

Basic Approaches to Minimization of Vocabulary in Russian and European Educational Lexicography

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Abstract

The article discusses the main differences in the approaches of Russian and European specialists to the choice of principles for minimizing vocabulary, determining the volume of the lexical minimum and sources for compiling it, using text corpora to identify various aspects of the USA of a word.

Key words: Minimization, lexical minimum, principles of selection of lexical units, frequency, corpus of text.

In the theory and practice of teaching foreign languages, minimization is one of the basic methodological principles for presenting educational materials. Educational programs and standards include phonetic, lexical, grammatical, linguistic and cultural minima. Textbook, manual, reference books also reflect only a fragment of the language system. In the works of educational Lexicography, the selection of language material becomes a necessary stage of work, which determines the teaching orientation and pedagogical effectiveness of the resulting vocabulary.

The problems of the minimizing the vocabulary of a foreign (primarily English) language began to be actively discussed by Western experts already in the 1920 and 1930. 20th century within the framework of this direction, which received the general name of the Vocabulary Control movement, there were two main approaches to the selection of vocabulary-philosophical and Linguistic.

The philosophical approach is associated with the name of Ch. K. Ogden, who in 1930 published a dictionary of Basic English Vocabulary Dictionary of Basic English, consisting of 850 words. This lexical minimum (LM) was positioned by the author as a reduced language model capable of replacing natural language as a means of communication. Ogden first of all tried to isolate circle of the most important ideas and concepts, and then selected the main, most simple English words for their nomination. By the beginning of the World War II Ogden's dictionary had acquired a huge.

Popularity it was used in more than 20 countries of the world, but the minimality and simplicity of Basic English turned out to be illusory and the concept of the dictionary was later criticized. It was calculated that the 850 units included in the Ogden minimum have more than 12000 meaning and in addition, it was found that, for obvious reasons, a number of words significant for everyday communication were not included in it (for example, goodbye, thank you, big, never, want etc.)

An alternative to Basic English was the English that emerged in the United States in the early 1930 s. a new direction in the methodology of the teaching English as foreign Language Reading Movement. The leaders of this trend sought to compile a basic dictionary of the English language (core vocabulary), which includes not conceptual concepts, at least Ogden, but words selected based on the principle of frequency, necessary for reading literature in a foreign language. Thus there was a change in approach in the practice of compiling lexical minimums- from the philosophical concepts of the supporters of basic English there was a transition to a linguistic concept, which from that moment becomes the main one.

In 1930-1935. The Carnegie foundation organized an international conference of linguistics, which brought together leading experts in the field of teaching English (M. West, G. Palmer, E. Thorndike, L. Fawcett). The research results were summarized in the report Interim Report on Vocabulary selection (1936) [1], in which the principle of frequency was declared the leading one in the selection of vocabulary for

educational purposes. In addition, the following criteria for compiling a minimized vocabulary were identified:

- 1) Structural value (common words of the language were included)
- 2) Thematic unlimitedness (terms were excluded)
- 3) Stylistic unlimitedness (colloquial words and slang were excluded)
- 4) The presence of defining words (we included the words necessary for formulating definitions in dictionaries)
- 5) Word formation ability.

Based on these criteria, in 1953 M. West issued the General Service List of English words. [2] Which included 2000 commonly used words and their derivatives with an indication of their relation to parts of speech (this is of particular importance for the English language, since the same the word can belong to different part of speech) and highlighting the lexical-semantic variants of the meaning of the word with illustrative examples. A distinctive feature of the list was the indication as a percentage of the frequency of the use of the word in each of its specific meanings.

The principles of vocabulary selection proposed in General service list are still used in the European practice of compiling minimum dictionaries, the frequency and coverage of text in most cases remain the main and only criteria for minimizing vocabulary for educational purposes. At the same time, the percentage of coverage is also the main criterion for assessing the lexical minimum: if the words included in it cover 95% texts (usually speech refers to texts of various styles contained in national corpora and texts of textbooks), the list is recognized as pedagogically effective and reliable (1). As an alternative to the criterion of frequency in the 50-60s. 20th century French researchers J. Gougenheim and R. Mishea proposed the principle of “presence in the mind” (disponibility). The work on the selection of the basic vocabulary of the French language (Francais fundamental), carried out by them at the Saint-Cloud Center, showed that many words necessary for the formation of the speaker’s vocabulary in this language are not frequent and arise in his mind when a specific communication situation requires it:” we pronounce the words autobus (bus), bouton (button), fourchette (fork) only they are called by the topic of conversation” [3]

To identify such words the method of a mass survey of schoolchildren of different ages was used: they were offered a list of 16 main topics (parts of the body, clothing, home, food etc.), for each of which it was required to select 20 necessary, in the opinion of the participants experiment, lexical units. Then the statistical processing of the obtained data was carried out, its results formed the basis of the Dictionary Fondamental de la Langue Francaise (1958).

