

# A REVIEW ON THE CLASSIFIED DICTIONARY FOR BULGARIAN AND CHINESE

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**Abstract:** *The Classified Dictionary for Bulgarian and Chinese* is the first reference book in language teaching and research history of Bulgaria, which is based on comparison between Bulgarian and Chinese. This dictionary is composed of five parts. Besides the preface, table of contents and catalogue for looking up, there are two main bodies. The main bodies contain 15,000 pieces of words, idioms, temporary phrases and small sentences, then phonetics, morphology and sentence structures. Finally, this paper introduces the author, compiling background, and most importantly analyzes its contents, style and shortage.

**Keywords:** *The Classified Dictionary for Bulgarian and Chinese*; Review; Contents and Style; Shortage

## Chapter One: The author & the background

*The Classified Dictionary for Bulgarian and Chinese*, based on comparing Bulgarian and Chinese, is the first reference book in language teaching and research history of Bulgaria. Though published by *Sofia University Press*, it is edited by a Chinese lady called Zhang Sunfen, rather than any Bulgarian scholar.

Zhang Sunfen has a legendary life story and Chinese teaching experience. She was born in 1918, with a well-educated mother, a father historian, called Zhang Xinglang, and a grandfather, Zhang Xiangwen, who paved the way for geography studies in modern China. In 1935, after her graduation from high school, she was admitted to Yenching University with a wonderful grade and majored in nursing education at the biology department. Then she finished university in 1940. Overwhelmed with patriotic feelings, she travelled a lot around Hong Kong, Kun Ming, Gui Yang and some other cities to find the Red Cross, where she could be a member of the medical to support China's anti-Japanese war. In 1942 she married a communist Bulgarian warrior called Gan Yangdao, who at that time worked for the battlefield medical team in China. After the war, she settled down in Bulgaria. But firmly attached to her own nation, she never became a Bulgarian citizen. The communication got more and more often between People's Republic of China and Bulgaria, which owed a lot to their contribution. With the rapid development of the relationship between the two

countries, students from both started to take exchange courses, and Chinese gained popularity in Bulgaria. At that time, Ms. Zhang was invited by Sofia University to focus on teaching and research work of Chinese.

Professor Zhu Dexi started teaching Chinese in Sofia University in 1952, when the teaching process was mainly aided by interpretation and translation. That is, for instance, that Mr. Zhu talked in Chinese and Ms. Zhang interpreted all he said in Bulgarian. With no textbooks available, they worked together and wrote the first textbook in Bulgarian history for teaching Chinese, which was named *Courses of Chinese* (published in 1954). During the next several years, the Chinese teaching in Bulgaria went through many ups and downs, but Ms. Zhang persisted in it without any stop. Besides, she also tried to compose essays and reference books, among which *The Classified Dictionary for Bulgarian and Chinese* was an important study result.

In the beginning, there were no textbooks for Chinese teaching in Bulgaria, let alone a reference book. The huge distinction between the two languages, which are in different language systems, combined with the specialty of the Chinese characters, makes it very hard for a Bulgarian to learn Chinese. And that is why the reference dictionary came out. The author emphasized that the dictionary was aimed to help college students in Bulgaria learn Chinese, as well as Chinese students learning Bulgarian. Up till then, the two countries never had such dictionary for Bulgarian and Chinese. Considering the strong need of Bulgarian students, she wrote and edited it and hoped it would be really helpful.

