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ABOUT SOME PECULIARITIES OF ELECTRONIC DICTIONARIES

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Abstract:

In this article there are the urgency of creating electronic dictionaries of various types is substantiated and the comparison of informative and navigational capabilities of traditional paper and electronic lexicographic products is carried out. A brief description of existing computer dictionaries is given.

Keywords: Computer lexicography, electronic dictionaries, traditional paper dictionaries, translation programs, translation automation, efficient search mechanism.

Nowadays computers occupy an increasingly important place not only among programmers and engineers, but also among a wide variety of users, including linguists, translators and specialists in need of prompt translation of foreign language information. In this regard, computer dictionaries are a very convenient handy tool in order to save time and optimize the process of understanding foreign language information. In addition, now there are translation programs that can produce more or less adequate translation of foreign language texts and can be of assistance in the work of specialists of various profiles. This work is devoted to the study of these problems, as well as the analysis of some linguistic software products aimed at automating the translation process. This research topic can be considered quite modern, since the history of the development and implementation of personal computers in everyday life (and even more so that it would be "within the power" to implement more or less modern machine translation programs) is hardly more than fifteen years old.

This topic acquires particular relevance if we take into account the fact that it is now in the world that it is increasingly integrating into the international community and that, along with economic and political barriers, it is largely hindered by language barriers. At the same time, there are not so many professional translators who are capable and willing to carry out such a process of communication between communities in all spheres of science and culture, which results in the fact that their services are not cheap. Therefore, it is now especially relevant to find ways to automate the process of translation carried out by a person as much as possible, in order, on the one hand, to maximally facilitate the hard work of a human translator, and on the other, to make this work as effective as possible. This can be done only by integrating the efforts of specialists in the fields of cybernetics, programming, psychology, and most importantly, linguistics. With the advent of computer technology, software creators have created a new type of dictionaries - an electronic dictionary.

This type of dictionary is an absolutely new word in the history of lexicography, marking a new qualitative stage in its development. It is now that electronic dictionaries have emerged from the shadow of paper dictionaries and are becoming independent players on the language platform, moreover, players who, it seems, will soon make the rest of the characters exhibits of the book museum. After all, electronic dictionaries have a number of obvious and significant advantages over traditional dictionaries. Their only drawback is their attachment to a personal computer and, therefore, limited availability. However, this drawback will soon be eliminated, if not completely, then at least for the most part, due to the ever-increasing pace of computerization, including the growing availability of portable computers.

There are quite a lot of electronic dictionaries now released, so we will focus only on bilingual English-Russian and Russian-English dictionaries. For example, let's take two of the most famous: Lingvo by Abby and MultiLex, developed by MediaLingua. It is interesting to compare these dictionaries, because the teams that create them profess different views on the principles of electronic lexicography. In the traditional approach, the minimum unit of access is the token (the name of the dictionary entry): you need to read the entire article to determine whether it contains the answer to our query. For dictionaries like Oxford, this presents a serious problem. For example, the verb 'set' has only 400 basic meanings (and many of them have sub meanings). The user would like the dictionary to localize the relevant information as much as possible. At the same time, we are not talking about the automatic selection of a translation equivalent (if we are talking about a translation dictionary). The specificity of the dictionary answer is that it gives a very diverse information about a word or phrase, and not just a translation match, it assumes an active choice of the user from several possible well-grounded alternatives. However, an attempt to solve the problem of an adequate reaction of the dictionary to a request inevitably encounters resistance from the very vocabulary material transferred from the paper dictionary.

Electronic dictionaries not only contain transcriptions, but can also pronounce words. There are also two approaches here. A sound synthesizer is built into MultiLex and all words are pronounced. However, it is dangerous to completely trust this approach without controlling it by transcription. The synthesizer can incorrectly place the stress or even distort the pronunciation of the word. In Abby Lingvo, the main vocabulary is delivered by an Oxford-based speaker. But, of course, the most important advantage of good electronic dictionaries is the simultaneous search not only by the title of a dictionary entry, but also over the entire huge volume of dictionaries, which is simply unrealistic in a paper version. Such a search creates a multidimensional portrait of a word, while not only specific examples of its use and stable expressions in which the word occurs, but also exposed, the linguistic laws to which the rules of word formation obey are extracted from the depths of the dictionary entry. Even a mobile electronic dictionary cannot reflect all the momentary movements of the language, but it can provide a key to decipher and understand these changes, making the user a co-author of the lexicographer. This is very important when an accurate semantic translation is required, because this is not the task of choosing a suitable expression, but in a broad sense, the display of one culture using the language of another.

Therefore, in Lingvo, you can build your own dictionary under a common shell. In fact, many of the dictionaries that developed in the mid-century linguistic atmosphere are outdated. They do not indicate the modern meanings of the old words, and many new words are simply missing. Literal transfer of such dictionaries to computers is futile. This has become especially evident in connection with the development of the Internet: most of the Web pages are composed of English texts written in a lively modern language, abundantly using colloquial vocabulary and slang. Hardly any of the existing English-Russian dictionaries can answer this challenge. Only electronic dictionaries can solve this problem. Most of the "paper" dictionaries are focused on a person who reads in a foreign language, that is, a person who finds "reference" words in a text he does not understand, helping to build a general semantic picture. A person "writing", in addition to knowing all the words used, must clearly understand how these words are combined with each other, what prepositions are used in this case, whether there are stable expressions that convey the necessary meaning.

Alas, if the "paper" dictionary meets the needs of the Reader, then he most often simply ignores the interests of the Writer in a non-native language! But in our age of electronic communications, almost every Internet user has become a writer! And here the electronic dictionary is much more useful than the "paper" one. Even the literal reproduction of a decent "paper" dictionary on a computer makes it possible to extract from it the information much needed by the Writer, buried in the depths of dictionary entries. For example, a user can open several dictionary entries on the screen at once, characterizing all the meanings of the word "get" (take, receive, get bored, etc.) both in one language and in another, and thus learn all the nuances of using the words.

However, the more correct way is to think about the writer beforehand when compiling the dictionary. To take into account his interests, one must be able to describe the ways of forming complex phrases. For example, how to convey in English the meaning of "rigging or falsifying election results"? This expression does not apply to idiomatic, therefore it should not be searched in the entire vocabulary. On the other hand, it cannot be translated correctly in parts. The most logical way to look for this expression is in the article "election". However, in order for it to appear there, you need the desire of the developers of the dictionary to put it there.

As a conclusion, we can say that humanity has not yet reached the level of complete automation of translation, and it probably will not come soon. The reason for this is probably the insufficient level of development of the sciences involved in the creation of such systems. It is too difficult to tell how a person translates - and even more difficult to simulate this process using a computer program. It is all the more difficult to do this, considering that a person thinks in images, and teaching this to a computer is impossible in principle (at least, at the present level of computer development).

Thus, speaking about the most promising ways of developing translation automation systems, one should probably focus on what is feasible at the moment, that is, on creating more efficient electronic dictionaries with the most efficient search and indexing mechanism, with the most integrated system of dictionary entries. If we take into account the development of Machine Translation systems, then the most promising direction here will be the improvement of the subsystems of grammatical analysis and synthesis, as well as an increase in the volume of contextual coverage of the text and the improvement of semantic chains in order to more accurately select the meanings of words.

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