

SZANDRA ÉSIK

(Eötvös Loránd University, Chinese Department)

Huba Bartos–Imre Hamar 2017.

***Kínai-magyar szótár* [Chinese–Hungarian Dictionary]**

包甫博–郝清新: 汉匈词典

(Budapest: ELTE Confucius Institute. 2097 pp.)

Huba Bartos–Imre Hamar–Melinda Pap 2023.

***Magyar-kínai szótár* [Hungarian–Chinese Dictionary]**

包甫博–郝清新–梅林达: 匈汉词典

(Budapest: ELTE Confucius Institute. 1710 pp.)

The beginnings of the Chinese–Hungarian dictionary have an adventurous history. The first time Jenő Zsámár started working on a Chinese–Hungarian, Hungarian–Chinese dictionary was in Beijing in the 1940s, in the framework of a Jesuit mission. In the 1950s, he continued his work in Taiwan with Jesuits working in French, English, Spanish, and Latin, and the project expanded into a multilingual dictionary. The result of their efforts was a work containing millions of entries. Tibor Vajda, a Jesuit who preached the Christian religion in Taiwan, also made a significant contribution to the further development of the Hungarian section. The proofreading of the dictionary was commissioned by the Akadémiai Kiadó (the publishing house of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences) and started in 1981 in Hungary. However, during the proofreading process, the experts identified several inconsistencies and omissions, and the work was soon abandoned; hence the dictionary was never published.¹

The first Chinese–Hungarian and Hungarian–Chinese dictionaries to be published, compiled with appropriate professional competence, were edited by Huba Bartos, PhD, and Imre Hamar, DSc. The first edition of the dictionaries was published in 1998, followed by a second, revised edition in 2001 and a third edition in 2013. In the framework of this project, an online Chinese–

¹ Martoni 1985.

Hungarian dictionary was created by the ELTE Confucius Institute and MorphoLogic Ltd.²

The work on the new, two-volume *Kínai-magyar szótár* [Chinese–Hungarian Dictionary] presented here was started in 2014 with the support of the Hungarian State and the Centre for Language Education and Cooperation (Hanban). Containing 6,090 first-level headwords and some 74,000 linked compound headwords, it is the largest Chinese–Hungarian dictionary ever published. The commemorative copies were handed over to Chinese Premier Li Keqiang (李克强) and Prime Minister Viktor Orbán at a ceremony in November 2017 during the 16+1 Summit in Budapest. The dictionary was finally commercially available by the end of 2018.

The editors-in-chief, Huba Bartos, PhD, and Imre Hamar, DSc, are prominent scholars in the field of Hungarian sinology. Huba Bartos is the deputy director-general of the Hungarian Research Centre for Linguistics at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and an associate professor at the Department of Chinese Studies at Eötvös Loránd University, specialising in Chinese syntax. Imre Hamar is vice-rector for international affairs at Eötvös Loránd University, head of the Department of Chinese Studies and the Confucius Institute, and the director of the Institute of East Asian Studies. His main research interests are Chinese religions and philosophies, especially Chinese Buddhism. He teaches Classical Chinese text reading and Chinese Buddhism for the master's and doctoral programmes in Chinese studies.

In parallel with the *Chinese–Hungarian Dictionary* project, work began on its counterpart, the *Magyar–kínai szótár* [Hungarian–Chinese Dictionary], which contains 57,000 headwords. It was published 2023, with Melinda Pap, PhD, assistant professor at Eötvös Loránd University, joining the editors-in-chief. Her main research area is Chinese Buddhism, and she teaches both undergraduate and PhD courses at the Department of Chinese Studies, where she has been working since 2008. She recently joined the ELTE Roman World and the Far East Research Group. In addition to the editors-in-chief, one should not forget the many other sinologists who have contributed to the dictionaries with their excellent work.

By ‘Chinese’, the editors of the dictionary mean, as is common practice, the modern Chinese vernacular, which is based on Mandarin dialects, mainly the Beijing dialect. In mainland China, it is referred to as *putonghua* 普通话,

² <http://www.morphologic.hu/kinai/> [Last accessed: 19.01.2024].

while in Taiwan the term used is *guoyu* 國語. Regarding the *Chinese–Hungarian Dictionary*, we see that the authors also considered *putonghua*'s historical antecedents (*guanhua* 官話), the classical written language (*wenyan* 文言 or *guwen* 古文), and the literary language derived from the language of traditional drama and prose (*baihua* 白話). However, as a modern Chinese dictionary, its content is largely based on the vocabulary of modern vernacular and literary language. At the same time, the *Chinese–Hungarian Dictionary* does not avoid dialect-specific expressions, which, although not part of the vernacular, are widely known and used.

