From User Feedback on Chinese-English Translation and Dictionary Tools, to DeepSeek as the Ultimate Translator and Lexicographer

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Abstract

In the AI era, the integration of artificial intelligence into lexicography and language service technologies has become inevitable. Lexicographers and language technology developers are actively exploring ways to embed AI into their research and products to remain relevant and competitive. This study investigates how frequent users of Chinese-English reference tools perceive current translation software and dictionaries, as well as their expectations for future improvements. User reviews reveal that while current reference tools provide decoding functions, there is still a significant unmet demand for encoding support. Questionnaire results further show that users strongly expect improvements in electronic dictionaries and AI tools, especially regarding cultural adaptability, specialised terminology, and the quality of example sentences. These findings offer new insights into the evolving needs of dictionary users in the AI era. Our study aims to support the development of next-generation language tools that are efficient, user-friendly, and culturally adaptive, particularly for Chinese users learning English as a second language. To this end, we also evaluate the DeepSeek-R1 model for generating advanced Chinese-English translations and lexicographic content. Compared to Google Translate and DeepL, DeepSeek-R1 shows superior performance in handling specialised terms, syntactic accuracy, and textual coherence. Furthermore, in the specific task of providing in-depth explanations of specialised terms, although GPT-4o performs competently, DeepSeek-R1 demonstrates a stronger lexicographic capability than both Gemini-2.5 and GPT-4o.

Keywords: Paper lexicography, Dictionary Apps, Machine translation, Users of Chinese-English translation and dictionary tools, Pedagogical functionality, Cultural sensitivity, Artificial Intelligence, Gemini-2.5, GPT-4o, DeepSeek-R1

1. GenAI in Translation and Lexicography

To stay relevant, dictionary compilers and language technology developers must capitalise on AI-driven tools to create innovative and user-centred solutions. The integration of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) into dictionary writing systems (de Schryver & Joffe, 2023) as well as dictionary compilation processes (de Schryver, 2023), and language service technologies (Fu & Liu, 2024), has indeed significantly enhanced the efficiency of meeting user demands (Rees and Lew, 2024; Savoldi et al., 2025). This advancement poses substantial challenges to traditional dictionary-making practices, including the production of paper dictionaries and manually compiled resources. DeepSeek is a highly efficient reasoning model that rivals top Large Language Models (LLMs) like ChatGPT and Gemini, offering open-source access, full technical transparency, and low usage costs (Poo, 2025). Chen et al. (2025) highlight DeepSeek's unique advantage in efficiently generating large volumes of information to support lexicographic work, particularly in compiling Chinese learners' dictionaries.

This study, therefore, investigates user preferences and cultural attitudes toward various language-service tools by collecting feedback from Chinese dictionary users. The analysis focuses on translation software, mainstream dictionary apps and paper dictionaries, with comparative insights drawn from surveys on the use and perception of online translation tools, digital dictionaries and traditional paper dictionaries.

2. User Reviews in the Era of GenAI

This study analysed over 1,500 user reviews, covering both paper dictionaries and reference applications. While these reviews offered valuable insights into users' spontaneous feedback, they were often brief and lacked contextual detail. Only the best were therefore withheld.

The goal was to identify user preferences and dictionary usage patterns. Prior to generating word clouds, the reviews were pre-processed to remove common functional words to enhance the clarity of the results. The prominence of positive terms such as "好" (good) across the visualisations indicates generally favourable user attitudes toward these tools. The frequent appearance of "翻译" (translation) suggests that translation remains a core user expectation. Additionally, the prevalence of the term "单词" (word) highlights the centrality of vocabulary-related activities in user interactions.

Building on these findings, the study further examined user behaviours related to vocabulary engagement, distinguishing between word lookup and word memorisation. A fuzzy keyword search revealed that word lookup was more commonly mentioned in reviews of free applications and paper dictionaries, while word memorisation was more prevalent in reviews of paid applications. This suggests that different platforms support distinct user practices: free applications and paper dictionaries are primarily used for quick lexical consultations, whereas paid applications are more often used for systematic vocabulary learning.

User needs were categorised into productive and receptive types. Productive needs encompassed expression support (e.g., collocations, usage, example sentences) and form confirmation (e.g., spelling, pronunciation, grammar). Receptive needs included meaning comprehension and translation equivalence. Analysis across platforms revealed that users of free applications primarily focus on receptive needs, especially translation, while users of paid applications exhibit a more balanced distribution between receptive and productive needs, indicating deeper engagement with language-learning tasks. Paper-dictionary users demonstrate relatively limited engagement, with a slight preference for receptive needs.

