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Russian for All Occasions: A Polythematic Russian-English Dictionary of Collocations and Expressions. The Authors Reflect on the Idea Behind the Dictionary, the Problems Encountered and How They Were Solved

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ABSTRACT

The authors discuss the problems of compiling a bilingual dictionary ‘for all occasions’. The first part of the article deals with the aims and the concept of the dictionary within a wider lexicographical tradition. Among the problems discussed are: what type of entries it should have, which topics to include and how to organise them to make the dictionary usable and useful, how best to divide the dictionary into different units and sub-units, what sources to use, what range of styles to cover. The second part discusses the principles used in compiling the English entries of the dictionary and the differences between the two languages which this process revealed, as well as the need to provide additional explanations in the form of notes.

KEYWORDS

Thematic dictionaries;
bilingual dictionaries;
dictionary of expressions;
dictionary of collocations;
communicative fragment;
Russian word stock

Introduction

Everyone who has had the experience of learning a language is aware of a disproportion between passive and active language skills. With the knowledge of a few basic grammar rules and the help of a good dictionary, it does not take long to acquire the ability to read and understand without too much difficulty all sorts of written texts, but it takes years of practice and immersion into the respective culture to produce natural idiomatic texts in the target language. Memorising an enormous quantity of words and learning all the grammatical rules and exceptions is not sufficient to produce fluency in a particular language, and the main purpose of our dictionary, which we entitled *Russian for All Occasions*,¹ is to help an intermediate or advanced learner as well as a foreign user of Russian to overcome this ‘linguistic muteness’.

In this article, the two authors of the dictionary, one a native speaker of Russian, the other a native speaker of English, examine in turn various issues relating to the dictionary and to the processes involved in its compilation. It was the Russian-speaking co-author who had the original idea for the work, and in the first part of the article he examines the origin of this idea, placing it in its lexicographical context, before going on to

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discuss how the material for the Russian entries was selected, how it was classified and how the dictionary was structured.

The way the dictionary was put together was that the Russian-speaking co-author first compiled the Russian entries for a chapter and then forwarded the completed chapter to the English-speaking co-author who added the English entries. This means that the Russian entries came first, while the English entries were formulated as equivalents of these pre-existing texts. There were a number of issues that arose during the process of translating the entries, but for present purposes, it was decided to concentrate on just two that seemed during the process to be particularly important. The first is the manner in which the translations reveal some of the ways in which Russian and English are languages that do things differently, while the second is the use of notes to supplement the translations provided.

Compiling the Russian list

You Have Your Shoe-Lace Undone! Verbal Reactions to Real-Life Situations. A Problem of Compilation of a Thematic Dictionary

The following anecdote reflects how this dictionary was conceived. In the early 2000s, the Russian speaking co-author went on a group hiking trip in Ireland on a dull rainy day. While climbing a hill, he noticed that the shoe lace of a female hiker he was following had come undone, and he was worrying that she might get into trouble by stepping on it. By that time he had been living on the British Isles for a few years and his vocabulary was sufficient for most occasions, but in that particular situation he failed to find an appropriate natural English equivalent for the Russian phrase *Девушка! У вас шнурок развязался!* Being aware that a word-by-word and form-by-form translation would sound awkward, he opted for not say anything, and, as a result, the worst happened. The girl stepped on her shoe lace, fell on him and both found themselves in the mud. It was the real-life confirmation that the simple scheme THE SITUATION → THE RELEVANT WORDS → THE STRUCTURED PHRASE → THE FINAL REACTION does not work in many situations, and for effective flawless communication one should possess a repertoire of typical reactions, cast in ready-to-use collocations and phrases belonging to typical micro contexts. From that point, the idea of compiling a list of thematically organised phrases and blocks of words started to take its shape. When they started working on this dictionary the two co-authors inevitably ran into the main methodological problem related to this kind of task: what principles to apply when compiling the relevant list of topics that might comprise 'all occasions'. In theory, life in its entirety, all mental, physical, biological, cultural, political and other themes related to human beings should be reflected in a dictionary of this type, and it should encompass all registers of the living language. In other words, it should be nothing else than a thematically organised corpus of modern Russian. Practical necessity, however, requires a careful selection of topics and entries, to make it usable on the one hand, and to represent a compressed cross-section of language usage in its current contemporary state on the other.

There are many works that apply this thematic principle, and for a great number of languages and topics; they differ in size, the range of topics that they cover, the way the material is represented and the intended readership. But even if you put together all the existing thematic dictionaries for one pair of languages, you would still not have

a universal polythematic dictionary ‘for all occasions’, as it would not include most trivial situations of every-day-life. The most comprehensive polythematic bilingual or multilingual dictionaries are probably pictorial dictionaries such as those that have been published for decades by Duden and Oxford. Their textual part consists almost entirely of nouns or noun-based collocations, and in practical usage, these lists are not sufficient for the production of natural-looking/sounding text in any language. Another popular application of the polythematic principle can be found in phrase books but these have a limited and superficial coverage. Bilingual thematic dictionaries specialising in a particular area, for example, science, business, medicine, industry or sport, do not properly belong here, but the polythematic approach is often applied in an interesting and important way in learners’ dictionaries.

