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Russian Agnonyms as an Object of Lexicographic Treatment

Abstract

This paper describes an approach to the lexicographic treatment of a category of words called agnonyms. By agnonyms, a term coined by V. V. Morkovkin, I mean lexical and phraseological units of a mother tongue which for many native speakers are unknown, difficult to understand or misunderstood.

Every lexicographic treatment is always a treatment of a definite segment of the lexico-phraseological system of a language. While choosing such a segment as an object of lexicographic treatment the lexicographer who adheres to an anthropocentrical approach should take into account first of all the potential users' needs. It is clear that if the user is a native speaker of the described language one of the segments in question can be so-called "agnonyms" of this language. The notion of "agnonyms" as well as the term was suggested by Prof. V. V. Morkovkin (Morkovkin 1992).

Agnonyms [from Greek α – 'no', $\gamma\nu\sigma\sigma$ – 'knowledge' and $o\nu o\mu\alpha$, $o\nu\psi\mu\alpha$ – 'name'] are lexical and phraseological units of a mother tongue which for many native speakers are unknown, difficult to understand or misunderstood. As examples of Russian agnonyms we can cite words like *благостыня* 'mercy', *бора* 'strong cold wind from the mountains', *епитрахиль* 'strip of the material, which is worn around the neck by a priest and hangs over the chest', *детинец* 'central part of an ancient Russian town', etc.

The choice of agnonyms as an object of lexicographic treatment is dictated by the rather obvious thought that people use a monolingual explanatory dictionary in two basic cases: either to eliminate doubt about the correct use of some lexical units, or in the case of interruption in continuity of understanding of written text or oral speech.

In general, any dictionary making consists of elimination of doubt concerning its micro- and macro-structure. The ascertainment of the macro-structure of the dictionary presupposes a forming of its vocabulary, a decision about its composition and the character of separate compositional parts, a determination of the order of the disposition of

headwords, etc. The elaborating of micro-structure includes all questions connected with the interpretation of headwords in the dictionary articles.

From the anthropocentrical point of view the realisation of both of them is adjusted by the users' claims. In our case all information of the users' claims can be represented as three tasks: 1) to give the user necessary information about the form, meaning, connotations and features of combinability of each lexical unit selected for the dictionary; 2) to ensure satisfactory conditions for the insertion of corresponding agnonymic units in the language system (first of all, the lexical system), that the average user has at his disposal; 3) to give the user an opportunity to choose the necessary word to work out the problem of communication. The lexicographer's main task in elaborating the dictionary's macro-structure is forming its vocabulary. In our case, the aggregate of agnonyms, found with the help of a specially developed method, must become the basis of the desired vocabulary. Our method is based on the relative placing the Russian linguistic person's lexicon on the same footing as the lexicon of the researcher. The main idea here is that the difference between lexical competence of any two linguistic persons who were brought up in similar conditions of linguistic socialisation is ignorably small in comparison with the difference between the vocabulary of any linguistic person and the vocabulary of his corresponding ethnic community. Hence in order to receive the desired totality of agnonyms we need three things: the researcher's vocabulary, the vocabulary of the Russian ethnic community and the instrument for extracting the first from the second. The researcher's memory contains his vocabulary and he can examine it by using introspection. For the Russian ethnic community vocabulary we can take the lexical totality reflected in existing unabridged dictionaries of the contemporary Russian language. As to the third thing, the correlation between the meaning and the combinability of the words allows us to create a system of criteria, according to which an agnonym is a lexical unit, about which the native speaker can make one of the following statements: 1) I do not know the meaning of this word at all; 2) I have only an idea that this word means something concerning a certain wide sphere, for example, *бакштов* 'something connected with the sea'; 3) I know that the word means something concerning a certain class of objects, but I don't know how this object differs from other objects of this class, for example, *бальнеология* 'kind of a science'; 4) I know that the word represents a certain object, but I don't know the concrete features of this object or the means of its use or function, for example, *сизоворонка* 'a migrant bird, but singing or not?'; 5) I know what the word means, but have no idea what the corresponding object looks like, for example, *епанечка,*

