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## AN ACTIVE DICTIONARY: USER NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS

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Key words: cognitive lexicography, EFL lexicography, combinatory thesaurus, dictionary user profile, lexicographic function, L2-production. This article focuses on user profiling in an active dictionary, i.e. outlining user needs and compiler's strategies of catering for them. Among the traditional alphabetical dictionaries designed for sporadic consultation in case of coming across an unfamiliar word, there is a growing demand for active dictionaries. The current research is conducted as a part of the PhD project on compiling an Active learner's construction-combinatory thesaurus (ALCCT) facilitating adult learners in L2 encoding activities. The aim of the present study is to identify the relevant user search questions and formulate the corresponding groups of user needs. The research procedure includes two online-lounged surveys with the participation of 53 and 115 respondents respectively, concerned with: i) most typical difficulties in L2 production and ii) most relevant search questions in a dictionary of L2 encoding tasks. The participants received two questionnaires designed in a simplified manner with no linguistic terminology. The first questionnaire focused on the respondents' self-assessment of their L2-production skills on the 5-point scale. The second questionnaire offered several blocks of questions, each being introduced with an example of the combinatory thesaurus "SCHOOL". The relevance of each of the questions was assessed by the subjects based on a gradual scale: from "Yes! Absolutely necessary!" to "No! It is not relevant!" The results of studying the ALCCT intended user expectations made it possible to design a user profile, i.e. identify user age, education, background knowledge and language expertise as well as formulate the three types of user needs: primary - occurring before the usage and concerned with the quantitative and qualitative constraints of the thesaurus registry, secondary - taking part in the process of the usage and tertiary - following from the systematic usage and fostering the development of L2 encoding skills. Concluding discussion calls for revision of the criteria of activeness of the dictionary as a more cognitively oriented learning tool and outlines the future research on the compiler's strategies of catering for the identified user needs.

# АКТИВНИЙ СЛОВНИК: КОРИСТУВАЦЬКІ ПОТРЕБИ ТА ОЧІКУВАННЯ

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Ключові слова: когнітивна лексикографія, навчальна лексикографія, комбінаторний тезаурус, профіль користувача словника, лексикографічні функції, іншомовна продукція. У статті основну увагу звернено на розбудову профілю користувача активного словника, тобто окреслення користувацьких потреб і стратегій укладачів щодо їхнього задоволення. Серед традиційних абеткових словників, призначених для спорадичного консультування в разі стрічання незнайомого слова, зростає попит на активні словники. Поточне дослідження проводиться в рамках дисертаційного проєкту з побудови Активного навчального конструкційно-комбінаторного тезауруса (АНККТ), призначеного для асистенції дорослих користувачів у продуктивних видах іншомовної мовленнєвої діяльності. Розвідка має на меті визначити релевантні користувацькі запити й сформулювати відповідні групи користувацьких потреб. Процедура дослідження містить два онлайн-опитування за участю 53 і 115 респондентів відповідно, що стосуються: і) найтиповіших труднощів іншомовного говоріння та письма;

іі) найактуальніших користувацьких запитів для активного словника.

Учасники отримали дві адаптовані спрощені анкети, в яких навмисно не вживалося жодних лінгвістичних термінів. Перша анкета зосередилась на самооцінюванні респондентами власних навичок іншомовної продукції за 5-бальною шкалою. Друга анкета стосувалась користувацьких запитів і була розділена на кілька блоків запитань, кожен з яких було проілюстровано фрагментом комбінаторного тезауруса «ШКОЛА». Релевантність кожного із запитів респонденти могли оцінити на основі градуальної шкали від «Так! Вкрай необхідно!» до «Ні! Це не важливо!». Результати вивчення очікувань і запитів потенційних користувачів АНККТ дозволили розробити профіль користувача, тобто визначити вік користувача, освіту, фонові знання та мовні компетенції тощо. На основі дослідження сформульовано три типи користувацьких потреб: первинні, що виникають до користування тезаурусом і стосуються його кількісних та якісних обмежень реєстру, вторинні, що беруть участь у процесі безпосереднього користування, та третинні, що випливають із систематичного користування словником і сприяють розвитку навичок конструювання власних іншомовних текстів. У статті дискутується перегляд критеріїв «активності» словника як більш когнітивно орієнтованого навчального засобу й окреслюється перспектива подальших досліджень стратегій задоволення визначених користувацьких потреб укладачами.

The majority of the existing lexicographic sources are *passive*, i.e. designed to assist their users in L1/L2 decoding tasks [10; 11, p. 174–175]. The purpose of such dictionaries is limited to a sporadic *consultation*, *i.e.* looking up an unfamiliar word in the process of reading, listening or translation [12; 16]. Following the longstanding traditions of alphabetic wordlists, the classical reference sources have not changed for centuries but for some minor elaborations on the lexicographic description [cf. 8; 9]. The alternative type of lexicographic works is the *active dictionary* 

(AD) designed for encoding tasks (i.e. L2 speaking and writing) and, thus, modelling not only language but the very possibility of generating texts (speech) from a limited repository of linguistic means [3; 10, p. 3; 8, p. 278–280]. In the broad sense, ADs encompass all the *combinatorial dictionaries, dictionaries of synonyms, thematic dictionaries, thesauri, constructicons, activators* etc. [3; 11, p. 179–180], those compiled to the onomasiological approach of studying the linguistic signs, i.e. in the direction form their meaning to the variants of their forms. In

the narrow sense, AD is a lexicographic tool for text production only [14]. Although some scholars view the "activeness" of such dictionaries only in terms of the integrative and overall description of separate words [3] leaving their users overinformed and under-instructed, it might be reasonable to research what the actual user expectations are in respect to AD object language, content structure and functionality [15]. One of such dictionaries, introduced and discussed in the present study, is the *active learner's construction-combinatory thesaurus* (ALCCT) – an EFL cognitively oriented tool for adult L2 production.