Overall, the findings suggest that while users continue to rely heavily on reference tools for decoding language, there is a growing expectation for tools—particularly AI-enhanced ones—to also support productive functions such as expression and accuracy.

3. Questionnaire Results in the Era of GenAI

To obtain more targeted and comprehensive responses from a clearly-defined user group, focusing on an analysis of translation and dictionary tools, a high-level questionnaire was created, yielding 60 valid responses.

Our findings suggest that while online translation tools and digital dictionaries are progressively replacing paper dictionaries, they have not yet achieved full substitution. Digital tools excel in immediacy, accessibility, and multi-language support but exhibit limitations in pedagogical functionalities and cultural sensitivity. Paper dictionaries retain their value in educational support and for perceived authority, which remain challenging for digital tools to replicate fully.

The analysis of the questionnaire also contributes to the understanding of dictionary users' evolving needs and preferences in the AI era. When selecting digital or AI-assisted language tools, users overwhelmingly prioritise access to usage information, including examples and collocations, over isolated definitions. This preference supports Hanks's (2002) argument that word meaning is best conveyed through patterns of real-life usage rather than through static semantic inventories. Bilingual translation functions were identified as the second most valued feature, likely influenced by the participants' linguistic backgrounds and the dominance of English in academia. Multilingual support was also regarded as important, particularly for international users in multilingual environments such as Belgium with three official languages. The primary contexts for tool usage were academic reading and writing, with users mainly relying on these tools for meaning comprehension, translation, and writing assistance—highlighting a task-oriented, purpose-driven engagement in academic settings.

Regarding AI tools, most respondents reported frequent use of ChatGPT, followed by DeepSeek, which has rapidly gained popularity among Chinese-speaking users. By delineating the strengths and limitations of both digital and paper tools, it offers actionable insights for developers of language technologies. The findings underscore the importance of combining AI-driven features, such as real-time translation and personalised learning, as participants generally viewed AI tools as effective in providing accurate translations and enhancing language proficiency. But the responses noted a relative weakness in cultural adaptability, suggesting that current systems lack sufficient sensitivity to sociocultural and pragmatic nuances. Key areas for improvement include the need for more specialised terminology for academic and professional domains, the provision of more authentic and pedagogically-useful example sentences, and the inclusion of cultural background explanations to enrich semantic depth and intercultural understanding.

As we can see, rather than viewing these resources as static reference materials, users now expect dynamic, multifunctional platforms that deliver linguistic precision, rich contextualisation and adaptive user experiences. Notably, the growing interest in tools like DeepSeek suggests that emerging models may hold great potential in meeting these evolving needs, particularly in providing culturally-sensitive and context-aware lexicographic support.

4. For Translation: DeepSeek-R1 ascends while Google Translate and DeepL descend

Building on these insights, this study focuses on DeepSeek as a representative next-generation language model. Our aim is to explore how such an intelligent system can contribute to the development of efficient, user-friendly, and culturally-adaptive language tools, especially for Chinese users learning English as a second language. Specifically, we investigate DeepSeek's ability to generate high-quality Chinese-English translations and lexicographic data that go beyond surface-level equivalence to address deeper cultural and contextual nuances.

The starting point of this analysis is a brief financial news report published by Xinhua News Agency, reproduced in Addendum A. This newspaper article announced the departure of the first China-Europe freight train from Yiwu in the Yangtze River Delta at the beginning of the 2025 Chinese New Year. This event is not only economically significant but also culturally symbolic, frequently mentioned in conversations among both overseas Chinese and foreign individuals who are interested in China's international connectivity. Such topics naturally emerge in multilingual and cross-cultural exchanges, making them valuable cases for studying machine translation and lexicographic processing.

The source text was translated using three different machine translation systems: Google Translate, DeepL and DeepSeek. See Figures 1 & 2 and the opening section of Addendum B. The comparison focuses on readability, terminological accuracy, structural clarity, and the translation of culturally embedded expressions, particularly the term "一条龙" (yi tiao long).

