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NEW DICTIONARY TYPES IN CONTEMPORARY RUSSIAN AND FOREIGN THEORETICAL LEXICOGRAPHY

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Abstract

The article analyses the principal models of contemporary lexicography and describes the new dictionary types that have emerged where corpus linguistics, digital technology and cognitive research meet. The classical accounts of L.V.Shcherba, V.V.Morkovkin, Y.N.Karaulov, P.N.Denisov, V.A.Kozyrev and V.D.Chernyak are read against foreign work in electronic lexicography by S.Granger, M.Paquot, B.T.S.Atkins, M.Rundell, P.Hanks, A.Kilgarriff, H.Bergenholtz and S.Tarp. Corpus-based, associative, ideographic, active and learner dictionaries receive close attention, together with the resources of the Russian National Corpus, the Sketch Engine query system, and the Uzbek tradition represented by the five-volume *Izohli lugʻat* of 2006 to 2008.

Keywords: lexicography, dictionary typology, corpus lexicography, electronic dictionaries, associative dictionary, ideographic dictionary, active dictionary, learner dictionary, Russian National Corpus, Sketch Engine, thesaurus, digital lexicography.

Introduction

Contemporary lexicography is passing through a change comparable in scale with the shift from handwritten glossaries to printed academic dictionaries in the eighteenth century. Over the past twenty-five years the number of dictionary



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types for Russian has grown several times over, and the place where dictionaries live has moved from the bookshelf onto servers and mobile devices. In the consolidated count assembled by V.A.Kozyrev and V.D.Chernyak, the inventory of native Russian-language dictionaries reaches almost 3,200 items once bilingual and terminological editions are set aside and the whole array passes 3,600 titles when those editions are added back. To this stock the digital environment attaches resources that exist online only, among them Wiktionary, the Sketch Engine platform and the search interfaces of the Russian National Corpus. Counting dictionaries has stopped being a finite task.

Methods and literature review

The study employed the comparative-typological method, which made it possible to align the Russian and foreign traditions of describing dictionaries, descriptive analysis of dictionary entries of several types, the method of dictionary parametrisation tracing back to the work of Y.N.Karaulov, componential analysis applied to associative and ideographic fields, and elements of the corpus method with recourse to the resources of the Russian National Corpus and the Sketch Engine system. Quantitative counting of typological features by the scheme of V.A.Kozyrev and V.D.Chernyak supported the classification, and critical source analysis was applied to the prefaces of academic editions of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Eight works form the supporting circle for the analysis. The first is the 1940 article by L.V.Shcherba, which builds a system of six oppositions between dictionary types [1]. Next to it stands the monograph by V.V.Morkovkin, «Ideograficheskie slovari», which laid the groundwork for conceptual description of the lexicon [2]. The parametric approach to the dictionary was developed by Y.N. Karaulov in «Lingvisticheskoe konstruirovaniye i tezaurus literaturnogo



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yazyka» [3]. The lexicon as an object of dictionary description was reconsidered by P.N.Denisov in «Leksika russkogo yazyka i printsipy eyo opisaniya» [4]. The textbook by V.A.Kozyrev and V.D.Chernyak, «Russkaya leksikografiya», surveys roughly 700 Russian dictionaries [5]. The foreign theoretical base appears in the practical guide by B.T.S.Atkins and M.Rundell [6], the collective volume edited by S.Granger and M.Paquot [7] and the monograph by P.Hanks, where the theory of norms and exploitations is formulated [8]. The corpus direction is represented by the programmatic article of V.A.Plungian on the Russian National Corpus [9].

Results

The roots of the modern typology of dictionaries lie in the work of L.V.Shcherba, who first set out six oppositions, among them the academic dictionary against the reference dictionary, the encyclopedic against the general, the thesaurus against the ordinary explanatory dictionary, the explanatory against the ideological, the explanatory against the translation dictionary, and the historical against the non-historical. The state of lexicographic theory at the end of the 1930s was described by Shcherba himself in the following terms, «Хотя человечество очень давно начало заниматься составлением словарей разных типов, однако какой-либо общей лексикографической теории, по-видимому, не существует еще и до сих пор. Предлагаемый здесь опыт такой теории не рассчитывает целиком заполнить этот пробел, а имеет в виду лишь наметить некоторые основы будущей теории, в связи с чем он естественно распадается на ряд отдельных этюдов» [1, с. 265]. In English the passage states that although humanity began compiling dictionaries of various types very long ago, no general lexicographic theory yet appears to exist, and that the attempt offered here does not aim to fill the gap entirely but only to sketch some foundations of a future



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theory. This formulation became the point of departure for every later classification. On its basis rest the typologies of V.V.Morkovkin, V.A.Kozyrev, V.D.Chernyak and many others. The six oppositions still function as the grid against which any new dictionary type is measured, which is exactly what the next sections test.