We found one particular dictionary to be very close to the model we were seeking.² This dictionary consists of thematically arranged utterances about persons and contains over one hundred sections covering topics from character traits to political views and moral values, such as reticence / małomówność; discretion / dyskrecja, rozważa; talkativeness / gadatliwość; empty talk, boredom / głędzenie, nuda; oratory ability, eloquence / oratorswo, elokwencja; onesidedness / jednostronność; boss, superior / szef, przełożony. Each section in Bajoński’s dictionary includes 10–20 English sentences and their Polish equivalents. Utterances in the informal register are indicated using the abbreviation ‘inf’. Here are a few English entries from section 83 (Trouble making / Konfliktowość):

(1)

1. She is the most impossible person I have ever seen;
2. She is a trouble-maker;
7. He often makes a nuisance of himself;
17. She likes to have a finger in every pie. inf.

This approach matches the user’s needs, as it offers ready-to-use blocks which can be modified and adjusted to real-life situations: the Russian-speaking co-author of *Russian for All Occasions* successfully used Bajoński’s dictionary for learning both Polish and English simultaneously. The thematic range of Bajoński’s dictionary is, however, rather narrow, and in addition to this, it does not include non-predicative units such as collocations, so much needed in various situations. The fact that it is written by one person, who in an ideal world would have to be absolutely bilingual, can also be regarded as a disadvantage. We were a team of two authors, native speakers of Russian and English respectively, and that allowed us to aim at compiling a ‘deep’ comprehensive polythematic bilingual dictionary, which, making use of our long teaching experience, would cover the most relevant topics for those foreign users who need to create texts in Russian, speak in Russian, translate into Russian or explore the way Russian works in use. It was decided that the main units in our dictionary would be speech blocks of various structures and lengths: sentences, expressions, phrases or collocations.

A Dictionary ‘for all occasions’ and the Concept of Communicative Fragment

Setting out methodological principles for our dictionary we found a strong theoretical support in the concept of ‘communicative fragment’ («коммуникативный фрагмент») elaborated by Boris Gasparov:

Communicative fragments (CF) are linguistic units of varying length which are stored in a speaker's memory as fixed elements of an accumulated linguistic experience and which are used for the creation and interpretation of utterances. A CF is a linguistic unit complete in itself, which speakers are able to reproduce spontaneously as part of the process of language production, and which they immediately recognise as a complete unit in utterances they encounter.³

Thus the vast majority of entries in our dictionary have all the features of communicative fragments, and it could easily be called a dictionary of communicative fragments. Returning to the anecdote about the shoe lace, one can see that the required reaction in that case could not be achieved simply by putting the relevant words *girl, young lady, shoe, lace, to untie* into a grammatically correct sentence. The solution lies in the production of a typical verbal reaction in its entirety: *Excuse me! Your shoe lace has come undone*. That is why the entries in our dictionary consist predominantly of complete sentences. For practical reasons, however, and bearing in mind the typical mistakes made and problems experienced by students of Russian, we included a few sections in which entries are made of groups of single words, as in the case of Section 24.2 (Peoples of the world) which contains 48 entries, each of them consisting of single word forms: nouns and adjectives supported by notes in English when needed:

(2) 24:26–38⁴

- | | |
|---|--|
| 26. a) Вѣнгрия
b) венгѣрский
c) венгр
d) венгѣрка
e) вѣнгры | Hungary and Hungarian\с |
| 27. a) Гермѧния
b) немѣцкий
c) нѣмец
d) нѣмка
e) нѣмцы | Germany and German\с

Note. The adjective гермѧнский is used with the meaning 'Germanic' (e.g. гермѧнские языки 'Germanic languages'). It can also occur in certain specific contexts: the official Russian name of the former German Democratic Republic was Гермѧнская Демократическая Республика. |
| 28. a) Греция
b) грѣческий
c) грек
d) грѣчанка
e) грѣки | Greece and Greek\с

Note. The noun грѣчка means 'buckwheat'. |
| 29. a) Грузия
b) грузинский
c) грузин
d) грузинка
e) грузины | Georgia and Georgian\с

Note. This refers to the independent republic in the Southern Caucasus. The American state of Georgia is known in Russian as Джорджия. |
| 30. a) Дѧния
b) датский
c) датчѧнин
d) датчѧнка
e) датчѧне
... | a) Denmark
b) Danish
c) Danish man
d) Danish woman
e) the Danes |
| 38. a) Китѧй
b) китѧйский
c) китѧец
d) китѧянка
e) китѧйцы | China and Chinese

Note. Китѧйка means 'a type of apple'. |

Gasparov points out that despite being used by speakers and recognised by hearers as ready-to-use blocks for verbal interaction the communicative fragments remain flexible, with blurred borders and shapes. He calls this feature associative flexibility ('assotsiativ-naia plastichnost') noting that it corresponds to the fluidity of our linguistic memory:

This feature of the communicative fragment corresponds perfectly to the nature of linguistic memory, which has the characteristic of combining a focus on the specific and on the tangible nature of each separate concept with a recognition of the fleeting nature of these concepts and their ability instantly to change shape, merge into each other or fly off simultaneously in numerous different directions.⁵

Gasparov considers the compromise of two opposite tendencies immanent to the communicative fragment as a primary unit of language proficiency:

In speakers' minds communicative fragments, as elements of their accumulated linguistic experience, exist in a state of dynamic unstable equilibrium, that is, they are poised uneasily between two contradictory tendencies: the first differentiates, distinguishing each familiar expression as an individual and instantly recognizable linguistic 'object', while the second looks for similarities, agglutinating different expressions into groups of more or less evident analogies. Each specific speech act is a compromise between these contradictory tendencies that is valid only for the exact occasion on which it is used.⁶

Gasparov goes on to state that each available communicative fragment, having become securely fixed in the linguistic memory, can undergo an infinite variety of modifications, fusions or fissions, all resulting from contamination with numerous other fragments.⁷ This fluidity of the communicative fragments is reflected in *Russian for All Occasions* by a set of graphic conventions showing different types of replacements and versions to indicate possible synonyms, additions or omissions in a communicative fragment:

(3) 26:17

a) Внутренний долг страны | растёт.
b) ~ сокращается.

a) The country's internal <domestic > debt is | rising.
b) ~ falling.