Figure 1: Translation result from Google Translate

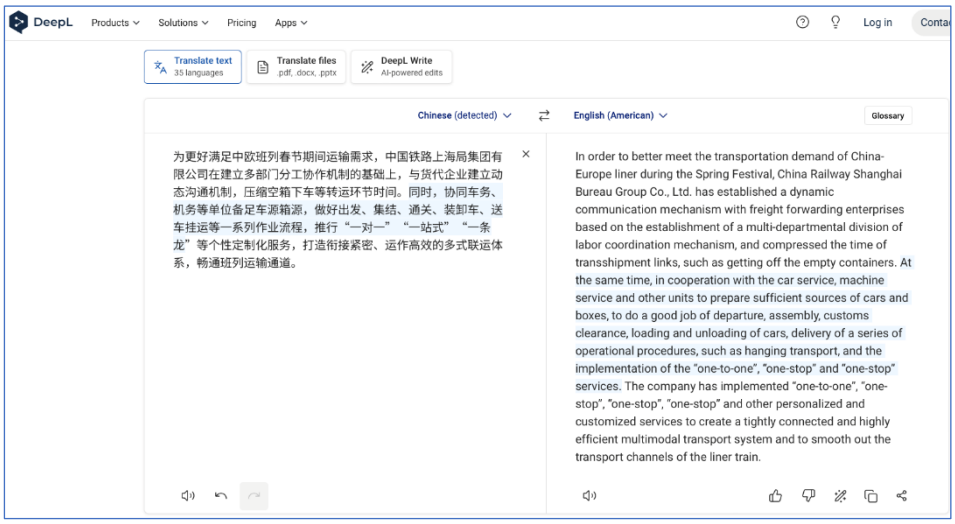

Figure 2: Translation result from DeepL

In terms of domain-specific terminology, DeepSeek demonstrates a more accurate and internationally-accepted choice of expressions. For instance, for the phrase “中欧班列 (zhong ou ban lie)”, DeepSeek translated the term as “China-Europe freight trains”, which correctly identifies the train as a freight service. In comparison, Google Translate rendered it as “China–Europe train”, omitting the crucial detail that these trains are exclusively for cargo transportation, which may lead to potential misunderstanding. DeepL’s version is even less accurate, using the term “China-Europa liner”, which is misleading. According to the COBUILD dictionary, a liner is “a large ship in which people travel long distances, especially on vacation” – see Figure 3. This definition is entirely unrelated to the logistics context and demonstrates a severe lexical error that diverges from the intended meaning of the original term. Even more important, DeepSeek’s handling of the three service-related terms—“一对一”, “一站式” and “一条龙”—is particularly noteworthy. DeepSeek accurately differentiates between these terms by translating them respectively as “one-to-one”, “one-stop” and “end-to-end”. The choice of “end-to-end” as the translation for “一条龙” is especially appropriate, as it is widely recognised in both international-logistics and information-technology sectors to denote a fully integrated, seamless service process. DeepSeek’s ability to capture this industry standard expression demonstrates a clear understanding of domain-specific language. In contrast, both Google Translate and DeepL fail to make this distinction, frequently misusing or redundantly applying “one-stop” for multiple concepts (“一站式” and “一条龙”). This not only diminishes the semantic precision of their translations but also overlooks the nuanced service structures described in the source text.

Moreover, when translating phrases slightly longer than terminology, particularly those describing transportation procedures, DeepSeek consistently adopts more concise, precise, and internationally-standardised expressions. For example, DeepSeek uses the term “train dispatching”, which aligns closely with the terminology commonly employed in the railway transportation industry. In contrast, Google Translate renders this concept as “delivery and transportation”, a vague expression that fails to accurately convey the specific operational step of dispatching trains and may cause ambiguity in a professional logistics context. Another example is DeepSeek’s translation of “unloading empty containers”, which

offers a clear and industry-appropriate description of the process. DeepL, however, mistranslates this phrase as "getting off the train with empty containers", which is not only linguistically awkward but also potentially misleading, as it introduces an unintended image of passengers disembarking rather than accurately describing a freight operation. DeepSeek's ability to avoid such literal and contextually inappropriate renderings further demonstrates its superior capacity to handle specialised phrases in the domain of logistics and transportation. These examples illustrate that DeepSeek not only maintains terminological accuracy at the word level but also excels in conveying procedural clarity at the phrase level, which is essential for the accurate transmission of technical content across languages.

