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A Pioneering Lexicographic Work: “New Explanatory Dictionary of Russian Synonyms” by Jurij Apresjan*

Abstract

The paper describes an innovative lexicographic product published in Moscow in the late 1990s—Ju. Apresjan’s *New Explanatory Dictionary of Russian Synonyms* [NEDRS]. NEDRS is essentially based on Apresjan’s theory of systemic lexicography and integral linguistic description. His introduction to NEDRS proposes several new important linguistic notions, such as lexicographic type, lexicographic portrait (of a lexeme), the dominant of a synonym series, etc. The main characteristic of NEDRS is the wealth and precision of the linguistic information supplied: thus, it specifies the referential and communicative status of the lexeme under consideration and its actants, the type of the speech act expressed, the capacity of constituting an independent utterance, etc.; in particular, it offers meticulous and exact analyses of semantic distinctions between synonyms. Such data were not provided before in other dictionaries. At the same time, NEDRS is extremely reader-friendly.

Keywords

Russian, semantics, lexicography, synonyms, synonym series, lexicographic notions

In his “Postface” to the *English-Russian Synonym Dictionary* (Apresjan 1979), Ju. Apresjan formulated some fundamental principles for the lexicographic description of synonym series; these principles were fully embodied in the said

* This article is an updated version of a previous Russian-language publication (*Russkij jazyk v naučnom osveščanii*, 2001, № 2, 240–249); it has been prepared especially for this issue of *Neophilologica* [Editors].

dictionary, where after a series of English synonymous lexemes a detailed Russian explication is supplied: the common part of their meanings is presented and the semantic distinctions between synonyms are stated and commented upon.

Apresjan's "New Explanatory Dictionary of Russian Synonyms"—NEDRS (NOSS—*Novyj Ob'jasnitel'nyj Slovar' Sinonimov russkogo jazyka*—in Russian) follows and develops the above principles. NEDRS had its two first issues published in 1997 and 2000 (Apresjan et al., 1997 and 2000).¹ These issues were compiled by a team of linguists headed by Jurij Apresjan. The first issue contains 132 lexical entries (= synonym series), and the second, 118. The vast majority of the words treated belong to the world of humans: the human mind and body, feelings, mental states, speech acts, etc. Each lexical entry is dedicated to one **synonym series** and features the following structure:

1) **The headword zone**, which includes

- all synonyms of the series
- the common meaning of these synonyms, that is, the intersection of their meanings
- lexicographic examples—specially constructed sentences to illustrate the typical contexts for the use of the synonyms in question
- the indication of semantically related series (not obligatory)

2) **The semantic zone**, which includes

- the list of semantic features that distinguish the synonyms of this series
- a detailed comparison of the synonyms

An example will help the reader better represent the sophistication and fineness of the description proposed. The series *NAMERENIE* 'intention' includes the synonyms *namerenie* 'intention', *umysel* 'aforethought/intent', *zamysel* 'idea/design', *zadumka* 'idea/point', *plan* 'plan', *proekt* 'project' and *prožekt* 'irrational project'; their shared semantic content is 'a thought of a person X about what he wants to do and the readiness to deploy the necessary efforts in order to do this'; the semantic features underlying the distinctions between these synonyms are: 1) the correlation of the thought and the will: *namerenie* 'intention' is, in the first place, the will, *plan* 'plan' being rather the thought; 2) the type of X: in X's *umysel* 'X's aforethought/intent', X can be only a person, and he has to execute his *umysel* himself, while in X's *plan* 'plan', X can well be an organization or a social body and X's *plan* can be realized by somebody else; 3) the character and scale of what

¹ The third issue of NEDRS was Apresjan et al., 2003; it contains 105 lexical entries. In 2004, the Apresjan team published a unified volume (Apresjan, Ju., ed., 2004), with 354 entries (= synonym series); this is a corrected and expanded edition. For obvious reasons, these later works are not covered in the present review.

is to be done: in *namerenie to do Y*, Y can be anything, but in *zadumka to do Y*, Y is something creative (\approx artistic) and on a minor scale; etc. Five and a half large format pages of additional comments follow, supplying a real wealth of semantic information on the lexemes involved.

- 3) **The morphological zone** specifies morphological information about synonyms
- 4) **The syntactic construction zone**, which includes syntactic information, in particular, data about government and linear position
- 5) **The cooccurrence zone**, covering lexical and morphological cooccurrence
- 6) **The linguistic illustration zone**
- 7) **The semantic (quasi-)equivalent zones**
 - phraseological synonyms
 - analogs, that is, lexemes having meanings close enough to the common meaning of the series
 - conversives, exact and approximate
 - antonyms, exact and approximate
 - derivatives
- 8) **Bibliography** (not in all series).