At the same time, in the 50s. In the 20th century, the theoretical issues of selection of vocabulary for didactic purposes began to be widely discussed in Soviet methodology. In one of the first works devoted to compiling a minimum Dictionary of the Russian language for national school [4], N. Z. Bakeeva considered as a basic principle of practical necessity, corresponding to the principle of “presence in the mind” of J. Gougenheim and R. Mishea. According to this principle, the word necessary for everyday use of the Russian in school life and everyday life were selected. The principle of taking into account the native language of students in comparison with the Russian language and the thematic principle were put forward as accompanying ones.

Later, in the 60-80s, I. V. Raxmanov, I. D. Salistroy, V. GKostamarov, E. A. Stainfield, V. V. Morkovkin, P. N. Denisov and other researchers proposed other criteria for the selection of vocabulary which are widely used in the theory of compiling lexical minimums and have retained their relevance for Russian educational lexicography and linguodidactics to the data.

The main criteria identified by most experts include :1) frequency; 2) compatibility (the wider the compatibility of the word, the more expedient its inclusion in the minimum);3) stylistic unlimitedness;4) semantic value (the dictionary should include words that denote concepts that are often found in literature, and are also necessary for conducting a conversation in a foreign language ;5) derivational value (the more derivatives a word has, the more reasons for its inclusion in the minimum);6) ambiguity (the more different meanings a word has, the more important it is to know it);7) combat ability(functional words and words that are components of phraseological combinations should be included in the minimum).

Taking into account these criteria the Unified Lexical minimum of the Russian Language for the national Secondary School [5], complex educational dictionaries for foreigners “the lexical bases of the Russian Language” [6] and “the lexical minimums of the Modern Russian Language” [7] were compiled, edited by V.V. Markovkina , Gradual series of the lexical minimums in Russian as a foreign language [8], which is component of the Russian system for testing citizens of foreign countries in Russian (TORFL).

The principles of selection of lexical units used by Russian and European methodologists in the development of minimum dictionaries are presented in a comparative table.

Principles of vocabulary selection for compiling lexical minimums in Russian and European educational lexicography.

Principles of vocabulary selection	European educational lexicography	Russian educational lexicography
Frequency	+	+
Coverage of texts	+	+
Building ability	+	+
Stylistic unlimitedness	+	+
Derivative value	+	+
“Presence in the mind” (J. Guguenheim, R. Mishea) / practical necessity (N.Z. Bakeeva)	+	+
Thematic principle	+	+
Inclusion of words 2 qualifiers needed to formulate definitions in dictionary	+	–
Semantic value	–	+
Compatibility	–	+
Polysemy	–	+

As you can see, the system of vocabulary minimization criteria proposed by Russian and European experts largely coincide, but there are also significant differences. They relate, in particular, to the attitude towards the use of statistical data in compiling the LM If in the European concepts of the lexical minimum frequency is unconditionally recognized as the leading principle of vocabulary selection, then in the Russian

methodology a real controversy unfolded around this principle. So V. G. Kostomarov noted its unreliability of the frequency criterion for selecting a learning dictionary is due to the specifics of the language itself: starting from the second thousand, the coefficient of repetition of the words is already so low that it can't be convincing evidence of the prevalence and importance of the word for all styles of the language [9].

Yu. A. Markov, on the contrary, absolutized the value of the criterion of frequency in compiling LM and called the principles of the semantic and derivational value, polysemy, compatibility, combat ability frequency "inside out". This is a frequency that loses its quantitative characteristics and at the same time its accuracy" [10]. V. V. Markovkin recognizing the statistical principle as the leading one, noted the need to use additional vocabulary selection criteria." Frequency Dictionaries.... are not able to automatically solve the problem of selecting the most common words" [11].

The use of other principles of vocabulary selection (in particular, the thematic principle and the principle of the practical necessity of a word) becomes especially relevant when compiling LM for the initial stage of learning, since many words necessary in everyday communication, as noted above, are not frequent. This fact casts doubt on the possibility of using the frequency criterion as the main one at this stage of training.

