BOOK REVIEW

Kathy Rooney (English) Kong Qi (Chinese): The English-Chinese Encarta Dictionary 2011

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1 Introduction

The English-Chinese Encarta Dictionary (E-CED) is produced from its mother copy, the 2001 electronic edition of the *Encarta Concise English Dictionary* (ECED). To keep the Dictionary up-to-date, it also added the 5,000 new words in the *Bloomsbury Concise English Dictionary (2005),* the second edition of ECDC. The E-CED is currently the biggest bilingualized English dictionary in the Chinese market compared with its predecessors, the well-known "Big Five" dictionaries by Longman, Oxford, Cambridge, Collins and Macmillan. The E-CED (hereafter the Dictionary) belongs to the dictionaries for advanced learners' category because it reflects the advice of professors and teachers of English on spelling, grammar, syntax and style, and possesses every element a learners' dictionary has: "pronunciation, frequency information, grammar, signpost and menus,… defining style and examples" (Yamada 2013: 197). With 2,238 pages and the size of a desktop dictionary, the Dictionary is not "concise" at all. It provides users with over 90,000 headwords, over 220,000 definitions, more than 650 illustrations, over 600 usage notes, and about 9,000 encyclopedic entries on people and places. All these have Chinese equivalents. The E-CED is a clear example of the fact that the boundary between different types of dictionaries is not as clear as three decades ago: learners' dictionaries have more entries and encyclopedic information, while monolingual desktop dictionaries have added more information to meet the needs of non-native English users or learners worldwide.

   The aim of the original dictionary (ECED), as the chief editor Dr. Kathy Rooney claims is 'to meet the everyday requirements and expectations of global English

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speakers in the new century' (Rooney 2005: xi). The target readers are "families and college students". The ECED stands out from other dictionaries of the same type in three ways. First, it takes a new view of today's world language. Drawing on the data from the *Bloomsbury Corpus of World English*, the ECED reflects the fact that the English language does not belong to any nation; it is 'the possession of every individual and community that wishes to use it, wherever they are on the world' (McArthur 1999: xxxii). Sociolinguistic markers are added to words with particular regional meanings, far more than British English and American English. Secondly, the ECED draws on the joint wisdom of a world panel of English professors and teachers with learning problems itemized into 600 usage notes and 700 misspelling panels. Thirdly, in an era of ever-faster communication, the dictionary attempts to provide quick information in every aspect: quick facts, quick literary links, quick definitions and quick usage notes.

2 Macrostructure

Macrostructure is the arrangement of vocabulary or the word list of a dictionary. Dictionaries are products of their age, reflecting the interests, concerns and culture of the time. Lexicographers have to make a judgement about representation of vocabulary of various areas and how well the words are established. According to the editor, Professor Gong Qi of Jinan University in China, the word list of the dictionary is taken from the electronic edition of ECDE (2001) and is supplemented by 5,000 neologisms in the *Bloomsbury Concise English Dictionary* (2005), therefore it has a more comprehensive coverage of neologisms, compared to other learner's dictionaries. Given that 'scientific words have become part of everyday life' (Preface), the latest terms in science and technology, especially those from the internet were taken as part of the lexicon. Frequently used shortenings in online communities were also selected, such as *e.o.m.* (end of message).

The E-CED updated the entry list with new political figures, during its seven-year translation process, for example, Gordon Brown (*b.*1944), British Prime Minister (2007–2010); David Cameron (*b.*1951), British Prime Minister (2010-); Barack Hussein Obama (*b.*1961), the 44th American President (2009-); and Ban Ki-moon (*b.*1944), South Korean statesman and Secretary General of the United Nations (2007-). Compared to entries relating to famous individuals, additional neologisms relating to new social events and emergent technologies seem to be limited. For instance, podcasting and plasma display are very important technologies that started in the early 2000s, but the Dictionary does not include them. The online community Twitter was set up in 2006 and by the time the Dictionary was published in 2011 it had millions of users. The definition of *twitter* in the Dictionary has only one sense: "a loudspeaker used to reproduce high-frequency sounds, e.g., in a hi-fi system". The entry *WiFi* is defined as "a certificate trademark assuring the interoperability of wireless local area network product". However, its most accepted meaning today is, according to Wikipedia, 'a technology that allows an electronic device to exchange data or connect to the internet wirelessly'. When the Dictionary is revised, new meanings of *blackberry* and *apple* should also be included.