NEDRS is a unique lexicographic work that embodies the results of Apresjan's many-year theoretical and practical research in semantics, lexicology and lexicography (Apresjan 1995a, b). Each entry of NEDRS achieves such depth and precision of linguistic description that, in point of fact, it can be considered a full-fledged scientific paper. Apresjan's brilliant introduction to the “Project of NEDRS” (Apresjan 1995c) gives an exhaustive presentation of this dictionary and shows how it differs from other Russian synonym dictionaries. To characterize NEDRS, we cannot avoid repeating (sometimes simplifying) central ideas of this introduction; to this, we will add our reader's impressions and some considerations and suggestions.

1 NEDRS is an innovative lexicographic product underpinned by a solid theoretical basis

1.1 Systemic integral description of language

NEDRS is developed following Apresjan's conception of systemic lexicography and integral description of languages (Apresjan 1995b).

The main principle of systemic lexicography is quite simple: the lexicon of the given language must be described as a system. The key notion here is a **lexicographic type**—a group of lexemes that feature multiple common semantic and syntactic properties and, as a consequence, require a uniform lexicographic description.

Integral linguistic description presupposes a tight coordination/collaboration of grammar (= system of general rules) and lexicon (= system of lexical units). Each lexeme gets a comprehensive characterization: a **lexicographic portrait**. As far as the exhaustiveness of the information about each lexeme is concerned, NEDRS is incomparable: thus, no dictionary we know indicates communicative, prosodic or referential properties of the lexeme and/or of its actants. The practical lexicography is, as a rule, far behind achievements of theoretical linguistics. But NEDRS does not have this defect: it is a direct practical embodiment of Apresjan's theoretical studies, as well as of those of other modern Russian linguists—such as I. Boguslavskij, M. Glovinskaja, L. Iomdin, E. Padučeva, etc. All linguistic notions involved are rigorously defined in a glossary of terms (found in the Introduction). This glossary has an independent value demonstrating the linguistic conception of Apresjan and, more generally, of the Moscow Linguistic School; thus, it presents such notions introduced by Apresjan as the 'Speaker's personal sphere', 'the Observer's frame', 'interpretational verbs' ("an interpretational verb does denote a specific action, but serves to for an evaluative interpretation of another, quite specific action": Issue 2, p. xxv; for instance, *MEŠAT'* 'interfere' or *SOBLAZNJAT'* 'seduce'), etc.²

The traditional view of **synonyms** is essentially refined. Firstly, the synonyms in a series must share many semantic components in the assertive part of their definitions, and the main components of the assertion (most often, it is the generic component) must be identical. Thus, the verbs *gordit'sja* 'be proud', *xvastat'sja* 'boast' and *risovat'sja* 'show off' are not synonyms, since their generic components are different: *gordit'sja* 'be proud' denotes a feeling, *xvastat'sja* 'boast' denotes a speech act, and *risovat'sja* 'show off', a type of behavior.³

Secondly, the differences between synonyms can be not only semantic or stylistic, but also concern their pragmatic properties, connotations, lexical cooccurrence, prosody, possible syntactic constructions, etc.

A new important notion is introduced: the **dominant of a synonym series**. This is the synonym that semantically is the least specialized and stylistically

² NEDRS's second issue contains a new, improved version of the terminological glossary. The third issue (2003) adds a score of new terms and offers corrections to several definitions.

³ The glosses proposed for Russian lexical units are quite approximate—they are meant only to help distinguish these units.

the most neutral. The dominant is used as the name of the series (that is, of the corresponding lexical entry) and thus determines the place of the series in the dictionary—synonym series are presented in the alphabetical order of the dominants.

1.2 Synonym series

In conformity with the principle of systemic description of the lexicon, the first zone of the majority of lexical entries contains the so-called **preamble**, which lists different semantically related synonym series and specifies the meaning differences between these and the head series (i.e., the series described in the given entry). At the same time, the meaning shared by all these series is indicated.