таратайка; 6) I know the word in connection with specificness of my life experience and my profession, but I suppose many other people do not know it or know it insufficiently well, for example, *менталитет, фрикативный*. The examination of all lexico-semantic variants (LSV), registered in the Dictionary of Russian Language edited by A. P. Evgenjeva, from the point of view of the given criteria allows for the formation of the whole body of agnonyms – 8394 lexical units.

An important stage in the elaboration of a dictionary's macro-structure is the ascertainment about its composition. In connection with this, it seems reasonable to concentrate proper lexicographic materials in two mutually connected parts. The first part is alphabetical. It must represent the list of dictionary explanatory articles which are arranged in alphabetical order. The second part is systematic. It should include, first, an ideographical classification of the agnonymic units, second, a list of synonymic rows, containing the agnonyms, in which the first lexical unit must be not an agnonym, but a commonly used word.

Decisions, at which the lexicographer arrives while elaborating on the dictionary's micro-structure are made, first, by his conception of the structure of the word as an object of examination, and, second, by taking into account the users' needs.

According to the theses of anthropocentrical linguistics, a word as a lexicographic object has, first, certain formal characteristics (spelling, pronunciation, stress, word changing), second, certain characteristics of its plan of content (polysem, absolute value of each LSV, its relative and combinatory value), third, the capacity to function as part of phraseological units, fourth, word-building value, fifth, ethymological value.

Let us examine some of the enumerated positions. In an explanatory dictionary for native speakers, pronunciation may be omitted, reflected selectively or reflected in full volume. Two issues must be considered when working out the problem concerning the reflection of pronunciation in a dictionary of agnonyms. The first is that such a dictionary in a sense is similar to a bilingual dictionary because explained words by definition are unknown or insufficiently known to the user. The second circumstance is that the user knows perfectly all the basic rules of the transition from the letter to the sound because he is a native speaker. These two circumstances determine the choice of the decision: the most reasonable is the selective reflection of the pronunciation. Why? First of all, because, for example, the consecutive transcription of all headwords means inevitably overloading the dictionary with absolutely needless information. On the other hand, complete refusal of an indication of the pronunciation can be justified only in cases when without exception headwords in the dictionary are pronounced in accordance with the rules.

From the standpoint of the character of semantic structure the aggregate of agnonyms which is to be treated in the dictionary can be devided into three groups. In the first group are monosemantic words. The second group is represented by polysemantic words, whose LSV's are all agnonyms. The third group consists of words with some agnonymic and some non-agnonymic LSV's.

So long as words from the first group feature an elementary semantic structure, their lexicographic presentation provides no difficulties. As to words of the second group, the ordering of their semantic structure can be realised on the basis of one of three basic principles traditionally used in lexicography: historical, logical or empirical. Available facts allow us to conclude that the most acceptable principle from the point of view of the dictionary's objectives is the logical principle, which must be assumed as the basis of the lexicographic treatment of Russian agnonyms.

The words from the third group are a matter of some difficulty while we are looking for the best approach concerning the treatment of their semantic structure. Indeed, if only one of several LSV's of a polysemantic word is an agnonym, must it be considered a monosemantic word? It appears not. But if it is so, does it mean that all other non-agnonymic LSV's of a polysemantic word must be included in the dictionary and considered on the same footing as agnonymic ones? I believe that this decision is also not the best one because it leads to an evident and sharp increase in the redundancy of the dictionary. So, we consider optimum the decision according to which all meanings of a polysemantic word are to be showed and regulated in the dictionary, and in order not to lose the agnonymic LSV's, they are to be marked out with the help of lexicographic means (font type, signs, etc.).