(4) 30:5

a) Солнце | сияло.
b) ~ стояло в зените.
c) ~ палило нещадно
<пекло немилосердно>.
d) ~ зашло за тучу.
e) ~ выглянуло из-за туч.
f) ~ начало припекать.

a) The sun | was shining.
b) ~ was high in the sky.
c) ~ was unbearably hot.
d) ~ went behind a cloud.
e) ~ peeped out from behind the clouds.
f) It started to get very hot in the sun.

(5) 12:18

a) Русскому языку | её обучила
<научила> русская бабушка.
b) ~ он научился от русской бабушки.

a) He was taught Russian by | his Russian grandmother.
b) He learnt Russian from ~

Dissecting the World: The Problems of Taxonomy, Selection and Variables

When compiling the left (the Russian) side of the dictionary we faced three methodological problems: the problem of the shape of its basic unit (already mentioned), the problem

of taxonomy and the problem of selection. The problem of taxonomy is about how to break life into topics and categories preserving the usability of the final product since the breakdown to subcategories, and the quantity of 'occasions' as such have in principle no limits. Our solution was to breakdown the whole content into 33 chapters, which are grouped into four larger units: Unit I (Chapters 1–11: The person; The family); Unit II (Chapters 12–19: Culture; Technology; Daily life); Unit III (Chapters 20–28: Society); Unit IV (Chapters 29–33: The natural world). The thematic principle of the dictionary inevitably brings about a number of related issues, one of them being the depth of the classification. Looking for the optimal structure we divided each chapter into sections and then most of these sections into subsections. Thus, the dictionary has four levels of depth: the entry, with all its variables, is part of a subsection; the subsection is part of a section, the section is part of a chapter, and the chapter is part of a unit. For instance, in Unit I (The Person; The Family), Chapter 1 (The human body and the senses; The functioning and malfunctioning of the human organism) contains 508 entries divided into 9 sections, with up to 6 subsections in each. In Section 1.1 (Sleep) Subsection 1.1.4 (Getting enough sleep; Lack of sleep; Insomnia) is followed by Subsection 1.1.5 (Beds and bedding). This hierarchy can be demonstrated by the location of the entry 97 in Chapter 27: Unit III (Society) → Chapter 27 (Work; Occupations, with three sections) → Section 27.2 (Different types of employment; Wages and salaries, with two sub-sections) → Subsection 27.2.1 (Different types of employment, with 14 entries) → Entry 27:97 (with four variables):

(6) 27:97

a) Она подхалтүривает
<подрабáтывает> | перево́дами.
b) ~ ча́стными уро́ками.

a) She makes a bit on the side by | doing translations.
b) ~ giving private lessons.

Because of the thematic principle, the same word may play a key role in entries belonging to different chapters and even units. For example, the verbs *летать/лететь* (to fly) appear as a key element in a number of entries in Chapter 17 (Transport) and in Chapter 32 (Spatial orientation and movement); the verb *купаться* (to swim, to bathe) appears as a key element for entries in Chapter 1 (The body and the senses) and in Chapter 30 (Heavenly bodies; Natural world; Weather and climate).

The third problem is how to deal with the enormous actual linguistic material: where should the communicative fragments be collected from and what stylistic range should the dictionary cover? Dubchinskii rightly points out the double nature of a lexicographer's work:

On one hand the author of a dictionary is an individual creator, on the other hand, the author tries to depersonalise the text of their dictionary, adjusting it to an average representative of the language community. As a result, the author of the dictionary's content appears as an average anonymous speaker.⁸

To a great extent, this applies to our dictionary. The content of its left part resulted from the Russian author's linguistic reflection, his observations of the speech and texts of other native speakers, references to the Russian National Corpus and the Internet. When compiling our dictionary, however, we had not only to select the material on behalf of an 'average speaker' but also to take into consideration the needs of the potential user: an intermediate-advanced learner or a practical translator from or into Russian.

For this reason, we included in the dictionary sections on Russian names, nationalities, the inhabitants of different regions of Russia, as well as entries showing the difference between the verbs *ездить* and *путешествовать* or between the adjectives *русский* and *российский*. Stresses were indicated in the Russian part, also for the convenience of users. Testing out this dictionary in practical teaching at the University of Glasgow in Russian courses for students of the School of Modern Languages and Cultures and the College of Social Sciences in 2019–2021 has demonstrated that this balanced approach was efficient and useful.

Owing to the ‘anthropocentric’ nature of the dictionary some of its topics are covered in more detail than others and some were completely excluded. Subsection 4.10.2 (Laughter) in Chapter 4 (Feelings and state of mind), for instance, includes more than thirty entries, while laughter is also dealt with in Section 5.4. (Humour; Irony; Wit; Mockery) of Chapter 5 (Character; Traits and inclinations. Attitudes to people; Relations between people).