The next zone considers the semantic differences between the members of the head series. In this way, the treatment of lexical meanings is hierarchical: from the more general distinctions to the more specific ones. For instance, the preamble of the series *NADOEST'* ‘cause to be fed up’ (Issue 2 of NEDRS) contains other similar series related according to the component ‘reaction to a repetitive situation’ and establishes the main semantic differences between these series:

- The synonyms of the *NADOEST'* ‘cause to be fed up’ series (*naskučit'* ‘become boring’, *ostočertet'* ‘make sick and tired’, *opostylet'* ‘grow hateful’, *priest'sja* ‘become unpleasant because of frequent repetitions’) all indicate that the Experiencer wants to cease the contact with the fact that is repeated.
- The series *dosazdat'* ‘annoy’, *donimat'* ‘pester’, *dokučat'* ≈ ‘pester’, *presledovat'* ‘pursue/persecute’ puts into focus the impact of an unpleasant situation on the Experiencer.
- In the series *oprotivet'* ‘become disgusting’ and *omerzet'* ‘become loathsome’ the main semantic component is ‘disgust’.
- In the converse series *privyknut'* ‘get accustomed’, *prisposobit'sja'* ‘adapt [one-self]’, *priterpet'sja* ‘adjust by being patient’ and *svyknut'sja* ‘get used’ the situation that repeats itself is presented as the norm.

The zone following the preamble presents the oppositions that distinguish the synonyms of the head series. All the semantic oppositions between different synonym series and inside of each series are formulated in the most uniform way—to make visible the systemic character of the lexicon organization. Thus, the preamble of the entry *TOLSTYJ* (Issue 2) establishes two classes of synonym series denoting the body volume different from the average: too big volume vs. too small volume. The lexical units of both series contrast according to the same features: the degree of deviation from the norm, the evaluation by

the Speaker, the type of the subject qualified by the adjective, and the reason for the deviation from the norm (there are in addition some more specific differences). The work on NEDRS can result in sets of relevant semantic oppositions for various lexicographic types.

The systemic orientation of the dictionary does not interfere with detailed descriptions of individual lexical units [= LUs] as separate entities with characteristic properties. These properties are presented in the fullest way possible, so that each LU gets its exhaustive lexicographic portrait.

1.3 New types of lexicographic information

In conformity with the principle of integral description of the lexicon, the characterization of each LU must take into account all general types of grammar rules. Therefore, the description of synonyms in NEDRS includes information that is new with respect to what is normally presented in traditional synonym dictionaries—for instance, communicative and prosodic properties. Here are a few examples.

- **Referential status** of the lexeme or of its actants. In the series AVTORITET ‘authority’ (Issue 2) actant I of the noun *prestiz* ‘prestige’ must be a generic term—in contrast to *avtoritet*, which does not have this constraint (*avtoritet Ivanova* vs. **prestiz Ivanova*, cf. *prestiz vrača* ‘the prestige of a doctor’).

- **Communicative status** of the lexeme. The adjective *blizkij* ‘close’ (series BLIZKIJI.1, Issue 2) can be a rheme, while its synonym *bližnij* ‘near’ cannot (*Bereg kažetsja blizkim* ‘The shore seems close’ vs. **Bereg kažetsja bližnim* ‘The shore seems proximate’). The adverb *poblizosti* ‘nearby’ (series BLIZKOI.1, Issue 2) can be a clause adverbial, but its synonym *blizko* ‘close’ cannot (*Poblizosti byl posëlok zolotoiskatelej* ‘Nearby there was a prospector settlement’ vs. **Blizko byl posëlok zolotoiskatelej*). The adverb *vdrug* ‘suddenly’ (series NEOŽIDANNO ‘unexpectedly’, Issue 2) tends to be a theme, while its synonym *vrasplox* ‘unawares’ prefers the rhematic position.

- **Focus of attention.** In the series UBEŽDAT’ ‘convince’ (Issue 2) the verbs *ubeždat’* and *uverjat’* ‘assure’ put into focus the addressee of the verb, while *dokazyvat’* ‘prove’ focuses on the thesis. Consequently, the first two have the direct object corresponding to the addressee and the indirect object expressing the thesis: *ubeždat’/uverjat’ kogo* ‘whom’ *v čëm* ‘of what’; with *dokazyvat’* things are the other way around: *dokazyvat’ komu* ‘to whom’ *čto* ‘what’.

- **The type of speech act.** The verb *deržit’* ‘talk back’ (the series GRUBIT’ ‘be rude’, issue 2) implies ‘answering rudely’, while its synonyms *grubit’* and *xamit’* ‘be very rude’ do not carry such an implication.

• **Semantic scope.** The adverb *neožidanno* 'unexpectedly' (series NEOŽIDANNO 'unexpectedly', Issue 2) has both the broad scope, characterizing the situation as a whole (*Neožidanno on vernulsja* 'Unexpectedly he came back', and the narrow scope, characterizing only some particular aspects of the situation (*Neožidanno on vernulsja ne odin* ⟨*očen' bystro/poveselevšim*⟩ 'Unexpectedly he came back not alone ⟨quite quickly/more joyful⟩). Its synonyms *vdrug* 'suddenly' and *vnezapno* 'all of a sudden' cannot have a narrow scope (*Vdrug on vernulsja* 'Suddenly he came back' vs. **Vdrug on vernulsja ne odin* 'Suddenly he came back not alone').