The approaches of Russian and European methodologists to the compilation of LM differ not only in the choice of criteria for selecting a dictionary. The question of the volume of the dictionary is also solved in different ways. European experts calculate it based primarily on the goals of training [12]. According to them, a minimum of 120 words ("survival list") is necessary for everyday life in the country of the language being studied (for shopping, reading signs, etc.). To conduct a conversation in a foreign language, knowledge of 2000 words is required; for reading non-special texts in the original - 3000-5000 words; for understanding texts in the specialty studied at the university - 10,000 words.

When calculating the volume of the LM of the Russian language, along with the goal and stage of training, the feasibility of mastering a given number of lexical units by students in the allotted time and its sufficiency for the implementation of speech intentions, determined by the Standard (requirements) of the corresponding level of language proficiency adopted in Russia, are taken into account.

One of the fundamental differences in the approach to compiling a minimum dictionary is the choice of a source for selecting vocabulary. The sources for the lexical minima of the Russian language are dictionaries (mainly frequency, explanatory and translation) previously created by the LM, the vocabulary of Russian textbooks and books for reading [13]. In European practice, text corpora and the most authoritative dictionaries of a given language are used for these purposes. The lexical content of textbooks is not a source, but the result of the selection of words (i.e., the words included in the lexical minima are worked out in the textbook) [14].

It should be noted that text corpora in foreign methodology and educational lexicography are used very widely, since the analysis of corpora allows:

- To obtain a list of the most frequent words;
- Choose the most demonstrative and natural contexts of their use for a given language;
- To identify priority meanings in the semantic structure of words;
- Describe the compatibility of the selected words with other words.

In Russian educational lexicography and teaching methods of Russian as a foreign language, the National Corpus of the Russian language is not used as widely, which is partly due to the fact that the corpus is in the process of formation, being supplemented and improved both in formal, technical and content

terms. We do not know of any textbook of the Russian language or a lexical minimum compiled on the basis of this corpus or any other.

Another significant difference between Russian and European lexical minima is the choice of the unit of description. In Russian lexical minimums, the word in the totality of its meanings acts as a unit of description. In some lists compiled by European authors (for example, in the already mentioned General Service List of English Words, University Word List), the unit of description is not a single word, but a "word family" - the base word in all its meanings (including different part-of-speech meanings) and its derivatives, which students can understand based on knowledge of the rules of word formation. This difference is partly due to the morphological features of some European languages (English, French, Spanish), in which the same word can act as different parts of speech (for example, in English *mind* is a noun and a verb), which is not typical for the Russian language. Let us summarize the main differences in the approaches of Russian and European specialists to the selection of vocabulary for educational purposes in Table 2.

№	Topic	Russian technique	European methodology
1	Appearance of the first theoretical works	1950s	1930/s
2	The main criteria for the selection of lexical units	see table 1	see table 1
3	What percentage of texts should be covered by LM	70%	95%
4	Factors that determine the volume of the LM	Feasibility and sufficiency; goals and stage of training	goals and stage of training
5	Sources for compiling LM	1) dictionaries (frequency, explanatory, etc.); 2) frequency lists of words; 3) previously created LM; 4) vocabulary of Russian textbooks and books for reading	1) corpora of texts; 2) dictionaries; 3) frequency lists
6	Using text corpora	Practically not used	Actively used
7	Unit of description in LM	Word; educational lexical unit - a word in one meaning / and sometimes in one of its forms)	Word; "word family" (word family) - the word in all its meanings and its derivatives

Approaches to the compilation of lexical minimums in the Russian and European methods of teaching foreign languages

As you can see, there are significant differences in the approaches of Russian and European specialists to minimizing vocabulary: they affect the system of principles for selecting words, factors affecting the volume of the vocabulary, the choice of sources for compiling LM and units of lexicographic description, as well as the attitude towards the use of text corpora for educational purposes. At the same time, these approaches are united by the desire to take into account language needs to the fullest the needs of students, relying on academic lexicography and linguistic statistics, searching for the most effective ways of presenting the material, reflecting the lexicogrammatic features of a particular language.

NOTE

(1) Linguistic and statistical studies of Russian scientists have shown that a satisfactory understanding of texts is ensured by a list of words covering at least 70% of word usage (that is, this figure is significantly lower than that of European colleagues).