The difference in size between particular entries can also be explained by practical considerations: there are entries consisting of only four words, but there is also one – 10:86 – that consists of 315 words in its Russian part, being an example of a short biography. We excluded professional terms and expressions, but included topics that are applicable in every-day life and for translating a wide variety of texts, for example, Subsection 31.2.5 (Animal noises).

Treating Expressivity and Finding Place for Idioms

Expressive vocabulary, expressive syntax, idioms and sayings make up a significant part of a living language and their role had to be reflected in this dictionary. We followed the principle that such structures should be placed at the very end of each subsection, as in 7.5.4 (Orders and commands; Instructions) or 7.10.4 (Expressions used when refusing or indicating dissent).

(7) 7:218

Чего́ ты тут раскомáндовался? То́же мне
начáльник!

Who do you think you are, bossing me around like
that!

(8) 7:333

a) — Представляешь, мы должны
заплатить пятьсо́т рублёй за услу́гу.
— | А с како́й ста́ти? Ведь мы не
пользо́вались э́той услу́гой!
b) ~ А в честь чего́?
c) ~ Ещё́ чего́!
d) ~ Как бы не так! Разбежа́лись!

a) ‘Can you believe it? We have to pay a service
charge of five hundred roubles.’ |
‘Why, in heaven’s name? We never used their
service!’
b) ~ ‘What’s that in aid of?’
c) ~ ‘That’s the limit!’
d) ~ ‘No chance; they must be joking!’

We felt it was necessary to include in the dictionary a number of expressive and highly informal phrases, collocations and words in order to represent the stylistic variety or Russian, for example, *мухосранск* or *старнёры* (*старые пердуны*), with the respective notes to their English translations, in the following entries:

(9) 23:14

- a) Онi живyт | в пригороде.
- b) ~ в мегаполисе.
- c) ~ в промышленном центре.
- d) ~ в погранзоне.
- e) ~ в захолу́стном городишке.
- f) ~ в мухосра́нке.
- g) ~ в забытой Богом дыре.

- a) They live in | the suburbs.
- b) ~ a large city. || ~ a metropolis.
- c) ~ an industrial centre.
- d) ~ close to the frontier.
- e) ~ the back of beyond.
- f) ~ some remote shithole.
- g) ~ some God-forsaken hole.

Notes.

(i) Погранзона is an abbreviation for пограничная зона (literally: frontier zone). A special permit is normally needed to gain access to this area.

(ii) The word мухосра́нка is formed from му́ха 'fly' and срать 'to shit' to look as if it is the name of a real town. It should be used with a certain amount of care, since it may cause offence.

(10) 1:264

В комите́те одни старпёры <ста́рые пердуны>!

The committee is made up entirely of old farts.

Regarding the idioms and sayings, there was a dilemma about the right place for them. Should they demonstrate the specific figurative meaning of one of their lexical components in contrast with its direct meaning? Or should the idiom be taken as an indivisible unit with its idiomatic meaning illustrated within the relevant topic? We found that both principles can be justified. For example, the expression *хлопать ушами* in (11) is given in Subsection 1.4.1 (Ears), to demonstrate how the word *уши* (ears) can be used in an idiom, while entries with the word *голова* (head) shown in example (12) do not appear in Section 3.3 (The head), but in Section 6.5.3 (Forgetting).

(11) 1:284

Ча́йки утащи́ли моро́женое? Ты сам виновáт. Не́чего бы́ло уша́ми хло́пать!

If the seagulls have pinched your ice-cream, you've nobody to blame but yourself! You should pay attention to what's going on around you.

(12) 6:126–127

У меня́ э́то совсе́м вы́летело из голо́вы!
Он хоте́л окли́кнуть её, но её и́мя
вы́скочило у него́ из голо́вы.

That had completely slipped my mind.
He wanted to call out to her, but he couldn't call to mind her name.

Translating the Entries

Doing Things Differently

'Real-life' translation deals with whole texts; authors of standard bilingual dictionaries focus mostly on individual words. The decision to use as the basic unit of the dictionary communicative fragments, which fall somewhere in between these two extremes, presented us with certain problems, but also certain opportunities. We took as our starting point the notion expressed in the Introduction to *Modern Russian Grammar* that Russian is a language that 'does things differently from English'.⁹ In a sense, this is a truism that could be said about any pair of languages, but what lay behind this idea

was the conviction that Russian did more things differently or did them more different than most West European languages. In a sense this conviction lies at the very heart of the dictionary: there were many entries for which a literal or near-literal translation was either the best or the only option, but a dictionary made up solely of such entries would arguably have been of little interest to potential users. The majority of entries fall into one of two categories: those where a literal or nearly literal translation was an option, but where an alternative version was equally valid or even preferable, and those where a literal translation was not a valid option and where a version that differed from the Russian was hence a necessity. It is these entries that are the most valuable, not least because they provide the opportunity to collect raw material for a systematic study of some of the differences between Russian and English, differences that can be found at the levels of vocabulary, grammar and, perhaps above all, pragmatics. For present purposes, it was decided to concentrate on a number of differences that can be described as being in one way or another systemic and which either impose or at least offer the opportunity of a change of grammatical construction.

A topic that contains both grammatical and pragmatic elements concerns the different devices used by Russian and English to indicate focus and emphasis and in particular those differences that are a consequence of the fact that English, unlike Russian, has definite and indefinite articles and a fixed subject-verb-object word order. Three points, in particular, may be noted here. The first is the use of a passive verb in English where Russian has an active verb, a device that preserves the focus of the original:

(13) 4:490

Ему предоставили возможность пересдать экзамен.