• **Two new parameters for the description of the discursive expressions:**

—Capability to be used as an independent utterance. Thus, in the series VOVSSE NE 'absolutely not' (Issue 2) we have *Vovse net!* 'Not at all!' and *Otnjud' net!* 'Absolutely not!', but not **Daleko net!* 'Far from not!'. Similarly, the expressions *Konečno* 'Of course' and *Razumeetsja* ≈ 'Obviously' (series KONEČNO 'of course', Issue 2) can be used inside a clause, as well as self-standing statement, while *bessporno* 'no doubt' is used mainly inside a clause.

—Factivity vs. putativity. The synonyms *bezuslovno* 'definitely', *nesomnenno* 'undoubtedly', *bessporno* 'beyond debate' and (to a lesser degree) *konečno* 'of course' can be within the scope of a putative verb, while their factive synonyms *razumeetsja* 'obviously' and *estestvenno* 'naturally' cannot: *Ja sčitaju, čto on nesomnenno* ⟨*bessporno, bezuslovno, konečno*⟩ *vyputaetsja iz ètoj istorii* 'I think that he undoubtedly ⟨beyond debate, definitely, of course⟩ will extricate himself from this incident' vs. **Ja sčitaju, čto on razumeetsja* ⟨*estestvenno*⟩ *vyputaetsja iz ètoj istorii*.

• **Fine-grained semantics of morphological forms.** The entry UBEŽDAT' 'convince' (Issue 2) indicates that the forms of the past imperfective of different synonyms have different meanings: contrary to *uverjat'* 'assure', the past imperfective forms of the verbs *ubeždat'* 'convince' and *dokazyvat'* 'prove' have multiple resultative meaning: the Subject managed several times to get his/her thesis accepted. The aspectual characteristics are essential in other parts of the dictionary entry as well: thus, the semantic distinctions between the synonyms of the UBEŽDAT' series are weakened and partially neutralized in the imperfective aspect.

• **Differences in metaphorical uses.** The adjective *nežnyj* 'tender' (the NEŽNYJ series, Issue 1) cannot be replaced by its synonym *laskovyj* 'affectionate' if it used in a figurative sense: *nežnyj* ⟨**laskovyj*⟩ *zapax/ton/vkus* 'smell/tone/taste'. In the series RISOVAT' 'draw', only *risovat'* allows for metaphorical use, but not *zarisovyvat'* 'sketch', *pisat'* 'paint', *malevat'* 'paint poorly': *Ego povest' risuet* ⟨**zarisovyvaet*/**pišet*/**maljuet*⟩ *kartinu nravov jazyčeskoj Rusi* 'His novel draws a picture of mores of pagan Rus' or *Moroz risoval* ⟨**zarisovyval*/**pisal*/**maleval*⟩ *zatejlivye uzory na stekle* 'The frost was drawing intricate patterns on the window glass'.

- **Data on polysemy.** The NEDRS discusses in sufficient detail the polysemy of some synonyms, for instance, of *vybrat'* 'choose' (the VYBRAT' series, Issue 2) or of *ljubit'* 'love' (the LJUBIT' series, Issue 2).

- **Conditions of neutralization of semantic distinctions between synonyms** (information absent from traditional synonym dictionaries). For instance, the IZBAVIT' 'deliver [Y from Z]' series (Issue 2) indicates that if the oblique object (deliver from what?) of the verb is an undesirable internal state of a human, the semantic distinctions between *izbavit'* and *spasti* 'save' can be neutralized: *On spas (izbavit') eë ot golovnyx bolej točnym masažem* 'He saved her from headaches by punctual massage'; for a different oblique object this distinction remains operational: *Tonkie steny baraka ne spasali (*ne izbavljali) ot vystrelov* 'The barack's thin walls did not protect against bullets'.

- **The system of usage labels** in NEDRS is much finer and more precise than in other dictionaries: for instance, such labels as **uxodjaščee** 'obsolescing' and **neobixodnoe** 'not everyday'.