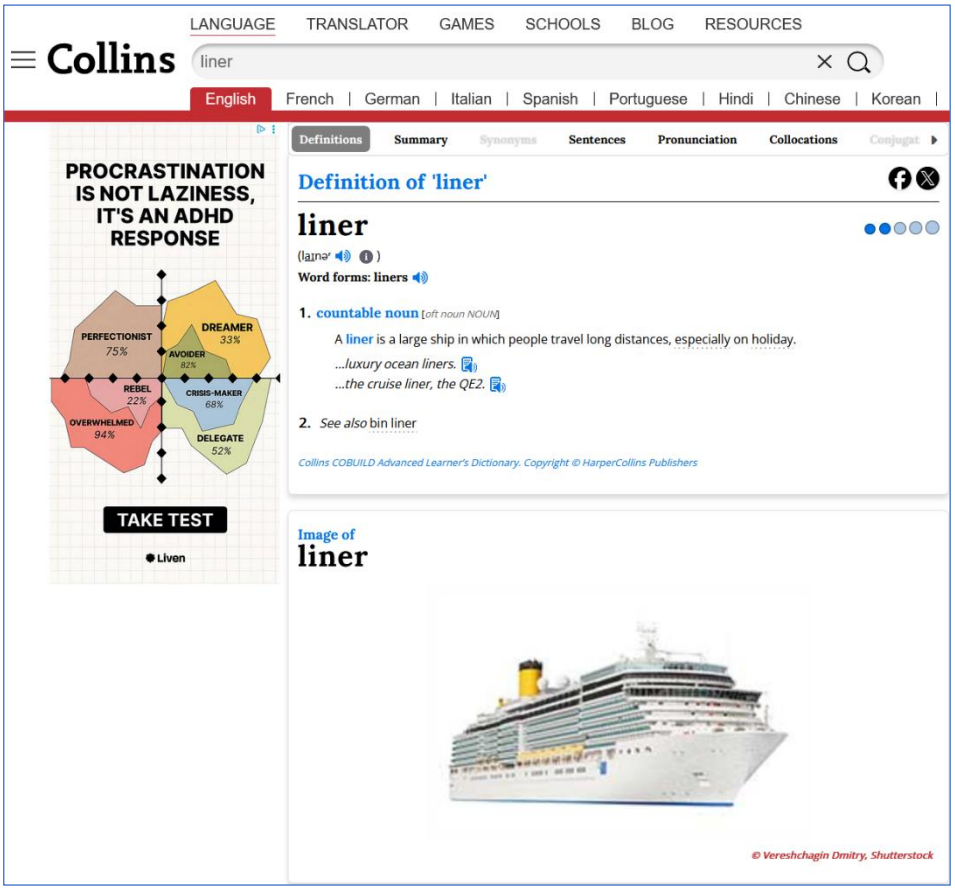

Figure 3: Entry for *liner* in COBUILD

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Furthermore, when translating the same paragraph, both Google Translate and DeepL produced only three sentences, with the longest sentence in Google Translate containing 59 words and the longest in DeepL containing 63 words. The Google Translate version shows basic semantic completeness but suffers from syntactic awkwardness and over-literal translation. For instance, the phrase "on the basis of establishing a multi-department division of labor and cooperation mechanism" demonstrates a direct syntactic mapping from Chinese that is not idiomatic in English. DeepL's version is more problematic. Its translation contains semantic errors such as "getting off the train with empty containers". It not only distorts the original meaning, but also produces unnecessarily long and cumbersome sentences. Such excessive sentence length further compromises readability and makes the translation more difficult to process for the target audience. DeepSeek provides five shorter and simpler sentences, resulting in improved readability and a more user-friendly structure for international readers.

From a text-cohesion perspective, the DeepSeek translation exhibits superior organisation and clarity in the sequencing of information. While DeepSeek does not rigidly adhere to the original two-sentence paragraph structure of the Chinese source text, it intelligently segments the content based on semantic units, resulting in more natural and readable English expressions. The translation effectively employs appropriate cohesive devices—like *this aims to*, *such as*, *at the same time*, *including*, *additionally* and *creating*—to guide the logical progression of the text. These connectors facilitate the smooth presentation of causal and sequential relationships between the various operational steps, allowing the reader to easily follow the intended flow of information. In contrast, both Google Translate and DeepL tend to produce translations that suffer from sentence accumulation and fragmented logical structure. Their renditions often lack sufficient cohesion, which may lead to difficulties in understanding the relationships between different parts of the process. DeepSeek's structural decisions thus contribute significantly to its overall translation quality, ensuring both linguistic fluency and conceptual clarity for international audiences.