## Chapter Two: The Context and Style

The dictionary is composed of 5 main parts with 612 pages, among which the preface takes the first two pages, the classified catalog the pages 3 to 10, and the classified entries pages 11 to 524. Chinese pronunciation, lexical structure, and grammar take pages 525 to 560, with left pages for a catalog of Bulgarian words in alphabetical order. The entry part is the body of the whole dictionary, followed by grammar. Here are the details:

### 1. Entries

The dictionary includes altogether over 15000 entries, including words, idioms, temporary phrases, sentences, and that is why it can be referred to as *language dictionary*. Each entry is indicated as order in Bulgarian, Chinese, and pinyin. All the words included are classified into three semantic levels of entries, and the ones with general meanings of a semantic category are in the first level. But what is shown in the catalog are only entries in the first two levels. In the main body, all the first level entries are marked by double underlines equal in length,

the second level ones by double underlines in different length, and the third level ones by single underline. However, neither are there clarifications about how many semantic categories are classified exactly, nor is there any coding for each category on such a mimeo. Besides, the catalog is not clearly leveled, and many words and their underlines are hard to recognize. Therefore, our research group got through it with a traditional method and what we found initially is as below: there are 50 first level entries, like “human”, “the psychology of human”, “visit”, and “heating system”; 296 second level entries are included into each first level category. For example, under the first-level category “the psychology of human” 24 entries are included there, such as “intelligence”, “memory”, “wisdom”, “stupid”, “imagination” and so on. Next are the characteristics of the entry part.

***a. Though disorderly looking in the beginning without codes, the three semantic level classifications are clear to understand.***

Normally, under a first-level category are some common and general entries, and then more words with specific meanings are accordingly into the second and third levels. The number of entries of each semantic category is different from each other, from several to some hundreds. Here is a semantic category “human being” and its subordinate entries in the first level (more explanations about pinyin and tone marks are afterwards indicated).

човечество	人类	rénlèi
първобитен човек	原始人	yúanshǐ rén
прадеди на човека	人类的祖先	rénlèi de zǔxiān
раждам	生	shēng 产 chǎn
раждам се	生	shēng 出生 chūshēng
роден съм (на)	生在	shēng zài ...
съществувам	存在	cúnzài 生存 shēngcún
живея	生活	shēnghúo 活 húo 住 zhù
живот	生活	shēnghúo 生命 shēngmìng
бит	生活方式	shēnghúo fāngshì
битие	生活条件	shēnghúo tiáojiàn 生存 shēngcún
битието определя съзнанието	存在决定意识	cúnzài juéding yìshì
жизнеспособност	生命力	shēngmìnglì

All the entries above are closely connected with “human”, the main semantic category, and are commonly used as well. Then they are followed by 5 second-level categories: “childhood”, “youth time”, “elderly time”, “death”, and “bibliography”, and more specific words are included as third-levels in the same category. But there is an exception that some categories have no first-level entries but only second-level ones.

As to the explanation, Dong Shuhui once mentioned this dictionary in her book *50 Years of Chinese Teaching in Bulgaria* published in 2005, that every entry has not only its own explanation but its concrete usage as well. However, we have found that the explanations here are actually translation between the two languages without further clarification on usage. It is definitely not a flaw or shortcoming, since the quality and purpose of this dictionary are no more than classifying semantically, and other reference books may present more concrete explanations.

***b. The arrangement of entries is based on glosseme.***

Usually, dictionaries written in two languages take one of them as the target language, and the other as the explanative one, and all meanings of one entry of target language will be explained there. Different from it, this dictionary includes for each entry only one common meaning and matches it with one Chinese word, which is much easier for learners to understand. If one entry has several common meanings, the explanation work will be taken in different semantic categories respectively with equivalent Chinese words. What is more, if several Chinese explanations match only one Bulgarian entry, then the most proper one will act as the main one, followed by the other synonyms and their pronunciations. Here is an example:

разбирам	懂	dǒng 明白 míngbái
обяснявам	说明	shuōmíng 解释 jiěshì

If several Bulgarian entries mean the same in Chinese, then they will be listed out, explained by one Chinese entry and distinguished with some synonyms in Chinese, so that the Chinese learning can be more effective and practical.

възприемане	领悟	lǐngwù 体会 tǐhùi
възприемам	领悟	lǐngwù 理解 lǐjiě

Since it is quite complex to list one entry in several semantic categories, all the Bulgarian entries included were listed in the appendix and marked with their matching page.