2 NEDRS is a reader-friendly—"humane"—dictionary

The unique property of this dictionary is combining the exhaustiveness and precision of the information supplied with a very "humane" form in which this information is presented. An entry of NEDRS contains much more data than traditional dictionaries intended for people; in this respect NEDRS is closer to formal dictionaries exploited in computer text processing. However, unlike such formal dictionaries as the *Explanatory Combinatorial Dictionary of Russian* (see Melčuk & Žolkovskij 1984), which address a well-prepared user, NEDRS is aimed at a mass reader. Its authors minimize the use of a special metalanguage and symbols, while favoring extended explanations "in prose," supported by numerous well-chosen examples. This characteristic of NEDRS is manifested in its following features.

- A NEDRS lexical entry starts with the presentation of a synonym series with the indication of its dominant and a relatively formal specification of the meaning shared by all synonyms of the series. Then follow a few simple constructed examples ("lexicographic sayings") and the list semantic contrasts typical of the given series. After this the reader gets a detailed description of the similarities and differences between the series synonyms—in a free, but always transparent form. This information is offered instead of full lexicographic definitions

of synonyms, which formally would be sufficient to show these similarities and differences. However, in this case, the comparison of synonyms and extraction of the relevant knowledge would be incumbent on the reader, and this would be an “unfriendly” act by the authors, who want the dictionary to be at the disposal of average readers. Moreover, Apresjan et al. 1995: 111 shows that it is theoretically legitimate and justified to describe the meanings of synonyms by indicating their semantic similarities and differences; such a description, just as rigorous lexicographic definitions of the *Explanatory Combinatorial Dictionary* type, models metalinguistic practices of native speakers.

- A formal dictionary tries to cover **all** the uses of a given lexeme, disregarding different frequency and standardness; a definition can include a disjunction whose members are unequal with respect to the number and importance of the linguistic phenomena covered. In other words, a formal lexicographic definition does not reflect the native speaker’s intuition about the most typical uses of the lexeme. A formal dictionary’s only goal is to ensure the transition from an explicit representation of meaning to actual lexemes (and vice versa), which is necessary and sufficient for automatic text synthesis and analysis. But for a human user the information about the most standard cases is highly useful. Therefore, NEDRS is oriented towards a real picture of lexeme use, widely recurring to marks such as **obyčno** ‘as a rule’, **časče vsego** ‘most frequently’, **inogda** ‘sometimes’, **imeet tendenciju** ‘tends to’ and concentrating on the most typical uses of the lexeme under consideration.

- NEDRS is especially “humane” in what concerns the form in which information is presented. Firstly, the quantity of special symbols is minimized. Secondly, artificial metawords, such as **KAUZIROVAT’** ‘to cause’, are avoided. Thirdly, the dictionary is not limited to concise formulations that, strictly speaking, are logically sufficient, but pedagogically wanting. The user-friendliness of NEDRS is exactly in its explanatory power. After similarities and differences between the synonyms of the series are compactly represented in the synopsis, each section of the synopsis is described again—in free form, with justifications and developed explanations, supplied with convincing linguistic illustrations.

- NEDRS tries to explain—as much as this is possible—the phraseologized expressions including the lexeme under discussion by the metaphors induced by this lexeme. Thus, the differences in restricted lexical cooccurrence of synonyms *talant* ‘talent’ and *sposobnosti* ‘abilities/gifts’ (TALANT, Issue 1) are linked to the fact that *talant*, unlike *sposobnosti*, is perceived by Russian speakers as capital: one can *rastratit’* ‘squander’ or *sberegat’* ‘save’ *talant*, and *talant issjakaet* ‘gets exhausted’. *Zakat* ‘sunset’ (ZAKAT, Issue 2) is likened in Russian to *ogon’*

‘fire’: *Zakat vspyxivaet* ‘flares up’, *gorit* ‘burns’, *polyxaet* ‘blazes’, *dogoraet* ‘burns out’. The information of this type is useless for computer processing of phrasemes (since all the phrasemes must be listed in the lexical entry anyway), and it is not found in a formal dictionary. But for a human user it is quite valuable—exactly because of its explanatory power: for instance, it helps a language learner remember the corresponding phrasemes.

The restricted lexical cooccurrence is also explained through encyclopedic information or the lexeme’s meaning. Thus, *gostepriimstvo* ‘hospitality’ is considered in Russian as a specific ethnic feature, so that the phrases *russkoe/gruzinskoe gostepriimstvo* are more standard than *russkoe/ gruzinskoe radušie* ‘Russian/Georgian cordiality’; at the same time, since *radušie* denotes a particular behavior that manifests the joy of receiving a guest, this lexeme co-occurs naturally with adjectives characterizing behavior: *iskrennee/fal’sivoe/pokaznoe radušie* ‘sincere/false/ostentatious cordiality’.