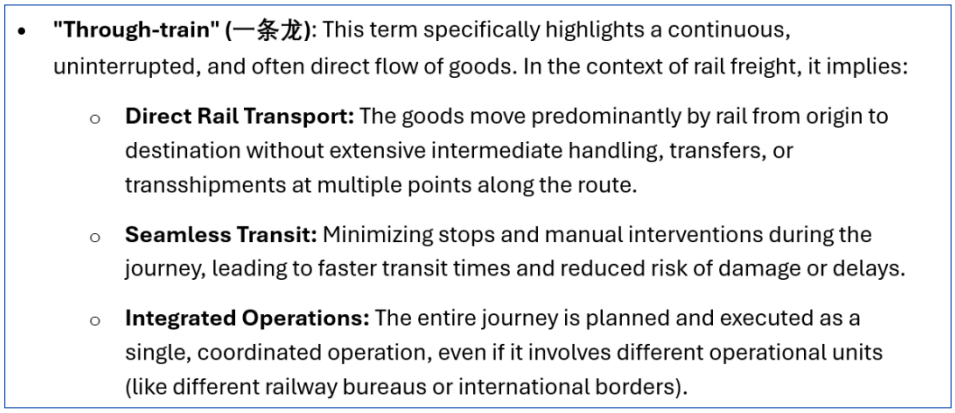
This comparative analysis of machine translation systems reveals that DeepSeek outperforms Google Translate and DeepL in translating complex financial news content involving specialised logistics terminology and culturally embedded phrases. The system's ability to produce fluent, contextually appropriate and terminologically accurate translations makes it particularly valuable for cross-cultural communication and the enhancement of next-generation translation tools, as well as lexicographic descriptions (as we will show next).

5. For Lexicography: DeepSeek-R1 leads both Gemini-2.5 and GPT-4o

Although at least 100 contributions have explored the use of generative AI in lexicography (de Schryver 2026), most of them are centred around OpenAI's **ChatGPT** with 98 mentions, versus only 10 mentions for Google's **Gemini**, 5 mentions for Anthropic's **Claude**, 4 mentions for Meta's **LLaMA**, 3 mentions for Baidu's **Ernie Bot**, and only 1 mention each for 14 others like Mistral's **LeChat**, including a single mention of High-Flyer's **DeepSeek**. Even the very latest article in the field 'merely' contrasts Gemini-2.5 with GPT-4o (de Schryver 2025), although, point taken, it is the very first at-length article that deals with the customisation of an LLM (namely GPT-4o) for lexicographic purposes, expanding an extended abstract that was sadly never delivered at Euralex 2024 (de Schryver 2024). Our study now seriously introduces DeepSeek-R1, a China-developed open-source LLM, into this discussion.

While terms such as "一对一" (one-to-one), "一站式" ("one-stop") and "一条龙" ("end-to-end") are commonly used in Chinese logistics and service industries, their surface-level translations may not fully convey the nuanced, culturally embedded meanings to non-Chinese users. These expressions often carry connotations of efficiency, exclusivity and comprehensive service models that require further cultural and contextual explanation beyond literal translation. (The literal translation of "一条龙" is "one [measure word for long, narrow] dragon".) This highlights a broader challenge in lexicographic work: certain terms, especially those rooted in specific socio-economic or industrial practices, demand deeper interpretation to ensure accurate cross-cultural understanding.

In this regard, we further explored how DeepSeek performs for the lexicographic compilation of culturally nuanced entries. Specifically, we compared the performance of Gemini-2.5 and GPT-4o with DeepSeek-R1. Equivalent prompts were used for all three chatbots. Part of the results can be seen in Figures 4 & 5 and the closing section of Addendum B. We aim to evaluate whether any of (the latest versions of) these three chatbots is capable of generating dictionary definitions that successfully capture both the denotative meanings and the cultural connotations of such complex, context-dependent terms.



- **"Through-train" (一条龙)**: This term specifically highlights a continuous, uninterrupted, and often direct flow of goods. In the context of rail freight, it implies:
  - **Direct Rail Transport:** The goods move predominantly by rail from origin to destination without extensive intermediate handling, transfers, or transshipments at multiple points along the route.
  - **Seamless Transit:** Minimizing stops and manual interventions during the journey, leading to faster transit times and reduced risk of damage or delays.
  - **Integrated Operations:** The entire journey is planned and executed as a single, coordinated operation, even if it involves different operational units (like different railway bureaus or international borders).