3 Microstructure

'A dictionary's microstructure refers to the layout and organization of the individual entry.' (Jackson 2002: 79). The ECED follows lexicographic conventions in its microstructure with spelling, pronunciation, meaning, examples of use, advice on grammar and usage and the origin of word. What is special of this reference work is its effort to make the lexicographic information easy to find, easy to understand and easy to use. Targeting digital natives (Prensky 2001), the entries provide information with speed, the most innovative and salient characteristics of the ECED. The feature is presented in the following functions:

1. A lightning bolt symbol ⚡ is used to indicate entries of high-tech neologisms not only with new coinages, e.g., *sudoku*, but also old words with new senses, e.g., *cookie, domain, dot.* New words or new meanings of old words can be located quickly.

2. SPELLCHECK and MISSPELLINGS. The marking of misspelled words in the Dictionary is unique. The first type is a signpost of SPELLCHECK. It warns users of confusing homophones with a notably friendly tone of voice, e.g., "Do not confuse *storey* with *story*, which has a similar sound. Beware: your spellchecker will not catch this error". The warning on homonyms and spellcheckers can catch readers' attention. While a SPELLCHECK note is under the correct entry word, a MISSPELLING is listed as an individual entry, printed in bolded grey and crossed. For example, misspelling *stretch* is placed after the entry *stream of consciousness*, placed as:

   [误]应为 stretch

   which is translated from the 'incorrect spelling of stretch' from the original dictionary. The correct form *stretch* is placed after 49 entries, not very convenient for users to find. There are about 700 misspellings; each takes an entry, such as

   [误]应为 belief
   [误]应为 believe
   [误]应为 beginning

   Spelling is not a process of memorizing, but a language skill, in which the sound knowledge plays a crucial role (Firth and Ralston 2000). The separation of spelling errors and notes of confusing homophones distinguishes different types of spelling mistakes and can be noticed or remembered with ease.

3. *Quick Facts*. Encyclopedic entries are normally long. To be quick, the Dictionary summarizes key ideas of these entries with clear labels such as *key dates, Key locations, Key elements, Key figures, Key publications, Key technologies and Key developments.* Users can obtain main information easily and decide if they need to go further for the item. For example, the entry "*genetic modification*" describes eight key stages of GM such as when DNA structure was established, when genes were decoded, and the time of the first human insulin protein produced in recombinant E etc. It also introduces key developments in medical and non-medical areas.

4. *Quick Literary Links.* The dictionary provides quick information to some world famous literature works and their Chinese titles, making it easier for Chinese users to match the original English master piece. For example, it contains the titles of all the 34 plays by William Shakespeare and a brief introduction to these plays.

5. *USAGE* Usage notes are common in dictionaries targeting at students. Based on the suggestions by 320 teachers and editors from across the world, the ECED includes over 600 short notes on the most commonly confused words. For example, a set of synonyms: *wordy, verbose, long-winded, rambling, prolix* and *diffuse*. The note not only provides CORE MEANING of the group: 'too long or not concisely expressed', but also clearly informs users of the differences between the synonyms, which is very useful for productive use of the words.

The USAGE note under the entry *why* reads "since critics disagree as to whether *reason why* is redundant, the safest course is to avoid using it in formal writing: *The reason the experiment failed is that our test procedures are flawed* rather than *The reason why the experiment failed is that our test procedures are flawed."* Is this a correct guide to users? I searched into three online corpora of academic writing: British Academic Written English Corpus (BAWE), academic sections of the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) and Corpus of Research Articles (CRA), and found *reason why* has a high frequency in formal writing, as shown in Table 1.

The observation of the collocates of *reason why* shows that when the phrase is proceeded by *no, any* and *one* the relative adverb *why* can hardly be omitted.