- One of the obvious advantages of NEDRS is an extraordinary abundance of examples, cited in generous contexts: they really animate the lexeme illustrated. The dictionary’s reader (and we mean “reader”: this dictionary can be read as a book) gets esthetic pleasure not only from fine semantic analyses, but from examples as well.

- Finally, NEDRS seems to be as a declaration of love to the Russian language. The authors have a crush on their data: they analyze the meanings lovingly, they select their examples affectionately. Their approach reminds one of Haj Ross (1983) who, while preaching about “humane linguistics,” exclaims: “Love your data!” NEDRS is a perfect specimen of amorous lexicography.

It is worth mentioning that an impeccable mastery of language materials is characteristic of all works of NEDRS editor, Jurij Apresjan. We do not know of any other theoretical linguist whose publications are to such an extent saturated with concrete linguistic data and who could process it with such ease, while “feeling” each word in such a fine way.

3 Possible uses of NEDRS

People can use the dictionary with different interests and pursuing the most different goals.

- A Russian speaker who is interested in the language can take interesting trips through the dictionary making fabulous discoveries, concerning, in particular,

“some not obvious and difficult to grasp differences between synonyms” (Apresjan et al., 1995: 82)

- A teacher of Russian finds in NEDRS a huge lot of useful knowledge—such as, for instance, the indication of prototypical speech situations in which a particular synonym is to be used.

- A learner of Russian can receive all the information corresponding to his/her level of Russian: from the most basic to the most fine-grained.

- A lexicographer can learn quite a few important things by diving into NEDRS.

—Some **heuristic techniques appropriate for establishing semantic differences**. Thus, what is known as “the inner form” of the word (roughly, etymological structure) may prove useful. For instance, *metel'* ‘blizzard’ and *v'juga* ‘≈ blizzard with turning snow whirls’ differ by the character of snow movements, which is reflected in the etymology: *metel'* *metët lit.* ‘a blizzard is sweeping’ (**met-** is the root of the verb *mesti* ‘sweep’), that is, the snow is blowing parallel to the earth surface, but *v'juga kružit lit.* ‘a blizzard is turning’, that is, it is producing turning whirls. The verb *ostolbenet'* ‘be rooted to the spot’ (*stolb* is ‘pole’) implies the immobility of a person who is standing—‘be turning into a pole’; its synonyms *ocepenet'* ‘become numb’, *okamenet'* ‘be petrified’ and *zameret'* ‘freeze [figurative]’ do not have such an implication. The meaning of the noun *radušie* ‘cordiality’ includes the components ‘**rad**+**ost**’ = joy’, because *radušie* denotes joy from being with pleasant visitors; *gostepriimstvo* ‘hospitality’ emphasizes the readiness for receiving *gosti* ‘guests’.

—**A trove of data on lexical cooccurrence**. As a general rule, each synonym is supplied with typical phrases containing it; many of these phrases are in fact the collocations described by syntagmatic lexical functions. Several paradigmatic lexical functions are represented in NEDRS as well: conversives, antonyms and derivatives are indicated for many synonyms.

—**Valuable information for lexicographic definitions**. One of the most efficient methods for finding the relevant semantic components to go into the definition of a lexical unit is to compare this unit with semantically close units—and this is exactly what NEDRS does.

- NEDRS is useful for specialists of Natural Language Processing [= NLP], more precisely, for automatic text synthesis and analysis, as well as for text generation.

—In conformity with the principle of integral linguistic description, NEDRS presents the lexical information rigorously aligned to the grammar; therefore, it is a good foundation for a formal (computer) dictionary.

—NEDRS supplies some material for the construction of a concept hierarchy, which is paramount for several tasks of NLP, such as logical reasoning (≈ theorem

proving) and paraphrasing. One can indicate the replacement of a specific name by the generic term in order to avoid tedious repetitions: *Zdes' rastët mnogo berëz. Èto derevo...* 'Many birches grow here. This tree...'

—NEDRS offers the conditions for neutralization of semantic differences between synonyms, and these conditions are necessary in the paraphrasing rules that involve approximate synonyms; such rules are unavoidable in any sufficiently rich system of automatic synthesis. Note that paradigmatic correlates of a given synonym—antonyms, conversives, derivatives, analogs—are also quite handy for paraphrasing.

- A linguist finds in NEDRS a good deal of precious data related to various linguistic problems. As is to be expected, different lexicographic types contribute to solving different problems.