Figure 4: Explanation of "一条龙" by Gemini-2.5

3. All-in-One (一条龙)

- **Meaning:** A fully integrated **end-to-end service covering the entire logistics chain** from the point of origin to the final destination.
- **Implication:** This typically includes all stages like picking up goods, transportation, customs clearance, storage, and final delivery — providing a **complete solution without gaps.**
- **Example:** A shipping service that handles the entire journey from a manufacturer's warehouse in China to a store in Europe without the customer needing to arrange any additional steps.

Figure 5: Explanation of "一条龙" by GPT-4o

Notably, DeepSeek-R1 demonstrates a clear advantage from the outset. When translating the term "一条龙", DeepSeek provided "end-to-end" as the corresponding English expression, which is widely accepted in international logistics and transportation contexts to denote an integrated and seamless service chain. In contrast, Gemini-2.5 renders the term as "through-train", a translation that fails to capture the intended service model and instead evokes a transportation-specific image unrelated to the original meaning. Similarly, GPT-4o provides "all-in-one", which, while somewhat closer, still lacks the established industrial precision and could potentially be misunderstood as referring to bundled products rather than process-oriented services.

Furthermore, DeepSeek's response to the query "What is meant by [term]?" closely resembles the structure and descriptive clarity expected in lexicographic entries:

> "This refers to a comprehensive service that covers the entire process from start to finish. For example, in the context of freight transportation, it would include everything from initial pickup, transportation, customs clearance, and final delivery. The goal is to provide a seamless, hassle-free experience for the customer by managing all aspects of the logistics chain."

Its answer is organised, definition-focused, and enriched with contextual explanations, reflecting characteristics typically found in professionally curated dictionary content. It is important to note, however, that GPT-4o shows promising performance when handling non-English languages, as also observed by de Schryver (2025). This suggests that despite its limitations in this particular case, GPT-4o retains potential value for multilingual lexicographic tasks, especially when applied to other language pairs or domains.

These findings highlight DeepSeek's potential as a powerful tool for culturally-sensitive lexicographic applications, offering a promising approach to lexicon development that demands precise cross-cultural understanding. By effectively combining terminological accuracy, contextual appropriateness and cultural nuance, DeepSeek demonstrates its capacity to support not only high-quality translations but also the compilation of dictionary entries that bridge linguistic and cultural gaps. Its performance suggests that chatbots like DeepSeek could play a pivotal role in the next generation of multilingual lexicography, where the ability to handle complex, context-dependent, and culturally embedded terms is essential for meeting the needs of diverse language users worldwide.

6. The Deep Starts to Seek More

Based on DeepSeek's translation performance and its handling of culturally embedded and domain-specific lexicographic terminology in the fields of logistics and transportation, its potential to facilitate cross-cultural understanding is evident. The system not only demonstrates terminological precision but also shows a remarkable ability to capture the socio-cultural nuances that are often lost in more literal translations. Additionally, comparative evaluations with other state-of-the-art LLMs could further clarify DeepSeek's position in the evolving landscape of AI-driven translation and lexicographic tools. However, we acknowledge that the scope of this study is limited, and our evaluation of DeepSeek is constrained to a relatively small set of examples within a specific domain. The present analysis does not aim to claim that DeepSeek is already a fully mature translator and lexicographer. Rather, this study offers an initial exploration that highlights DeepSeek's promising capabilities while recognising that a more comprehensive, systematic, and large-scale assessment is required to validate its broader applicability and long-term reliability. That goal, unsurprisingly, is also the topic of our next series of articles.

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URLs

AdblockPlus: https://adblockplus.org/

Chatbot session with Gemini-2.5: https://g.co/gemini/share/4ae5e05595c0

Chatbot session with GPT-4o: https://chatgpt.com/share/685d3948-8118-8011-9554-f4a3daf637ce

ChatGPT: https://openai.com/

COBUILD: https://www.collinsdictionary.com/

DeepL: https://www.deepl.com/

DeepSeek: https://www.deepseek.com/

Firefox: https://www.mozilla.org/

Gemini: https://gemini.google.com/

Google Translate: https://translate.google.com/

Addendum A: Newspaper Article

农历新年长三角首趟中欧班列从义乌开出

来源：新华网 2025-01-29 19:25

1 月 29 日凌晨 4 时 40 分许，一趟满载 110 标准箱日用百货、服装鞋袜、汽车配件等出口货物的中欧班列，从铁路义乌西站开出。这趟班列是农历新年长三角开出的首趟中欧班列。

