

ABC (Alphabetically Based Computerized) Chinese-English dictionary. By John DeFrancis. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996. Pp. xix, 897 + radical charts. \$28.00.

Comprehensive, practical and reliable Chinese-English dictionaries are few and far between, so John DeFrancis's *ABC Chinese-English dictionary* is definitely a welcome addition to current offerings.

Unfortunately, the alphabetic arrangement of this work is, in the reviewer's opinion, also its biggest drawback. While compounds sharing the same character are usually grouped under the same entry, D arranges all entries, including compounds, strictly alphabetically, disregarding morpheme boundaries. And while this may reflect an ideal of treating Chinese primarily as a spoken rather than written language, it also goes against native habit and intuition. To find all the compounds beginning with *shí*, 'to realize', for example, you must plow through numerous unrelated compounds with first elements also pronounced *shí*, in all the four tones, i.e. all the 70-some homophones. This makes using the work burdensome and time-consuming if you are doing anything but looking up a very specific compound you already know how to pronounce.

D draws on other dictionaries, apparently most heavily on the standard-setter for the whole field, Wu Jingrong's *A Chinese-English dictionary*, of which a revised edition has recently come out (Wei Dongya (ed.) 1995. Beijing: Foreign Language and Research Press). Yet, in the interest of producing a conveniently-sized volume, D's lexicon omits quite a bit of information and detail included in Wu's work. For example, under *chāoyuè*, D gives only 'exceed'; in Wu you find: 'surmount, overstep; transcend; surpass'; and three example sentences. This leads one to conclude that D may be fine for beginning and intermediate learners of Chinese, but a serious scholar or translator might as well save time and go straight to Wu when help is needed.

Since D uses simplified characters, looking up characters in traditional form is a bit more trouble than it might be (you must use a special index, though the traditional form is given upon the first appearance of each character/morpheme). The book features a number of useful appendices, including a compact Romanization table, though not as many as Wu's work. Some of D's conventions, e.g. asterisking high frequency morphemes for each syllable sequence, seem to be more for the sake of computer file management than reader need.

Missing from both D and Wu are expressions particular to the Mandarin spoken in Taiwan, Singapore, and other non-PRC Chinese-speaking areas.

The D work has the advantage of extremely clear print on high-quality paper, something many Chinese editions lack.

One cannot but feel the highest admiration for someone willing to take on the momentous task of producing in a conscientious way any kind of Chinese dictionary, and this work is truly admirable for this and many other reasons. D had limited resources to work with and did a positively remarkable job. But I hope that many dictionary users take him up on the invitation in his 'Editor's call to action' to improve and amplify future editions, for the sake of everybody involved in Chinese studies. [Karen Steffen Chung, *National Taiwan University*.]