—NEDRS contains rich information concerning the relationship between linguistic meaning and extralinguistic reality, that is, concerning criteria usable to distinguish between semantic and encyclopedic knowledge. Here is an interesting example. The synopsis of the entry *UBEŽDAT'* 'convince' (Issue 2) says that the verbs *ubeždat'* and *uverjat'* 'assure' differ from *dokazyvat'* 'prove' by the prosody with which they are uttered. At first blush, you can think that this indication is not about the meaning, but rather about the description of the world: as stated in the synopsis, the situations "CONVINCE" and "ASSURE" presuppose the Addressee's emotional resistance, so that the Speaker has to deploy emotional efforts in order to overcome this resistance; hence a particular prosody. But you have to change your opinion when you see in the derivative zone the adjective *ubeditel'nyj* 'convincing' = 'expressing the desire to convince'; more than that, there is the phrase *ubeditel'nyj ton* 'convincing tone'. This shows that the indication of specific prosody of the verbs in question is linguistically justified.

—NEDRS offers some materials for the study of the following problem: Is it possible to explain different metaphorical uses of synonyms by their semantic differences? Take the entry *NEŽNYJ* 'tender' (Issue 1). If somebody is *nežnyj*, his actions are refined: they presuppose sweetness, carefulness and care, a special attention to trifles of everyday life—that is, the ability to perceive something non-obvious and difficult to grasp. The meaning of the adjective *laskovyj* 'affectionate', a synonym of *nežnyj*, does not carry these semantic components. Therefore, *nežnyj* develops another wordsense: 'tonkij = fine' = 'such that perceiving it requires an elevated ability to distinguish' (with the antonym *grubyj* 'rough'), while *laskovyj* lacks such a wordsense: *nežnyj/*laskovyj zapax* 'smell' (olfaction), *nežnyj/*laskovyj cvet* 'color' (vision), *nežnoe/*laskovoe mjaso* 'meat' (taste).

—Many observations found in NEDRS are, in point of fact, *sui generis* linguistic riddles, each of which warrants a special study. Here is an interesting example.

The adverb *poblizosti* 'nearby' (in the series **BLIZKO1.1**, Issue 2) can characterize the absence of some objects around a given reference point, while a semantically close adverb *nepodalěku* 'not far away' cannot: *Mašin poblizosti ne bylo* 'There were no cars nearby' vs. **Mašin nepodalěku ne bylo* 'There were no cars not far away'. Two other adverbs of this series are also unable to appear in a negative utterance, and both have the negative prefix **NE-**: *nedaleko* and *nevdaleke*, both meaning roughly 'not far away': **Mašin nedaleko/nevdaleke ne bylo* 'There were no cars not far away' (cf. *blizko* 'close' and *vblizi* 'nearby': *Mašin blizko/vblizi ne bylo* 'There were no cars close {to us}/ nearby'). The prefix **NE-** seems to add to the adverb a meaning that cannot enter into the scope of negation. The prefix **NE-** expresses in many adjectives and adverbs the opposite quality, but with a nuance of moderation. The adjectives *nekrasivyj* lit. 'non-beautiful', *nedobryj* lit. 'non-nice', *nevysokij* lit. 'non-high' are used instead of *urodlivyj* 'ugly', *zloy* 'mean', *nizkij* 'low' if the Speaker wants to soften a negative evaluation or to avoid excessive definiteness. The lexicographic definition of a lexeme with the prefix **NE-** could include the indication of the Speaker's attitude towards his/her evaluation, something along the following lines: 'the Speaker does not want this evaluation to be too definite' (see Apresjan 1995a: 312 on the necessity of such a component). The component of "intended indefiniteness" may block the use of **NE-**-prefixed adverbs in negative utterances. Cf.: *On mozet sdelat' èto xorošo/neploxo* 'He can do it well/lit. non-badly' vs. *On ne mozet sdelat' èto xorošo/*neploxo* 'He cannot do it well/non-badly'; or: *Xotja ego prosili govorit' tixo/negromko, on ne govovil tixo/*negromko* 'Although he was asked to speak quietly/non-loudly, he did not speak quietly/non-loudly'. A similar property of so-called weakly definite pronouns was stated by E. Padučeva (1985: 212–24): "A weakly definite pronoun cannot be within the scope of negation," as in *Ja tebe priněs koe-èto* 'I have brought you something' vs. **Ja tebe ne priněs koe-ègo* 'I haven't brought you something'. Padučeva defines weak definiteness in the following way: a pronoun is weakly definite if its referent is known to the Speaker, but unknown to the Addressee; a particular case of this is a situation when the Speaker deliberately avoids definiteness. Therefore, the adverbs of the *nepodalěku*, *nedaleko*, *nevdaleke* type could be called weakly definite.