The vocabulary is not only diverse but also very up-to-date, with words of recent origin and culture-specific words. The *Chinese–Hungarian Dictionary* is based on the glossaries of the most standard monolingual and bilingual dictionaries, such as *Xiandai Hanyu Cidian* (現代漢語詞典 Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2013), *ABC Chinese–English Comprehensive Dictionary* (John Defrancis ed. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003), *Pleco* (electronic dictionary, <https://www.pleco.com/>), and *A Modern Chinese–English Dictionary* (現代漢英詞典 Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2014). The *Hungarian–Chinese Dictionary* is based on the *Hungarian–Russian Dictionary* (eds. László Gáldi–Pál Uzonyi) published by Akadémiai Kiadó in 2013 and the *Hungarian–German Dictionary* (eds. Előd Halász–Csaba Földes–Pál Uzonyi) published in 2002.

The dictionaries mainly apply the simplified characters used in the People's Republic of China (*jiantizi* 簡體字), but the *Chinese–Hungarian Dictionary* also includes characters' traditional versions (*fantizi* 繁體字) in brackets, if the latter differs from the simplified form. The need for the use of unsimplified characters is demonstrated by the fact that classical texts with traditional characters still appear in mainland China and also by the fact that traditional forms are still the official character versions used in Taiwan and Hong Kong.

The structure of each entry in the *Chinese–Hungarian Dictionary* is as follows. The basic form of a first-level heading is in red, with its traditional form in red in brackets. Behind these, in black, are the other, non-standard variants. The characters are followed by their *pinyin* 拼音 transcriptions (i.e., the standard, Latin alphabet transcription system of the Chinese language that is widely used internationally), then their word class and meaning. The dictionary contains the first-level, one-character headwords in alphabetical order by pinyin transcription. Also listed alphabetically under the headwords

are their compounds (i.e., words and phrases that begin with the letter of the headword).

The entries in the *Hungarian–Chinese Dictionary* also proceed in alphabetical order, and their layouts basically follow the above scheme. Title words are in red, followed by possible variants, grammatical information, and their meanings in italics and pinyin. To meet the needs of Chinese dictionary users, the headings also indicate possible word changes, changes in vowel length due to conjugation, and information on prepositional usage.

For both language pairs, the carefully selected examples accompanying the articles are remarkable, as they help to give the words a more precise meaning in context for the user. One of the cornerstones of Chinese is the use of separating verb conjunctions, which the dictionary also explains, to the delight of the user: in the pinyin transcriptions, the symbol // indicates that the members on either side of the sign can sometimes be separated. Also noteworthy is the inclusion of set phrases that usually consist of four characters (*chengyu* 成语), which are very characteristic of the Chinese language. These are a crucial part of Chinese culture, and their use shows the richness of our linguistic toolbox. Since the meaning of these expressions cannot be deduced from the characters that constitute them, they present a great challenge not only to language learners but also to translators. In the *Chinese–Hungarian Dictionary*, under the label ‘成’, these expressions are also found in the relevant characters’ entries. The editors used two methods to give their meaning. Where there is an approximate Hungarian expression, it is written with the literal meaning given in brackets. However, where there is no good Hungarian equivalent, the literal meaning is given, with an explanation in brackets to help the user’s understanding. I believe that this method reflects the precision and good work of the editors. The same logic and accuracy have been applied to the *Hungarian–Chinese Dictionary*, so that idiomatic expressions and idioms are also found at the end of the dictionary entries, well separated.

Due to the nature of the Chinese writing system, the ability to use a printed Chinese dictionary can almost be considered a special competence in itself that a language learner must acquire separately. However, the *Chinese–Hungarian Dictionary* also describes in detail the process of looking up characters. Once the user knows the pronunciation (transcription) of a character in question, they can browse alphabetically, directly to the word. In the case where a character’s pronunciation is unknown to the dictionary user, a

pair of look-up tables is used. Let us consider a concrete example. The character we are looking for is 机 (*jī* machine), but we do not know its pronunciation. We first identify the radical, in this case 木 (*mù* tree), a four-stroked character on the left side of the character. In the Radical Lookup Table, we look for 木 from the four-stringed (*sìhua* 四画) keys and then go to the Table of Characters by Radicals and Number of Strokes, using the number of lines next to it. To use the second table, we need to determine the number of strokes of the character we are looking for outside the key, which in this case is two. Thus, in this table, we will find the character 机 under 木 in the two strokes category (*èrhua* 二画), with the pronunciation next to it. After that, in the dictionary, we can easily find the entries alphabetically ordered under the letter J, with the pronunciation *jī*.

Printed Chinese dictionaries can be very helpful after one has a bit of practice, but for a new, Western user, the process of finding the characters described above can be a difficult one (especially if we consider that identifying the radical is not always so easy). Online dictionaries are therefore often considered to be more user-friendly by Chinese learners, but professional language users may still find themselves in jobs and situations where the use of a printed dictionary is indispensable. To meet the needs of the widest possible range of Chinese language users, an online version of the dictionaries has been developed.³

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³ www.szotar.net [Last accessed: 19.01.2024].

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