The style and register markers of the ECED differ from other dictionaries. While most dictionaries only use 'archaic' for out-dated lexical items, the word currency in the ECED has two types: *archaic* marks the words used since before the World War II, and *dated* refers to these used between 1945 and 1990 but no longer part of the current inventory. Register types in the Dictionary also have more categories such as *disapproving, babytalk* and *nonstandard.* For users to understand more cultural aspects, offensiveness is further leveled to *insult*, *offensive* and *taboo*. Although without context, it is hard to judge offensive terms, these indicators can help users to understand the pragmatic values of the terms.

6. *Geographic Label.* As claimed by the editor, the ECED represents world English. It not only labels British and American English, but also distinguishes other varieties of English including *UK, US, Can, Aus, NZ, Scotland, Hawaii, Hong Kong, Malaysia, E Africa* … totally 32. A notable example is that the word *pak choi* is labeled (Hong Kong) with its variants *bok choy* (US) and *pak choi* (UK). However, it is surprising to see that there is no label for Indian English, which is an 'established variety' of World Englishes 'with an incipient or actual standard' (McArthur 1999: 461). The regional label *S Asia* does not represent a recognized variety of English.

Table 1 Frequency of *reason why* used in academic corpora

Corpus	Size (mil)	Freq of reason why		Freq of the reason why	
		Raw freq	Per mil	Raw freq	Per mil
BAWE	8.3	96	11.6	18	2.1
COCA (acad)	79.3	946	11.9	228	2.9
CRA	5.6	256	45.7	122	21.8

4 Translation

The bilingualization in dictionary allows the language learning process in two directions: to learn English in English, and to learn English in one's mother tongue. With all the entries translated into Chinese, the E-CED can meet both the decoding and encoding needs of Chinese users. The translation team of the bilingual ECED no doubt faced challenges of finding equivalents for neologisms. A brief glance at a number of entries shows that the translation is clear and professional; the compilers rendered the entries by "following the authoritative sources" or "sticking to the translation popularly accepted" (Gong 2011: 11).

The bilingualized version did not fully reproduce its original copy. Modifications were made to meet the target users', in this case, the Chinese users' needs. For example, pronunciation symbols in the ECED were developed in-house at Bloomsbury, the bilingualized version replaced them with the international phonetic symbols which have been taught in the education system in China for years. For example, the pronunciation symbol of word *glance* is/gla:ns/in the E-CED, not/glaanss/in the original copy.

5 Suggestions for improvement

As Landau noticed, "in spite of all the care that goes into its preparation, the first edition of any dictionary contains numerous errors" (1989: 207). The ECED is of no exception. The bilingualized version corrected the errors during the translation process such as spelling errors, case errors and entry mismatching. In this sense, the bilingualized version also has room for improvement.

The Dictionary compilers seem to have selectively avoided the translation of some high-tech new words especially some abbreviations and shortenings. It is acceptable not to translate the abbreviations of URL address names such as *cn.* (for China) and *dk.* (for Denmark), but leaving frequently used new words in online communities needs further reconsideration, for example, *e.o.m* (end of message), *BTW, btw* (by the way), *IME* (in my experience) and *IMHO* (in my humble opinion). It should not be difficult to translate these frequently used new words into Chinese, and many users may need this type of information. The text rendering in some entries does not reach the expectation of users because of "bilingual lexicographers' unfamiliarity with the source language and culture, particularly with recent development and changes" (Yong and Peng 2007: 168).

Yong and Peng treat the bilingual dictionary as a system of intercultural communication (2007), which is a three-way relationship of *compiler*, *dictionary context* and *user* incorporating into a unified coherent framework. Translating a desktop monolingual dictionary targeting world users can benefit advanced learners with abundant linguistic and cultural reading. Chinese is the language of the most populous nation on earth, and English is the world's most widely used global lingua franca. The learners of both languages are increasing. The bilingualized *E-CED* can take care of Chinese learners/users with different degrees of English proficiency, accommodating their skills and needs. It may also help other users who need to translate English into Chinese. Although electronic dictionaries, particularly online dictionaries and mobile dictionaries have devoured the market of reference science, in my opinion, the hard copy of E-CED is a profound achievement within English dictionaries for world learners and users.

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