aware, however, that those of you who intend to study in Taiwan or who are interested in pursuing the serious study of traditional Chinese civilization should consider also purchasing a traditional dictionary. Unfortunately, it is easier to pick up simplified characters after you have learned the traditional forms, but millions of Chinese learn simplified first without adverse effects.

At the least, you should choose a dictionary with between 4000 and 5000 individual characters that contains in the neighborhood of 30,000 phrases (compounds). If you choose to buy a dictionary with simplified character forms, you should choose one that also lists the traditional (complex) form of the character along with the simplified version.

Dictionaries owned by the University library are indicated below with an asterisk.

A. Dictionaries with Simplified Characters

Here are some reasonable beginners' options:

Concise English-Chinese Chinese-English Dictionary

Revised. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. 1158pp.

This is probably the most popular beginning dictionary. It has reasonable coverage and the added, convenient feature of including pronunciation in the English-Chinese section. It also includes traditional forms.

A Chinese-English Dictionary (Revised Edition in Reduced Size)

Edited by the Beijing University Department of Foreign Languages
1995. 1444pp.

***Cheng & Tsui Chinese-Pinyin-English Dictionary for Learners* ***

Wang Huan, Editor-in-Chief.
Boston: Cheng & Tsui, 1999. 1288pp.

B. Dictionaries with Traditional Characters

Far East Chinese-English Dictionary

Liang Shih-chiu, comp.
Far East, 1992. 1828 pp.

This comes in three size formats (small, medium, and large). All are identical except for their physical size.

Mathews' Chinese English Dictionary*

Revised edition. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1943.

This dictionary must be used carefully (e.g., the pronunciations given are highly unreliable), but it is the dictionary that a couple of generations of Sinologists grew up with. It is still useful as a starting dictionary when you begin to read Classical Chinese (*wenyanwen* 文言文).

C. Electronic dictionaries

There are two types of electronic dictionaries. The first are hand-held electronic devices. These are, of course, available in China and other Chinese speaking regions. They are also sometimes available in Chinatown or electronic stores catering to a Chinese clientele.

In addition, there are some online dictionaries. The most easily accessed is probably the Chinese Characters Dictionary Web at <http://zhongwen.com/zi.htm>

II. Other Dictionaries

A. English-Chinese Dictionaries (*Ying-Han cidian* 英汉词典)

In addition to the Oxford dictionary listed above, there are numerous English-Chinese dictionaries available. You should be aware that most of these are not designed for English speakers, but rather for native speakers of Chinese who need to look up an unfamiliar English word. They therefore rarely give the pronunciation of the relevant phrases (the Oxford *Concise Dictionary* is an exception to this). These dictionaries also divide according to the simplified/traditional dichotomy.

Simplified characters

A Concise Practical English Chinese Dictionary

Beijing: Sinolingua, 1999.

Traditional characters

Far East Practical English-Chinese Dictionary

Liang Shih-ch'iu, comp.

This is the companion volume to Liang's Chinese-English dictionary. It also comes in three size options.

B. Specialized Dictionaries

Although you are not expected to purchase any of these, you should be aware that there are numerous dictionaries that deal with specialized subjects. To cite just a couple of examples, you can find dictionaries of business terms, military terms, scientific terminology, diplomatic language, and even romance.

III. Chinese/Chinese Dictionaries

A. General Dictionaries

As your language abilities improve, you will find that Chinese-Chinese dictionaries are incredibly useful. There are many options, but the most widely used and available one is:

Xiandai Hanyu cidian 现代汉语词典
3rd edition. Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1996.

B. Character Dictionaries (*zidian* 字典)

For those interested in the characters themselves, there is a class of dictionaries that emphasize the specific meanings of the characters. Unlike the dictionaries listed above, which try to be reasonably comprehensive in their coverage of common phrases, character dictionaries either include very few or no phrases. In exchange, they usually cover many more individual characters. They are useful for tracking the variety of nuances in the characters themselves.

The most popular and is the following:

Xinhua zidian 新华字典
6th ed. Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1998.

C. Classical Dictionaries

There are two competing dictionaries first published in the early 20th century and subsequently revised many times that are useful for working with classical texts:

Ciyuan 辭源 *
Revised edition. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 1986.

Cihai 辭海
Revised edition. Shanghai: Shanghai cishu, 1999.

The library has earlier versions of this.

D. Encyclopedic Dictionaries

You are not expected to purchase these, and you may never need to use them, but you should be aware that they exist. As one scholar has noted, they are analogous to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (if you have not heard of this, you should go to the library right now and look at it!) in that they trace the history of characters and phrases through history.

Hanyu da cidian 漢語大詞典
13 vols. Beijing: Hanyu da cidian, 1986-1990.
This contains over 300,000 phrases under 23,000 characters. There is a CD-ROM version of this. The library has a CD-ROM version of this work.

Hanyu da zidian 漢語大字典
8 vols. Sichuan cishu and Hubei cishu, 1990.
This contains over 50,000 characters.

IV. Where does one buy these things?

You have some choices. Here are places to start:

Online

- <http://www.amazon.com>: they have a decent collection, plus are connected with used booksellers.
- <http://cheng-tsui.com> : Cheng & Tsui, a Boston based company that sells books and other materials relating to Asia.
- <http://www.ewbb.com> : East Wind Books of Berkeley (California)
- <http://www.chinabooks.com>: China Books and Periodicals, Inc.

Bricks and mortar

- **Oriental Culture Enterprises Co., Inc.**
13-17 Elizabeth Street, 2/F, New York, NY 10013
Tel: 212.226.8461 Fax: 212.431.669
This store has a very impressive array of reference works such as dictionaries and books in Chinese on a wide range of subjects (including fiction). SUNY Albany faculty members have been spotted in its aisles.
- Both **Barnes and Noble** and **Border's Books** on Wolf Road occasionally have some dictionaries suggested above.

V. OTHER REFERENCE BOOKS

A reference work that is invaluable in learning about traditional Chinese culture is:

Endymion Wilkinson's *Chinese History: A Manual*. Rev. ed. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.