He was given a chance to retake the examination.

(14) 28:47

Их квартиру обокрали.

Their flat has been burgled.

Sometimes the preservation of the original focus requires a change to the order in which the information is given. For example, a subject placed after the verb in Russian can sometimes be translated into English using a noun qualified by an indefinite article:

(15) 16:144

У пиджака оторвалась пуговица.

A button's come off my jacket.

(16) 30:209

Через реку был перекинут висячий мост.

A suspension bridge has been built over the river.

A device often used in English to emphasise a particular element of an utterance is the so-called 'cleft sentence', as in the following:

(17) 33:230

Я заснул только под утро.

It was nearly morning before I got to sleep.

(18) 33:231

В райо́не обе́да, где́-то с двена́дцати до
трёх, у нас бо́льше всего́ посетите́лей.

It is in the early afternoon [literally: around lunchtime]
from about twelve till three that we get the greatest
number of visitors.

(19) 4:51

Он был не так бога́т, но из всех
претенде́нтов она́ предпо́чла́ и́менно его́.

He wasn't all that wealthy, but of all her suitors he was
the one she preferred.

A second topic that straddles the border between grammar and pragmatics is the question of Russian participles and gerunds. It is true that in the present-day language they are mostly found in the more formal levels of language, but in practice, it transpires that they are not necessarily restricted to those levels, as some of the following examples show. English has notional equivalents of Russian participles and gerunds, not only the various participial and gerundial forms of the verb, but also relative and adverbial clauses, but for translating the Russian entries these were not always found to be appropriate, and in such cases, it was necessary to depart more substantially from the original.

(20) 3:133

Он сморщил лоб, и, не́много подума́в,
ки́внул в знак согла́сия.

He wrinkled his forehead and after a moment's
thought nodded his head in agreement.

(21) 9:63

Начи́ная со второ́го ребё́нка роди́тели
полу́чают от госуда́рства мате́ринский
капита́л.

For all children after the first parents receive a special
payment from the state.

(22) 4:275

Меня́ беспоко́ит пове́шенный са́хар у вас
в кро́ви.

I'm worried that your blood sugar level is too high.

(23) 30:299

Она́ лови́ла языко́м па́дающие снежи́нки.

She let the snowflakes land on her tongue.

A further significant structural difference between the two languages is that in Russian a noun (especially an abstract noun) is often used where in English a verb phrase or a subordinate clause is preferable, another difference that might have been expected in more formal language, but which proved in the event to be rather more widespread. One corollary of this is that subordinate adverbial clauses are much less likely used in all levels of Russian than they are in English.

(24) 7:225

Он получи́л разреше́ние на вы́воз э́той
карти́ны за гра́ницу.

He was given permission to take this picture out of the
country.

(25) 9:65a

Он взял | о́тпуск | по ухóду за ребё́нком.

He took | time off work | to look after his child.

(26) 1:150

В присутствии мальчиков она хихикала и стреляла глазками.

If there were boys present, she would giggle and make eyes at them.

(27) 33:178

В младенчестве он постоянно болел.

When he was a small child he was always ill.

(28) 33:328

Где вы находились в момент ограбления магазина?

Where were you at the time the shop was being robbed?

The following entry, however, has an example of the reverse phenomenon: in one of the two English translations offered an abstract noun corresponds to a verb in Russian. Of the two translations the noun is used in a stylistically more formal version: this might appear in a written regulation, whereas the alternative might be read out by an invigilator.

(29) 7:222

Пользоваться мобильным телефоном во время экзамена не разрешается.

The use of mobile telephones during the examination is not permitted. || Mobile phones must not be used during the examination.

A noteworthy pragmatic difference between Russian and English concerns the use of abstract and inanimate nouns as the subject of an active verb. Although it is far from being a hard and fast rule, this is less likely to occur in Russian than in English, as is illustrated by the following:

(30) 12:314

В кратком заключении представлены основные выводы и намечены направления дальнейшего изучения проблемы.

A short final section lists the main conclusions and indicates some ideas for further research.

(31) 20:101a

В этой стране ущемляются права | национальных | меньшинств.

This country fails to observe the rights of | ethnic | minorities.

One consequence of this difference in approach is that in sentences of this type an active verb in English may correspond to a passive verb in the Russian original, as in example (31).

In Russian, unlike English, there is a widely used convention to start an utterance with a form of address of one sort or another. In the English translation it is sometimes possible simply to omit the form of address, while in other instances a more or less extensive reformulation of the original may be required:

(32) 7:361

Дорогие друзья, сегодня знаменательный день в истории нашей организации.

Today is a momentous day in the history of our organisation.
Literally: Dear friends, today is ...

Note. Russians generally begin announcements or speeches to groups of people with a form of address including the adjectives *дорогие* 'dear' or *уважаемые* 'esteemed'. These forms of address often have no equivalent in English.

(33) 7:370

Молодой человек! Это не вы уронили блокнот?

Excuse me, was it you that dropped this notebook?

(34) 33:284

Уважаемый докладчик, ваше время прошло <истекло>.

May I respectfully ask the speaker to draw his remarks to a close.
Literally: Esteemed speaker, your time is up.

In (32) a note explained the omission of the form of address, while in (34) a note provided a literal translation.