4 Shortcomings of NEDRS

The genre of review requires from its author to look for shortcomings in the publication under review. In this case, this task is quite complex: I cannot find in

NEDRS essential drawbacks, but see only some objective difficulties unavoidable in any study of this type. It goes without saying that such a huge work cannot be 100% free from minor inaccuracies and simple oversights. And although it is ungentlemanly to go nit-picking in a product of such a high quality, *le genre oblige*, and I will indicate a few problematic spots.

In the entry TAJNO ‘secretly’ (Issue 2) the synopsis lacks the indication of an important semantic feature that is used in the entry: ‘presence of the Observer’. According to this feature, the synonym series is divided into two sets: the presence of the Observer is relevant for *nezametno* ‘unnoticed’, *potixon’ku* ‘noiselessly’ and *ukradkoj* ‘furtively’; it is irrelevant for *tajno* ‘secretly’, *tajkom* ‘in secret’, *ispod-tiška* ‘on the sly’ and *vtixomolku* ‘on the quiet’.

The entry ULYBKA ‘smile_N’ (Issue 2) presents the shared meaning of the nouns *ulybka* ‘smile’, *usmeška* ‘grin’ and *uxmylka* ‘smirk’ as ‘stretched lips, which normally expresses that something is pleasant or hilarious for the subject’; does this mean that the generic meaning for these lexemes is ‘stretched lips’? It seems that this is not quite accurate: all types of smile are characterized by a general facial expression, where the whole face participates.

The entry ULOVKA ‘ruse’ (Issue 2) says that the synonyms *xitrost’* ‘trick’ and *manëvr* ‘maneuver’ can both be used in the instrumental case to denote the manner in which an action is performed, while having different referential statuses: generic for *xitrost’* and specific-referential for *manëvr*. As illustration the following examples are given: *On xitrost’ju* (<**ètoj xitrost’ju*) *otvlëk eë vñimanie* ‘He detracted her attention by ruse (<*by this ruse)’ vs. *Ètim lovkim manëvrom on ustranil svoego sopernika* ‘He removed his rival by this deft maneuver’. However, the sentence *On ètoj xitrost’ju otvlëk eë vñimanie* seems quite normal. It would be more accurate to say that *xitrost’* can be used in this role with any of the two statuses—generically or specific-referentially, but *manëvr* allows only for specific-referential use.

In some cases, one has the impression that two synonym series are separated without sufficient grounds. Thus, NEDRS presents the following two series:

- XUDOŠČAVYJ ‘lean’ (Issue 2): *xudoščavyj* ‘lean’, *podžaryj* ‘wiry’, *suxoj* lit. ‘dry’; ‘such that the volume of his body is **less** than average, because it contains no fat and **no extra** flesh’
- XUDOJ ‘thin [a living being]’ (Issue 2): *xudoj* ‘thin’, *toščij* ‘skinny’, *kostljavyj* ‘bony’; ‘such that the volume of his body is **much less** than average, because it contains no fat and **little** flesh’

It seems that the differing components do not impose the separation of these two series.

One of the main problems for the authors of NEDRS was polysemy. They had to isolate and describe the wordsense pertaining to the given series, and this requires many difficult decisions about the system of lexemes (= wordsenses) that compose the vocable under consideration. And the description of a multilexemic vocable raises the problem “a separate lexeme vs. a use of the same lexemes.” Under ‘a particular use of a lexeme’ the NEDRS authors understand such a use where the lexeme shows a minor semantic change with respect to its inherent meaning in specific contextual conditions. On many occasions, the authors speak of different ‘uses’ of a lexeme under description, since they obviously do not want to give this unit the status of a separate lexeme. It is quite probable that some solutions proposed with respect to real or potential polysemy will change in the process of further studies. It would be highly convenient for the dictionary’s user to have an index for already established wordsenses—since the present index of lexical units treated in NEDRS often does not make clear which wordsense is considered.

To conclude, let us repeat what we have started with: NEDRS is a huge step forward in the theoretical lexicology and practical lexicography. But not only in the lexicology/lexicography: it is a highly significant contribution to Russian studies in general and the whole of theoretical linguistics. (Remember, in particular, the system of formal linguistic notions introduced by Apresjan.) NEDRS, indeed, turned out to be a testing ground for a far more ambitious project: *Active Dictionary of Russian* (the first four volumes: Apresjan, Ju., ed. 2014—2023). This dictionary opens a new era in lexicology and lexicography—but here begins a new, different story.

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