图为等待发车的中欧班列在义乌西站装车现场。（杭州铁路物流中心供图）

为更好满足中欧班列春节期间运输需求，中国铁路上海局集团有限公司在建立多部门分工协作机制的基础上，与货代企业建立动态沟通机制，压缩空箱下车等转运环节时间。同时，协同车务、机务等单位备足车源箱源，做好出发、集结、通关、装卸车、送车挂运等一系列作业流程，推行“一对一”“一站式”“一条龙”等个性定制化服务，打造衔接紧密、运作高效的多式联运体系，畅通班列运输通道。

据统计，2025 年以来，义乌中欧班列已累计开行 89 列、运送货物 9478 标箱，已开辟运输线路 20 条，可通达俄罗斯、哈萨克斯坦、波兰、德国等 50 余个国家。义乌中欧班列（含中亚方向）运送的货品品类也由初期的 1 万余种，增长到目前的 5 万余种，为畅通国内国际“双循环”、促进沿线国家和地区经济 社会发展提供有力支撑。（记者魏一骏）

【责任编辑：马芮】

Source: http://www.news.cn/fortune/20250129/14092897c3b146c1ac62ca1c79e7df1a/c.html

Addendum B: DeepSeek-R1 Chat

New chat

Hello, how are you today?

Hello! I'm just a virtual assistant, so I don't have feelings, but I'm here and ready to help you with whatever you need. How are you doing today? 😊

I'm fine, but I need help with translating Chinese to English.

Of course! I'd be happy to help with translating Chinese to English. Please share the text you'd like translated, and I'll do my best to provide an accurate translation for you. 😊

Here it is: 为更好满足中欧班列春节期间运输需求，中国铁路上海局集团有限公司在建立多部门分工协作机制的基础上，与货代企业建立动态沟通机制，压缩空箱下车等转运环节时间。同时，协同车务、机务等单位备足车源箱源，做好出发、集结、通关、装卸车、送车挂运等一系列作业流程，推行"一对一""一站式""一条龙"等个性定制化服务，打造衔接紧密、运作高效的多式联运体系，畅通班列运输通道。

Here's the translation of the text you provided:

"To better meet the transportation demands of the China-Europe freight trains during the Spring Festival, China Railway Shanghai Group Co., Ltd. has established a dynamic communication mechanism with freight forwarding companies, building on a multi-departmental collaborative mechanism. This aims to reduce the time for transfer processes such as unloading empty containers. At the same time, the company has coordinated with train operations, locomotive departments, and other units to ensure sufficient availability of trains and containers. They have optimized a series of operational processes, including departure, assembly, customs clearance, loading and unloading, and train dispatching. Additionally, they have introduced personalized and customized services such as 'one-to-one,' 'one-stop,' and 'end-to-end' solutions, creating a tightly connected and highly efficient multimodal transport system to ensure smooth operations for the freight train routes."

Let me know if you need further clarification or adjustments! 😊

What is meant by: 'one-to-one,' 'one-stop,' and 'end-to-end' solutions?

Great question! These terms refer to different levels of service customization and efficiency in logistics and transportation. Here's a breakdown of what they mean in this context:

1. **One-to-One (一对一)**:
   This refers to personalized or dedicated services tailored to the specific needs of a single client or shipment. For example, a dedicated team or representative might handle all aspects of a customer's freight needs, ensuring a high level of attention and customization.
2. **One-Stop (一站式)**:
   This means providing all necessary services in a single location or through a single point of contact. Instead of dealing with multiple providers or steps, the customer can access everything they need (e.g., booking, customs clearance, transportation, etc.) through one service provider, simplifying the process and saving time.
3. **End-to-End (一条龙)**:
   This refers to a comprehensive service that covers the entire process from start to finish. For example, in the context of freight transportation, it would include everything from initial pickup, transportation, customs clearance, and final delivery. The goal is to provide a seamless, hassle-free experience for the customer by managing all aspects of the logistics chain.

In summary, these solutions are designed to enhance efficiency, reduce complexity, and provide a more customized and streamlined experience for customers using the China-Europe freight train services. Let me know if you'd like further clarification! 😊