Russian constructions involving *у* + personal pronoun (*у меня*, *у неё*, etc.) often require translations that diverge from the original. In some instances they correspond to English possessive pronouns, while in others it may be best to leave them untranslated, as in (37):

(35) 6:89

Память у меня стала никудышная. Ничего в голове не держится.

My memory has become useless: nothing sticks in my head.

(36) 16:120a

У вас шнурок (на ботинке) | развязался!

Your shoe lace | has come undone.

(37) 30:108

У нас крыша в сарае протекает <течёт>, — вчера опять залило мой инструменты.

The shed roof is leaking and yesterday all my tools got soaked again.

A mainly lexical issue relates to Russian prefixed verbs. There are many instances where these verbs have corresponding English phrasal verbs or other generally accepted equivalents which work in most or all contexts (e.g. *входить/войти* ~ *to come/go in*; *расписываться/расписаться* ~ *to sign (for)*). Elsewhere, however, a direct equivalent is either unavailable or inappropriate to the context, and here the English translation required an alternative approach that reproduces the effect of the prefix indirectly:

(38) 1:301

Он не дослушал новости и выключил радио.

He decided to give up on the news and switched off the radio.

(39) 13:98a

Он подклю́чил | компью́тер | к интерне́ту.

He went onto the internet from his | computer.

(40) 19:166

Дирижёр раскла́нялся пе́ред пуб́ликой.

The conductor took his bow.

(41) 33:335

Она́ ни дня не просиде́ла без рабо́ты.

She hasn't known a day when she's been without work. || She's worked every single day of her life.

Two other lexical issues both relate to specific English verbs. There are certain Russian verbs, such as *стать* and *оказаться*, that are close in meaning to *быть*, but which add an extra nuance. Often these can be translated perfectly adequately into English using *to be*:

(42) 12:193

По мнѐнию большинств́а экспе́ртов, причѐной отста́вки стал лич́ный конфли́кт.

According to the majority of experts his resignation was due to a clash of personalities.

(43) 9:37

Ребе́нок оказа́лся мертворожде́нным.

Her child was stillborn.

The verb *оказаться* is particularly problematic: there is no one-size-fits-all English equivalent, and a translation can require a formulation that is significantly different from the original:

(44) 18:104

Она́ оказа́лась в це́нтре до́пингово́го сканда́ла.

She has been caught up in a drugs scandal.

In her study of Russian verbs corresponding to German *benutzen* (i.e. *to use*) Ingrid Maier notes that the Russian verbs most usually associated with that meaning, specifically *пользоваться*, *использовать*, appear to be used much less frequently than are the equivalent verbs in some other languages.¹⁰ Her language of immediate comparison is Swedish, but since she notes that in this respect Swedish and English are similar, it is reasonable to infer that her comments are also applicable to the latter. And indeed it proved to be the case that in a significant number of entries it was either possible or desirable to formulate the English translation with the verb *to use* where the Russian original did not contain a verb normally associated with that meaning. A selection of those entries can be quoted here:

(45) 1:433a

Он бре́ется | электробри́твой.

He uses | an electric razor.

(46) 13:90

На́до выде́литель э́ту часть те́кста мышко́й.

Use the mouse to highlight this part of the text.

(47) 19:50b

Она снимает <фотографирует> |на чёрно-белую плёнку.

She uses black-and-white film.

(48) 30:210

Они перешли через реку по мосту.

They used the bridge to cross the river.

In examples (45) and (47) *to use* can be interpreted as a generic verb similar to *to make* and *to do*, used in the following entries to translate a Russian verb with a more specific meaning:

(49) 15:91a

Она сварила | суп.

She made | soup.

(50) 18:12a

Она занимается йогой.

She does yoga.

In (46) and (48) the insertion of the verb *to use* helps to reproduce the focus of the original.

Finally, it may be noted that divergence between the Russian and the English is likely to increase in those contexts where two or more of the above-mentioned elements co-occur, as in (51) (form of address + *to use*), (52) (*оказаться* + sentence focus), (53) (prefixed verb + sentence focus) and (54) (*у меня* + *to use*). In each of these entries, the resulting English translation contains a substantially different construction from the original.

(51) 7:360

Уважаемые пассажиры! С двадцатого мая автовокзал работает по летнему расписанию.

We would like to remind passengers using this bus station that the summer timetable comes into force on the twentieth of May.

(52) 12:108

Поезд тронулся. Моим соседом по купе оказался театральный режиссёр из Казани. Мы разговорились.

The train set off. I was sharing a compartment with a theatre director from Kazan'. We got talking.

(53) 21:6

Инициатором законопроекта выступил конгрессмен-демократ от штата Массачусетс.

The bill was initiated by a Democrat member of the Congress from Massachusetts.

(54) 29:46

Эта комната светлая, тут у меня рабочий кабинет. А та тёмная, она выходит окнами на север. Там у меня спальня.

This room gets a lot of light and I use it for my study. Whereas that one doesn't get much light because it faces north. That's the one I use for my bedroom.

The Use of Notes

It became apparent at the very outset of work on the English entries that in a significant number of instances the translation needed to be supplemented with additional

information and that the best way of providing this information was in the form of a note (or occasionally notes). The initial plan was to divide the notes into several categories: grammar notes, language notes, background notes and perhaps others. This idea, however, was soon abandoned, as we realised that in practice there were often no clear boundaries between the different categories. The proportion of annotated entries varies from chapter to chapter: in Chapter 14 (Daily life; House and home) notes were provided to six out of 131 entries, while in Chapter 28 (Crime; Punishment; Corruption) 54 out of 215 entries were annotated, with notes also accompanying the chapter heading and two subsection headings.