**c. The entries are selected and collected in the method of free association, and arranged based on the semantic relativity.**

Free association was well-known and widely accepted as a language teaching method in Middle and Central Europe, and so it is today. For instance, Chinese learners can associate the word “manager” with what they have learned relevantly, like “manager, economy, hairdressing, hairdresser’s, restaurant, bookshop, book, library, photo studio, restaurant, eat, delicious, good-looking, etc.” (“经理、经济、理发、理发店、书店、饭店、图书、图书馆、照相馆、饭馆、吃饭、好吃、好看……”), which is similar to Chinese Chain games. Early to 2004 in Bulgaria, the *Dictionary of Free Associated Chinese Words for Bulgarian* was published. Like this, in the *Classified Dictionary for Bulgarian and Chinese*, common vocabularies are classified in a general view based on free association, requiring lots of work for each semantic category. Generally speaking, all the entries are in alphabetical order, but by this the original idea of classified dictionary can hardly be seen. Thus this dictionary takes the semantic relativity as first principle to set levels and entries. Let’s take the example of the “family” category:

家庭：未婚生活-恋爱-婚姻-家属-家庭人口的增加-对家属的关怀-亲戚关系-家庭的破坏-家务-饮食-烹调-吃喝-打扫清洁

From family members to family relations and then to the housework, the second-level entries above are in line with people’s thinking pattern, for the semantic relativity it showed is less and less closer. The entry setting lies in the same way, in which a semantic category is divided into several subordinate categories including orderly listed entries. Here is the example of a second-level category “housework”:

料理家务-管家务-做家务事-|| 家庭妇女-女佣人-|| 家庭用具-东西-行李-|| 弄脏-弄脏屋子-弄脏地板-乱七八糟-|| 使通风-换掉屋里空气-把毯子吹吹风-|| 打掉灰尘-抖被单……

Under the semantic category of “housework” are 75 words, but we can see the arrangement principle from the first ten or more entries. The first three are common vocabulary of housework. Next, people who do housework and articles which should be tidy are listed. Finally, there are reasons why we do housework, such as mess and air pollution. Classifying and listing words based on free association is different from traditional dictionaries, which enhance readability a lot.

***d. Be practical, not limited.***

As what is said above, *The Classified Dictionary for Bulgarian and Chinese* is more like a “language quotation”, besides monosyllabic and disyllabic words, it also embodies a lot of temporary phrases, such as “干焦的嘴唇”, “习惯于一件事”, “开着窗户睡觉”, “打破盘子” and “一排假牙”, etc. A large number of sentences are also included, such as “他的演说鼓起了群众的热情”, “我看见什么都有气” “我是伊凡”, “你是谁啊”, etc. Therefore, we can see from the compiling system and the purpose that “The dictionary focuses on functions and meanings, highlights the principle of practicality as well.” What is worth noticing is that there are hardly any idioms in the dictionary, because embodying them is almost useless for beginners (especially for those who don’t study in China), and sometimes it just provokes a feeling against it.

***e. Emphasis on traditional Bulgarian words***

As a bilingual dictionary, it seems that it focuses more on the function of Chinese learning, since the editor emphasize “In order to help Bulgarian undergraduates learn Chinese as well as help Chinese undergraduates study Bulgarian.” However the basic point of the dictionary is Bulgarian. We can see the fact not only from the order of arrangement of Bulgarian, Chinese and Pinyin, but also in the selection of entries. For example, under one of the secondary semantic category, “women clothes”, there are almost ten items of types of skirts.

