Chapter 7
Dictionary Apps in Chinese Language Learning:
An Analysis of German Learner Needs

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ABSTRACT

After evaluating available Chinese-as-a-foreign-language (CFL) dictionaries on the market, this chapter identifies CFL learners' difficulties with learning Chinese and their needs for CFL dictionaries through an exploratory mixed-methods study involving interviews with 30 German CFL learners and a survey with 379 participants. This chapter also proposes a dictionary app for learning Chinese for German CFL learners with a focus on microstructural classes, access and network structures, and additional supporting functions.

BACKGROUND

With the increasing importance of the Chinese language in global discourse, numerous learning and teaching materials as well as reference works for Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) have been published in recent decades. These reference works include a series of mostly monolingual dictionaries for CFL learners, while CFL learners prefer bilingual ones. To counteract these circumstances, a large-scale CFL bilingual dictionary project for 44 languages was initiated by Confucius Institute Headquarters in early 2011. A CFL dictionary for German learners (*Kleines Wörterbuch der chinesischen Sprache* [KWC]) with about 4,000 Chinese lemmas and about 3,800

German words was published in 2019. However, before its publication, a large number of bilingual CFL dictionaries had already appeared on the German market.

Chinesisch-Deutsches Lernwörterbuch (1991/1995/2004), Handwörterbuch Deutsch-Chinesisch/Chinesisch-Deutsch (2006), Lernwortschatz Chinesisch (2006), Das neue Chinesisch-Deutsche Wörterbuch (2010), Modernes Wörterbuch Deutsch-Chinesisch/Chinesisch-Deutsch (2008), Modernes Wörterbuch Deutsch-Chinesisch (2009), PONS Kompaktwörterbuch Chinesisch (2009), Lernwörterbuch Chinesisch (2011), Langenscheidt Universalwörterbuch Chinesisch (2011/2018), Chinesisch-Deutsches HSK Lernwörterbuch (2016).

In a recent survey on use of CFL dictionaries (Yang & Yang, 2019), 77% of the participants did not turn to printed CFL dictionaries for reference, but to apps on mobile devices. With the technological development of smartphones and other mobile devices, learning apps such as *Pleco* and *Hello HSK* are being used more frequently and becoming more popular among CFL learners. The impressive development of e-lexicography has profoundly changed the behaviors of CFL learners, and so it is doubtful whether printed CFL dictionaries are still helpful to them. Moreover, the dictionaries' design must take the needs of users into account, but KWC lacks an analysis of their needs. In view of these circumstances, this chapter is concerned with the following questions:

1. What kind of difficulties do German CFL learners have?
2. What needs do German CFL learners have for dictionary products?
3. What kind of dictionary product would be suitable for German CFL learners?

INTRODUCTION: LEARNERS' LEXICOGRAPHY

A dictionary is a reference work with external access structures that contains linguistic information on lexical units (Engelberg & Lemnitzer, 2008). A lexeme in a dictionary is introduced by a headword (lemma), which together with other lexical information forms a dictionary article. The information in a dictionary article and its structure are called microstructure. Lemmas of a dictionary are listed according to a certain ordering system. A dictionary's entire collection of lemmas and the ordering of lemmas form its macrostructure. Dictionaries are considered indispensable aids in foreign language acquisition, especially in vocabulary learning (Herbst & Klotz, 2003). They can also perform several functions in the process of language reception and production, which has been experimentally proven by studies on dictionary use (Chen, 2012; Dziemianko, 2010; Hill & Laufer, 2003; Laufer, 2000).

A special type of dictionary for foreign language learning is a learner's dictionary, which is defined as an addressee-oriented dictionary type that takes the specific

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