As might be expected, most of the notes dealing purely with language matters relate to vocabulary. One group explains lexical items that are not straightforward to translate into English:

(55) 3:44g

У неё русые волосы

She has fairish hair.

Note. There is no exact English equivalent of *русый*, which covers those hair colours that range from just darker than blond(e) to just paler than brown.

(56) 12:372

Билеты на ребёнка оформляются по свидетельству о рождении.

Tickets for a child are issued on production of a birth certificate.

Note. The useful verb *оформлять / оформить* has a range of meanings, but in administrative contexts it tends to mean 'to accomplish some bureaucratic procedure, usually resulting in the issue of a document'. In this sense, it has no English equivalent, and the translation will inevitably depend on the context.

A second group explains the difference between near-synonyms:

(57) 3:56a

Она расчесала свой длинные волосы |
деревянным гребнем.

She combed | her long hair with a | wooden comb.

Note. The normal word for 'comb' in everyday language is *расчёска*; *гребень* would be used for an especially large or an ornamental comb.

Although an attempt was made as far as possible to ensure that the style of the translation matched that of the original, it was often found desirable to provide notes that give information about register. Finding terminology for this that is widely accepted and clear for users can be difficult, but we decided the best approach was to adopt that of *Modern Russian Grammar*, namely formal and informal¹¹; these terms can be qualified in appropriate circumstances.

(58) 3:67

Моя соседка парикмахер
<парикмахерша>. Работает в
парикмахерской в доме напротив.
Стрижёт хорошо и недорого.

My neighbour is a hairdresser. She works at the
hairdresser's in the building opposite. She's good and
doesn't charge too much.

Note. The feminine form *парикмахерша* is used in informal language.

(59) 12:312

В данной <В настоящей> работе я попытаюсь ответить на три ключевых вопроса.

In this work I am attempting to answer three key questions.

Note. The use of *данный* or *настоящий* to mean 'this' is characteristic of formal language.

(60) 1:425; 1:426

Он проблевался.
а) Я наступил на чью-то блевотину.
б) ~ чью-то рвотные массы.

He puked his guts up.
а) I've trodden in somebody's | puke.
б) ~ vomit

Note. The noun *блевотина* and the verb *блевать* / *проблеваться* are characteristic of extremely informal language. The phrase *рвотные массы*, on the other hand, is a rather formal term.

Sometimes a note gives a sort of 'health warning', which can be more or less severe according to the circumstances:

(61) 12:179

Она покрывала его матом. || Она обматерила его.

She let off a tirade of foul language at him.
Note. The noun *мат* denotes a system of foul language based on a number of words with overtly sexual connotations. Though *мат* is frequently encountered in daily life, its use in print or in public is strictly forbidden.

Another function of the notes is to provide literal translations and supplementary information relating to proverbs, idioms and catch phrases:

(62) 1:239

Дело пахнет керосином!

Things are about to go pear-shaped.
Note. This expression, which literally means 'The affair smells of paraffin', is used in informal language to indicate a situation of impending danger or disaster.

(63) 12:188

Как говорил <сказал> Виктор Степанович Черномырдин, хотели как лучше, а получилось как всегда.

As Viktor Stepanovich Chernomyrdin said: we wanted for the best, but it turned out as usual.
Notes.
(i) In contexts of this type the quotation can be introduced by either an imperfective or a perfective verb.
(ii) V.S. Chernomyrdin, Prime Minister of Russia from 1992 to 1998, was known for memorable aphorisms, which were often the result of him saying not quite what he intended to say. This close to untranslatable specimen is perhaps the most famous: during the 1990s it almost became a proverb and is still sometimes quoted.

It soon became clear that providing substantial quantities of grammatical information was an unrealistic proposition, and as a result, it was decided to restrict grammatical

information to points that were not always explained in standard text books and which were known to cause difficulty to students. This policy can be illustrated by the following:

(64) 1:7

- a) Меня клóнит в сон.
b) На лекции меня клонило в сон.

a) I'm having trouble keeping awake.
b) The lecture nearly sent me to sleep.
Note. These sentences provide examples of an impersonal construction where the verb is in the neuter singular and the person to whom the action relates is in the accusative. Such constructions tend to be used to describe actions over which the person has no control.

(65) 4:20

Это моё личное дело. Захочу — поеду домой, а захочу — останусь ещё на неделю.

It's my business whether I choose to go home or stay for another week.
Note. A literal translation of the second sentence would be: If I want, I'll go home, and if I want, I'll stay for another week.
In informal Russian it is possible, as here, to express conditions without using the conjunction *если*.

Other notes give background information about various aspects of Russian life. These were added where it was judged that the information would be necessary or at the very least helpful in order to make the English version fully comprehensible. These can be illustrated by the following:

(66) 4:438

Двадцать третье февраля — День защитника Отечества.

The twenty-third of February is Defenders of the Fatherland Day.
Note. Although it became a non-working day only in 2002, 23 February has since 1922 been a special day devoted to those who are serving or who have served in the Soviet (or later Russian) armed forces.

(67) 14:77

Горячую воду отключили <перекрыли> на месяц.

The hot water has been turned off for a month.
Note. In Russian cities, where hot water for washing and heating is piped from centralised locations, it is the normal practice to turn off the hot water supply for a few weeks in spring or summer to allow for maintenance.

