

PASSWORD Semi-Bilingual English-Chinese Dictionary

Liu Jin

Liu Jin is an assistant editor at the Shanghai Lexicographical Publishing House, majoring in International Chinese.

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The Shanghai Lexicographical Publishing House was formed in 1978 from the Cihai Editing Department of Zhong Hua Book Company. It is the first publishing house in China that specializes in reference works, including various types of dictionaries, chronological tables, indexes, yearbooks, etc. Over the years, it has published over 730 titles, with seventy million copies sold. Fourteen of its publications received the honorable title of the National Book Award, the supreme book award of China, and 25 dictionaries, such as *A Comprehensive Dictionary of Chinese Idioms and Phrases*, won the China Dictionary Award. In 1994 it was named the National Publishing House of Excellence.

457 North Shaansi Road
Shanghai 200040 China
cishu@online.sh.cn
<http://www.cishu.com.cn>



In May 2005, the *PASSWORD Semi-Bilingual English-Chinese Dictionary* was published by Shanghai Lexicographical Publishing House (SLPH), with the cooperation of K Dictionaries Ltd (KD). This brought to the fore the significant role played by semi-bilingual learners dictionaries in the field of foreign language teaching in China. With this recent publication, it is fitting to elaborate on the *whys* and *wherefores* of the research and development of this new type of dictionary.

Our original intent to publish such a dictionary was inspired by an article written in 2001 by Xu Hai, from the Lexicography Research Center of Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (<http://bilex.gdufs.edu.cn>), in which he made a full and detailed exposition of the academic reasoning for the use of the semi-bilingual dictionary – a novel member in the family of dictionaries. The ideas conveyed in the article held enormous appeal and we took them very seriously. In 2002, after meticulous modifications and editing, Xu's article was published in *Lexicographical Studies* (Vol. 2), a journal of the China Lexicographical Association (reprinted online, <http://kdictionaries.com/kdn/kdn14/kdn14-pwzh-x.pdf>). This is a unique professional periodical in the field of lexicography in China, published by SLPH. Ilan Kernerman, Managing Director of KD, paid a visit to our publishing house in 2003. Soon after we reached a collaborative agreement, which is how the dictionary came into being.

The reasons why we strongly recommend this new type of dictionary in China are as follows:

- The semi-bilingual English-Chinese dictionary can make up for the inadequacy of general English-Chinese dictionaries by providing the English explanation and examples of usage of the entry.
- It can make up for the inadequacy of monolingual English learners dictionaries by providing Chinese equivalences.
- It remedies the deficiency of English-Chinese bilingual dictionaries. It is designed in such a way that its users

are encouraged to read and think in English with a minimum need for using Chinese.

- It paves the way for readers to use monolingual English dictionaries, since the original English version constitutes the core of this dictionary.

- Last but not least, its comparatively lower cost to that of general English-Chinese bilingual dictionaries is appealing to users.

We made additional modifications by taking the current state of China's English teaching into consideration. For example, in the course of editing, we supplemented the words required by the English school syllabus in China. We provided KD with a list of well over 150 English words, which they

compiled into entries and we, in turn, translated to Chinese.

The dictionary was launched into the Chinese market in 2005, in full collaboration with KD. We were highly honored to have had the assistance of Prof. Huang Jianhua, chairman of the Commission of Bilingual Dictionaries of the Lexicographical Association of China (<http://bilex.gdufs.edu.cn/others/bilex.htm>). In his Preface to the dictionary, writing with coruscating wit, he gives a lucid and academic exposition of the importance of the semi-bilingual dictionary in active language learning.

Professor Huang drew an analogy between the semi-bilingual dictionary and "something that is neither fish nor fowl", eliciting a positive connotation from this usually negative phrase. He referred to the semi-bilingual dictionary as a "new type of thing" that cannot be exactly categorized and therefore integrates the advantages of both categories. In his point of view, the concept of the dictionary is based on the psychology of vocabulary acquisition in foreign language learning as applied in learners dictionaries.

In brief, the minimalistic translation that is provided in the semi-bilingual approach is by no means a "lazy" dictionary layout; rather, it is one that prominently promotes learner-friendly features.