连衣裙（连衫裙）、花的连衫裙、印花布的连衫裙、绸的连衫裙、雅致的连衫裙、露颈的连衫裙、赴舞会的连衫裙、打褶的连衫裙、紧腰的连衫裙

Under the influence of Bulgarian life culture, the type of dress is more specifically classified in Bulgarian compared with Chinese. As another example, “候补博士”, a word which is commonly used in Russian and the Middle East meaning a special type of doctor. Because Bulgaria once had been ruled by Turkey for over five hundred years and Turkey’s way of life influenced Bulgarians a lot, a great number of words here are with remarkable Bulgarian features, such as “土耳其咖啡”, “用小勺儿搅茶”, etc. There are still many Turkish living in Bulgaria. Bulgarian tea is different from Chinese tea and their way of drinking tea is obviously affected by the way of drinking coffee. In another case, abundant words and phrases about “roast”, “decoct”, and “fry” are also closely related to Bulgarians’ living habits. However, fewer items reflect Chinese cultural characteristics in the dictionary, this phenomenon may be related to the main group to use it and where the dictionary was written.

In a word, *The Classified Dictionary for Bulgarian and Chinese* is more than a checking tool. This readable book was compiled from the point of language expression.

## 2. Pinyin, morphology and grammar

Pinyin, grammar and morphology are listed in the appendix of *The Classified Dictionary for Bulgarian and Chinese*. Unlike most dictionaries, this difference is one of the prominent manifestations of this learners' dictionary.

**a. Pinyin.** In this part, the editor makes a comparison between Pinyin and 26 English letters first, and then arranges Pinyin in alphabetical order, inserting those out of 26 letters into the line, thus informing a form below:

a, b, c, ch, d, e, ê, f, g, h, i, i<sub>1</sub>(zh, ch, sh, r), i<sub>2</sub>(z, c, s), j, k, l, m, n, ng, o, p, q, r, (-r), s, sh, t, u, ü, (w), x, (y), z, zh.

Then the editor makes a comparison between Pinyin and Bulgarian letters. This method is of great help for learners in alphabetic language countries, especially for those who are familiar with English. Finally, there is a presentation about Chinese tone features as well as the combination law of Chinese initials and vowels. Aimed at Chinese tone, this part embodies "fifth degree notation".

**b. Morphology.** Firstly, the Chinese words are divided into three classes: monosyllabic words like "人", disyllables like "城市", "记者" and polysyllables (most of them are loanwords) like "盘尼西林". Secondly, typical examples are given to show structure rules of Chinese compound words. Learners will realize language structure spontaneously during the comparison of meaning of words between two languages, such as "木头桌子", "说明书". Explanations, however, are abandoned. The connotation of this part is wider than that in China, including the following:

词缀、助词（了、着、来着、过）、动词重叠、被动标记词、系动词、动补复合词、形容词重叠、量词及量词重叠、代词（人称、物主、指示、疑问）、否定词、语气词、拟声词

Examples of phrases and sentences in both Chinese and Bulgarian rather than compound or function words only are giving to make this presentation of morphology, such as "重重地给我一拳" (adjective reduplication), "本本都很好" (classifier reduplication).

**c. Syntax.** It's an abundant part which lists grammar points but pursues no systematicness. First, it provides several main types of phrases, such as coordinate phrase, modifier-noun phrase, verb-object phrase, verb-complement

phrase, idiom, etc. It's worth noticing that the dictionary focuses on verb- object phrases in different semantic relations and lists them as well, such as “做饭”、“抽烟斗”、“晒太阳”. Besides, it makes a separate clause for topic sentence, for example, “成绩不错-他成绩不错”. Second, it introduces sentence categories which are, in order, declarative sentence, interrogative sentences, imperative sentence and exclamatory sentence, every category has its own subclass and example sentences. Finally, there is a part of relational structure, like “不是……就是……”、“不但……而且……”、“无论……也……”、“非……不可”, etc.