Confirmation of the impossibility of dividing the notes into separate categories is provided by the fact that a substantial proportion of the notes combine both language and background information, as in the following:

(68) 17:200

Маршрутки отсюда идут каждые десять минут.

Minibuses leave here every ten minutes.
Note. Маршрутка is an abbreviation for маршрутное такси (though the full term is going out of use). Маршрутки are minibuses that follow a set route, and in some towns and cities these have partly or wholly replaced ordinary bus services.

(69) 23:178

У многих граждан Российской Федерации два паспорта — внутренний и заграничный.

Many citizens of the Russian Federation have two passports: an internal passport and a passport for foreign travel.

Note. The internal passport is not so much a travel document as an official identity document. The word паспорт on its own normally refers to the internal document, while a passport for foreign travel is usually referred to as a заграничный паспорт or загранпаспорт.

Entry 10:86 presents the biography of someone who spent much of his life in rural Russia. This entry required a number of notes that combined language and background information:

(70) Notes.

- (i) From the end of the 1920s Soviet agricultural units were organised into two types of structure: а колхоз [коллективное хозяйство] was a collective farm; а совхоз [советское хозяйство] was a state farm.
- (ii) А семилётка is a school offering seven years of schooling. Before the 1960s this was the norm in rural areas of the Soviet Union.
- (iii) Workers on collective farms were not paid wages, but instead received payment according to the number of days they had worked: а трудовень was one day's worth of work. Payments were often made in kind, rather in money.
- . . .
- (vi) День Победы ['Victory Day'] is celebrated on 9 May and is a national holiday in Russia. It marks the anniversary of the German surrender in 1945.

Notes combining language and background information were particularly important in the case of Chapter 28 (Crime; Punishment; Corruption), where no fewer than a quarter of the entries are annotated. This is due not only to the substantial differences between the legal system of Russia and those of most English-speaking countries, but also to historical and cultural differences relating to crime and differences in the way crime is reported in the mass media. The following exemplifies how notes were used in this chapter:

(71) 28:2

а) Она совершила | административное правонарушение.
b) ~ преступление.

a) She committed | an administrative offence.
b) ~ a crime.

Note. In Russia a distinction is made between administrative offences (usually minor matters, such as petty hooliganism, swearing in public) and crimes. The former are dealt with summarily and are usually punished with fines or short periods of imprisonment (normally no more than fifteen days).

(72) 28:19a

Он вор в законе.

He is a member of the brotherhood of thieves.

Note. The term вор в законе has no standard translation into English. It refers to a thief, usually with multiple convictions, who has been accepted into the brotherhood of thieves and who agrees to abide by its rules and customs; among Russian criminals this status has very high prestige and confers considerable power and authority.

Notes were clearly unavoidable in the very small number of entries where it was decided not to provide a translation. In principle, there should be no untranslatable entries, and indeed in a real text, a translator would be faced with the obligation of finding some sort of equivalent, however approximate, of even the most intractable words and phrases. The compiler of a dictionary, however, works to different constraints and in extreme cases can fall back on the expedient of replacing an expected translation with a note of explanation or some other substitute. The following example illustrates the use of this expedient:

(73) 1:453

С лёгким паром!

Note. This untranslatable phrase, which literally means '(I congratulate you on having had) light steam', is a greeting traditionally made to someone who has just had a steam bath, though nowadays it is also used with people who have just had a shower. The logic behind it is that the best steam in a баня was considered to be that nearest the roof, i.e. 'the lightest'.

In such instances, users who need an actual translation can use the information provided in the note to devise something appropriate to the specific context.

It was not always easy to decide when to provide notes, and for some users there may be too many, but for others, it is hoped that they will be seen as an essential adjunct to the English entries. More than that, however, when taken as a whole, they aim to provide a sort of deconstructed course in *лингвострановедение*, placing the linguistic information contained in the actual entries in the context of the Russian realities to which they relate and providing an introduction to numerous aspects of Russian life and to Russian institutions.

Conclusion

With the possible exception of the *Oxford English Dictionary* no dictionary can ever aspire to completeness of coverage, and even had we contemplated such an aspiration, our publishers, remarkably generous as it is with the time and space they allowed us, would certainly not have looked kindly on the idea. Like almost all other lexicographers we had to make choices, and the first choice was that to use communicative fragments as the base unit for our dictionary. From that initial choice followed a whole series of further choices relating to various questions of format, structure, contents and approach, some of which have been discussed here. Whether these choices were justified will be determined by those who use the dictionary; our aim here is to explain what we have done and why, but beyond that to initiate a discussion on the role that communicative fragments can play in language learning and in translation studies.

Notes

1. Khairov and Dunn, *Russian for All Occasions*.
2. Bajoński, *What Can You Say About Him?*
3. Gasparov, *lazyk. Pamiat'. Obraz*, 118. All translations from this work are our own.

4. The first number in the examples from *Russian for All Occasions* refers to the chapter number and the second to the entry number in this chapter. Here: entries from 26 to 31 in Chapter 24.
5. Gasparov, *lazyk. Pamiat'. Obraz*, 143.
6. *Ibid.*, 144.
7. *Ibid.*, 151.
8. Dubchinskii, *Teoreticheskaia i prakticheskaia leksikografia*, 16. The translation is our own.
9. Dunn and Khairov, *Modern Russian Grammar*, xii.
10. Maier, *Verben mit der Bedeutung 'benutzen' im Russischen*, 169.
11. Dunn and Khairov, *Modern Russian Grammar*, xii.

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