To show the absolute value of agnonyms we can use practically all types of explanation known in lexicography and the synonymic explanation must be considered the principal one among them. That means that if among the generally known lexical units there is a word with the same absolute value as the agnonym, specially this word has to be used as the explanation. Only the absence of a precise, generally known synonym can lead one to consider the possibility of using other types of explanations. A substantional part of the dictionary of agnonyms must be designated for various kinds of commentaries. The main purpose of the commentaries is, first, the adduction of the semes of the significative background, which are not presented within the definition and, second, the reporting of important encyclopaedic information. The purpose of reporting such information is to create the most favourable conditions in order that the corresponding denotat may be learned by the user in correct temporal, situational and cultural perspective. After all, the

importance of drawings can scarcely be exaggerated in the reflection of the absolute value of agnonyms. The use of drawings as an explanatory tool is based on the presence of the image-bearing semes in the structure of some types of lexical units.

The relative value of agnonymic headwords can be reflected first of all by the use of adduction of such lexical units which bring it to light. In particular, the dictionary entry must contain a special area for producing the information about the property of the headword to perform a function of a member of synonymic rows, antonymic or paronymic files, etc.

The reflection of the combinatorial value of an agnonym presupposes the adduction of certain information about both its syntactic and lexical combinability. Reflecting the lexical combinability of agnonyms, we have to proceed from the following assumption: the syntactic positions attached to them must be filed of all by such words that are important either for clarification of corresponding lexical meanings, or for revealing the particularities of the use of words in the functional sphere to which the agnonym belongs, or, finally, as the most typical means of providing the inclusion of agnonyms in speech. For example, the lexical combinability of the word *постриг* 'taking of monastic vows' is well illustrated by word-combinations *иноческий постриг, принять постриг (с каким-л. именем)* that both show the most important semes of the lexical meaning of this word, that is *постриг* has to do, first, with the ordaining of monks and with taking a new name and, second, the noun *постриг* is governed by the verb *принять* (ср. *В 1786 году Прохор Мошкин принял иноческий постриг с именем Серафим.*).

These are just some important theses connected with the realisation of the discussed project. The making of a dictionary of Russian agnonyms is not only an important contribution to the possible increase in linguistic and verbal competence of speakers of Russian, but it also will promote, we hope, a considerable broadening of their intellectual opportunities and cultural horizons.

As an example we give the dictionary's article with the headword *единорог* 'unicorn'.

ЕДИН=О=РОГ, -а, *м.*

РИСУНОК 1.0. Упоминаемое в Библии животное, похожее на быка с чёрным рогом на лбу или на носу, отличающееся свирепостью, силой, дикостью, быстротой и подвижностью.
* **Ид.** 246, V. *Бог вывел их из Египта, быстрота единорога у него* (Числ. XXIII, 22). *Можешь ли верёвкою привязать*

единорога к борозде и станет ли он боронить за тобою поле?
(Иов. XXXIX, 10).

РИСУНОК 2.0. Мифическое животное белого цвета в ранних традициях с телом быка, в более поздних - с телом лошади или козла и одним прямым рогом на лбу; является символом чистоты, занимает заметное место в геральдике, искусстве, мистических сочинениях. * **Ид.** 246, XX. *Для юношей открылись все дороги,/ Для старцев - все запретные труды,/ Для девушек - янтарные плоды / И белые как снег единороги* (Н.Гумилев, Потомки Каина).

РИСУНОК 2.1. Старинное артиллерийское гладкоствольное орудие, род гаубицы с украшением на стволе в виде такого животного. * **Ид.** 648. *У единорога каз ённик имел коническую форму.*

РИСУНОК 3.0. Редкое морское животное семейства дельфиновых, у самцов к-рого развит только один бивень - левый, достигающий в длину 3 метров. * **Ид.** 162. **Син.** *нарвал. Единороги водятся в тёплых морях.*
// *От прил.* **единый** *и сущ.* **рог.**

References

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