A turn toward the corpus as the primary source of dictionary information reshaped the whole practice of the twenty-first century. As V.A.Plungian put it, a national corpus must above all be large, its size measured in hundreds of millions of word usages, and, more importantly, representative, containing every text type present in the language during a given period and in the correct proportion. By 2024 the combined volume of all subcorpora of the Russian National Corpus exceeded 2.2 billion word usages, a figure recorded in the account of the second-generation platform by A.A.Bonch-Osmolovskaya and co-authors. The same corpus principle underpins the Active Dictionary of Russian compiled at the V.V.Vinogradov Russian Language Institute. Concrete shape is given to the picture by the Sketch Engine system, built by A.Kilgarriff, P.Rychlý, P.Smrž and D.Tugwell, which by 2025 holds more than 800 ready-made corpora totalling close to one trillion words across more than 100 languages.



Figure 1. Corpus-driven dictionary compilation workflow, from a representative text corpus to print, web and mobile delivery, with a feedback loop of usage data and corpus expansion



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The digital environment redefines the very notion of a dictionary. In her editorial introduction to the volume «Electronic Lexicography», S.Granger characterises electronic dictionaries as “primarily human-oriented collections of structured electronic data that give information about the form, meaning, and use of words in one or more languages and are stored in a range of devices (PC, Internet, mobile devices)” [7, p. 2]. This wording separates lexical databases aimed at machine processing from dictionaries that still address a human reader. The practical side of the shift is recorded in the guide by B.T.S.Atkins and M.Rundell, where a new professional norm is fixed, “In the twenty-first century, all good dictionaries take corpus data as their starting point, and the contemporary lexicographer (typically querying the corpus online and recording dictionary data in a structured database) depends on a number of technologies – most of them of recent origin” [6, p. 3]. Without recourse to corpus data the compilation of a full dictionary is no longer treated by the professional community as sound. The criterion has moved from the compiler's intuition to attested usage, and a citation slip drawn from memory now carries little authority next to a concordance line. Associative lexicography holds a special place in the modern typology, counting from the Russian Associative Dictionary of Y.N.Karaulov, Y.A.Sorokin, E.F.Tarasov, N.V.Ufimtseva and G.A.Cherkasova. In the preface to the first book the authors write that the dictionary models the verbal memory and linguistic consciousness of the averaged native speaker and serves as a new kind of source for studying language and the phenomenon of language command, «Русский ассоциативный словарь (РАС) составляет первую и основную часть Ассоциативного тезауруса русского языка, который моделирует вербальную память и языковое сознание «усредненного» носителя русского языка. Этот словарь является принципиально новым источником изучения языка и феномена владения языком, базой для анализа путей и



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закономерностей формирования языкового сознания в онто- и филогенезе». The experiment drew on roughly eleven thousand students of the first three university years, and the number of returned forms yielded statistically meaningful associative fields for several thousand stimuli. Belarusian, Latvian and Kyrgyz associative dictionaries were built on similar lines, as were the «Associative Norms of the Spanish and Russian Languages» compiled by M.Sánchez Puig, Y.N.Karaulov and G.A.Cherkasova and published in Moscow and Madrid in 2001. The associative dictionary records what comes to mind, not what the lexicographer judges central, and the gap between the two is itself a research finding.

Ideographic description proceeds from a principle opposite to the alphabetical one, grouping words by sense. In his 1970 book V.V.Morkovkin showed that any semantic dictionary is an attempt to model a picture of the world through the lexicon, and he defined the object of the field as the theory and practice of compiling dictionaries, observing that the absence of dictionaries of certain types is felt painfully both in the theoretical treatment of linguistic questions and in applied work such as teaching, the writing of textbooks and translation. Within the ideographic direction one distinguishes thesauri of the Roget kind, analogical dictionaries of the type associated with P.Boissière, and ideographic dictionaries of the learner variety. The Russian tradition is represented by the «Ideograficheskii slovar russkogo yazyka» of O.S.Baranov and the «Bolshoi tolkovyi slovar russkikh sushchestvitelnykh» edited by L.G.Babenko. Table 1 sets these resources beside foreign counterparts so that the parameters of coverage and digital availability can be read at a glance. The concept of the active dictionary, developed by Y.D.Apresyan and his school, moves the emphasis from comprehension to the production of speech. According to the publisher's note to the first volume, the Active Dictionary of Russian was developed with regard for



