

# Nice gadgets to help you to learn Chinese:

**Problem setting:** As a beginner in learning Chinese one of the most difficult issues is to read Chinese characters or Hànzì (汉字). Using radicals to find the character (“the traditional way”) works pretty well, but is nevertheless a very time consuming process. On a PC/Mac there is at least one excellent program I know of, namely Wénlín (文林) ([www.wenlin.com](http://www.wenlin.com)). Although somewhat costly, surely one of the best programs available. The big downfall however lies in the fact that you currently can only use it only on PC/Notebook/Tablet PC but not on Windows Mobile or the Iphone.

So in order to be able use an electronic dictionary everywhere I looked out for a practical gadget that should be able to perform the following operations while being as small as possible.

- 1) Draw Hànzì (汉字)
- 2) Type in Pīnyīn (拼音)
- 3) Type in English

(the device should return Hànzì (汉字), Pīnyīn (拼音) and English. German would also be nice).

## Common characteristics

There are two types of portables – one with keyboard and one without, I preferred the latter one because it is somewhat smaller and fits nicer into the pocket. All of them have a pen to input Hànzì (汉字) and use the big Oxford dictionary for English – the menus are in Chinese. All offer additional services in Chinese. Some characteristics:

### Portables:

#### Besta N910

has German Language Modul



#### Meijin e+e [www.iq168.com](http://www.iq168.com)



#### Pleco [www.pleco.com](http://www.pleco.com)

(software) runs on Windows Mobile, Palm, iPhone



If you want to learn more about how to use dictionaries and what you can do with these little helpers, you might find a presentation I did once useful:

#### 2009 01 29 Sinologie Wien, Wörterbücher Nestyak Part1v3, 2v3, 3v3

part 1 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0w-JiDxrULI> part one is mainly about classic (paper) dictionaries

part 2 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Za9Mj9xmSJ4> Wen Lin, start of Pleco Dict

part 3 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=09sMSP0jM6w> Pleco Dict, more detailed explanation.

(It is, however, in German, the PDF of the presentation is named “2009-01-27 WB-Präsentation.ppt” – [“google it”](#))

Some additional links to start with: [www.chinaboard.de](http://www.chinaboard.de), [www.leo.org](http://www.leo.org) (Dictionaries, German), <http://www.nciku.com/> (Dictionary, English), [www.adsotrans.com](http://www.adsotrans.com) (translator), [www.zhongwen.com](http://www.zhongwen.com) (Chinese Characters & Culture)

**Final note:** There are plenty of devices that are far cheaper but do not allow Hànzì (汉字) input by drawing. I guess that Chinese simply don't need to input Hànzì (汉字) because they simply can read all (important) Hànzì (汉字) after school. However, a Chinese learner does not.

**P.S.** My personal favorite for those that own a Palm/Windows Mobile/PDA or Apple iPhone is Pleco. It is a very good dictionary with handwriting input. Have a look at: [www.pleco.com](http://www.pleco.com). It also provides you with really useful flash card learning software for Chinese (maybe not yet in the iPhone version).