After reading this dictionary, we find that language points are precisely chosen in part of syntax. A small part with a huge amount of information and every point has its one-to-one correspondence between Chinese and Bulgarian must be very helpful to beginners. However, why does the dictionary take so much detailed grammar items down? We believe this phenomenon is concerned with Bulgarian's language teaching tradition. Though China, Europe and America have a trend of overlook grammar, Bulgaria instruction still put grammar teaching into a prominent position. So then, it's not hard to understand why *The Classified Dictionary for Bulgarian and Chinese* includes so much grammar items but still named “dictionary”. Besides, practicability is one of the most important rules during the edit of *The Classified Dictionary for Bulgarian and Chinese*. It is also a vital reason why the editor breaks the traditional conception of dictionary and makes it like this.

### Chapter Three: Disadvantages

One of the most remarkable traits of the entry is selecting them based on free association, which is open and dynamic. From a practical point of view, it's an advantage. From a systematic point of view, it's a disadvantage. When compiling a dictionary, every lexicographer will try to exhaust every word. But this dictionary, however, embodies too much temporary structures that it not only increases the randomness, but also reduces the scientificity. Deficiencies are as follows:

1. Lack of classification. The dictionary only classified object, attribute and movement, reflected in a corresponding of noun, adjective and verb. Semantic categories like “Orientation”, “implement” and “pattern”, which play a vital role in accurate language expression, are failed to take into account.

2. How to deal with some subjects is worth more carefully ponder and checkout since the dictionary didn't follow the standard in some aspect. For example, the dictionary didn't follow pinyin completely when dealing with tones. Pinyin requests that the four tones should be written on the essential

vowel. But *The Classified Dictionary for Bulgarian and Chinese* stipulates stiffly that the tones be written on the first letter of the vowel. Obviously, this unique stipulation is made for the sake of foreign students. If “i” is the head vowel of a compound vowel, then tone symbols like “ˉ ˊ ˋ ˋˊ” would be written on the top and the dot above “i” still remains (because it’s hard to type like that using computer, this article takes the dot out, such as “jīe”). Chinese scholars once came up with this idea in teaching Chinese as a second language, but if amend only in Chinese teaching, remain Pinyin as what it likes, we will receive good effect in a short time but great troubles in a long run. Textbooks and dictionaries published in China are based on Chinese Pinyin. If we adopt a new standard which is in contradiction with the old one, mess will be made because foreign learners can’t decide which is right. Actually, there is no big problem in teaching learners pinyin as teachers imagined. Chinese syllables are very limited and appear all the time, students will learn how to write them over a period of time. Thus, there is no need to create a new standard in teaching Chinese as a second language.

Another problem is how to deal with an unstressed word. In *The Classified Dictionary for Bulgarian and Chinese*, “子” is translated into “z”, such as “桌子 zhūoz”. This not only didn’t meet the rule that every Chinese syllable must have a vowel, but also didn’t match the actual phonetic value. “的” sometimes are devoiced into “de”, such as “有力的论证 yǒuli de lùnzhèng”, sometimes are devoiced into “d”, such as “狭隘的专家 xiǎài d zhūanjia”. We can’t see what the exact standard is, thus adds complexity in learning.

A few words are inconsistent, for example, “童年” in the subcategory of the catalog, turns to be “儿童时期” on the corresponding page, which is extremely inconvenient to refer to.

3. Since *The Classified Dictionary for Bulgarian and Chinese* was published in the 1960s and all the Chinese characters are handwritten as well as cut blocks for printing, a great number of abandoned simplified characters are embodied, such as “苗念”. Traditional characters also remain a lot, like “青菜湯”, “記憶”, “硬幣”, “繭子” and so on. Besides, substandard words like “月园时” still exist. The problems listed above reveal that it can’t meet the needs of Chinese learning now.

Despite the fact that *The Classified Dictionary for Bulgarian and Chinese* is somehow deficient, it is a magnum opus in an age of lacking Chinese materials in Bulgaria. It is proper to say that the book stands out as one of the notable landmarks in the progress of Chinese teaching in Bulgaria. This dictionary has been published for over half a century but still seldom found in China. I’m lucky enough to find this book during my teaching in Bulgaria, thus writing an article to provide a brief introduction.

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