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the chief achievements of Russian and European lexicography and aims to supply for each word, in each recorded sense, the volume of information needed not only for understanding that word in an arbitrary context but also for using it correctly in the speaker's own speech. By 2025 the team of the Russian Language Institute had published six parts of the edition, running from volume one (A-B, 2014) to the first part of volume five (JI, 2025). The Active Dictionary belongs with the New Explanatory Dictionary of Synonyms produced under the same editor, both sharing a deliberately generative orientation.

Theoretical reflection on digital resources advanced through the functional theory of H.Bergenholtz and S.Tarp, in which a dictionary counts as a utilitarian instrument that satisfies the concrete information needs of a user in typified communicative and cognitive situations. A different angle comes from the work of P. Hanks, where the theory of norms and exploitations is set out, "In this book, a systematic distinction is made between normal and abnormal usage, a distinction based on careful and thorough examination of evidence of actual usage. There is no hard-and-fast dividing line between normal and abnormal usage in language (instead, there is a cline: some uses are more normal than others), and there is no hard-and-fast dividing line between the possible and the impossible" [7, p. 3]. Learner lexicography, represented by the Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners under M.Rundell, by the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary and by the Russian work of V.V.Morkovkin, follows precisely this activity-centred approach. The Uzbek tradition gained substantially between 2006 and 2008 with the five-volume «O‘zbek tilining izohli lug‘ati» under the editorship of A. Madvaliev, whose note states that the dictionary covers more than 80,000 words and word combinations in wide use in the modern Uzbek literary language, including terms from science, technology, art and culture, dialectal words and certain historical and obsolete items. Digital



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projects develop in parallel, among them the corpus of the Uzbek language being assembled at the A. Navoi Institute. The Uzbek case shows a national lexicography completing its academic explanatory dictionary while its corpus instruments are still taking shape, which sets up the comparison that follows.

Table 1. Comparative parameters of five representative dictionaries

Dictionary	Headwords	Year	Tradition / type	Digital version
Big Academic Dictionary (BAS), RAS	≈ 150,000	2004	Russian, explanatory academic	partial, online
Active Dictionary of Russian (Yu.D. Apresyan)	≈ 12,000 (planned)	2014	Russian, active / generative	in preparation
Macmillan English Dictionary (M. Rundell)	≈ 100,000	2002, 2007	English, learner, corpus-based	yes, web
Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary	≈ 185,000 items	2020 (10th)	English, learner, corpus-based	yes, web / app
O'zbek tilining izohli lug'ati (A. Madvaliev)	≈ 80,000	2006-2008	Uzbek, explanatory academic	scanned, limited

Discussion

Setting Shcherba's system of 1940 against the modern classifications reveals oppositions unknown to the lexicography of the mid-twentieth century. Among them are the printed against the digital dictionary, the monolingual against the parallel bilingual corpus, the single-author against the collaborative resource of the Wiktionary kind, and the static against the dynamic online resource open to user adjustment. The functional theory of H.Bergenholtz and S.Tarp carries this



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logical move to its conclusion by placing the user at the centre of how an entry is built. In practice this means that one and the same body of corpus data can yield several distinct dictionaries, tuned for instance to a translator, to a secondary-school pupil and to a legal specialist. The dictionary stops being a fixed object and becomes a configurable output of a database. Russian and Uzbek lexicography occupy different positions here. The Russian tradition has accumulated a large body of theoretical research, in the work of L.V.Shcherba, V.V.Vinogradov, S.I.Ozhegov, Y.D.Apresyan, Y.N.Karaulov, V.A.Kozyrev and V.D.Chernyak, together with major corpus projects such as the Russian National Corpus, the Active Dictionary and the new-type dictionaries built at the Laboratory of General and Computational Lexicology and Lexicography of Moscow State University. Uzbek lexicography of the 2000s concentrated above all on completing the academic explanatory dictionary and developing bilingual resources, while corpus instruments are only now being formed.

Conclusion

The diversity of present-day dictionaries fits a typology that builds upon Shcherba's oppositions six decades later. Corpus methods, the digital environment and the functional approach of H.Bergenholtz and S.Tarp have turned lexicography from an auxiliary philological discipline into an independent field of knowledge bound closely to computer science and cognitive research.

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