Among the ways of making dictionaries more user-friendly some are grounded on the findings of the contemporary *dictionary use research* [7; 17] and the user perspective in lexicography [4; 16]. Within the framework of the so-called theory of lexicographic functions, types of users, user needs and situations of use are placed at the centre of compiler's decisions [1; 16, p. 119]. However, there are several methodological flaws of the functional approach when it comes to the compilation of AD. Typically, the researchers have at their disposal a number of direct and indirect methods to collect the data on the intended user characteristics, search questions, expectations, needs, and situations of use that are analyzed to various variables as a part of *user profiling* [1; 12; 16, p. 119]. Still, the design of such survey limits the respondents' feedback. Specifically, as M.C.C. Cubillo puts it, user *expectations* encompass the idea of a dictionary they typically have in mind and the types of information they want to find in it [7, p. 206-208]. Hence, providing the alternative user *search questions* in AD surveys seems to be critical to the causality of the results.

Furthermore, the formulation of user needs - the analytical interpretation of the data collected, relies on a deduction-based procedure, common sense and the compiler's intuitive understanding of the situation of use (with little or no consideration of any lingocognitive or linguodidactive grounds) [1; 16, p. 44]. Consequently, the compiler's strategies of catering to the user needs are restricted to some minor adaptations, formatting, and simplification of defining language [2, p. 20-22]. Meanwhile, the researches on cognitive accessibility of data and the dictionary content structure remain relatively limited [cf. 11]. The issue at stake remains even more unattended when it comes to *AD user profiling* [18]. The present article aims at identifying the relevant AD user search questions and formulating the corresponding groups of user needs with respect to ALCCT. It is hypothesized that there is a demand for a new kind of AD, namely, ALCCT. The object of the study is the user perspective in active lexicography; the subject of the study concerns ALCCT user needs and expectations. The research offers an onlinelounged survey on AD user expectations and search questions, highlights the main findings and formulates primary, secondary and tertiary ALCCT user needs. Some practical implications are concerned with the compiler's strategies in the final section of the article concerning compilation of ALCCT "TRAVELLING".

**I. The theoretical prerequisites.** The compilation process of *Active learner's combinatory-constructive thesaurus* starts with user profiling to the proposed algorithm (fig. 1.). First, the preliminary online-launched questionnaire offers the most topical search questions, foregrounds the intended usage situation

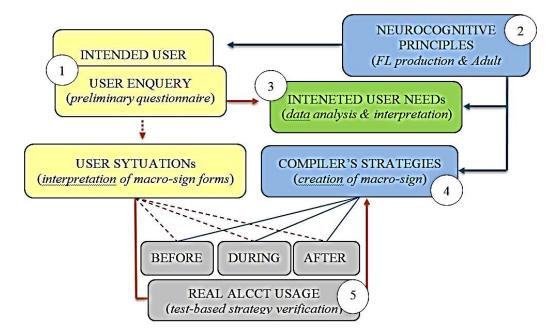


Fig. 1. ALCCT user profile model

and collects the details concerning the participants' age, native language, foreign language proficiency, academic background, possible difficulties concerning language learning, motivation etc. Secondly, the study outlines some lexicographically relevant neurocognitive and usage-based principles concerning the survey results and L2 learning (i.e. the researches on adults learning and FL production in our case).

Third, based on the principles and the survey findings the research formulates a wash of relevant user needs and couples them with the corresponding compiler's strategies of catering to each of the three groups of the needs, i.e. primary (BEFORE-usage; "function-related needs" [17, p. 283]), secondary (DURING-sage; usage-related needs [ibid, p. 283]) and tertiary (AFTER-usage; occurring in macrocontextual situations). This is compatible with a revised version of lexicographical communication theory [5] according to which the user needs can arise in such situations, as *meso-contextual* (those concerned with user's objectives and types of data to be selected), *micro-contextual* (related to actual usage questions) and *macro-contextual* (general socio-cultural contributions of a dictionary) [ibid, p. 10-12]. The latter, being vague and shadowed in the original paper, is redefined in our research as further assistance of a dictionary in the formation of a user L2 comprehension or/and production-oriented knowledge model based on a certain lexicographical message or dictionary domain as the whole. Finally, when the dictionary is compiled, a testbased verification can be offered based on the real user situations concerned with the interpretation of lexicographic text before, during and after the actual usage. Thus, the dictionary remains open to further adaptation and editing.

II. Methods and materials. During the period of March-June, 2020, two anonymous voluntarily questionnaires were distributed in Facebook via google form link to collect the information about the potential Ukrainian users of ALCCT. The first form, filled in by 53 people, aimed at gathering the information concerning some problems, objectives and formats of L2 learning. The second form was granted more attention and collected 115 unique responses concerned with the assessment of the relevance of information types in the thesaurus. Age, gender, education are similar for the respondents of both forms. It is necessary to note that all the questions were deliberately simplified and exemplified (if necessary) to reach people of all backgrounds. For instance, the position of synonymy and antonymy formulates the question as: "What are the similar or opposite words to the word "SCHOOL" by its meaning?"; and word-usage example is introduced as: "How is the word used in real practice / speech?"; the questionnaire avoids any linguistic terminology.

**III. Survey results.** The current section highlights some of the survey results on the intended user characteristics, search questions and expectations.

Age of the intended users. Most of the potential users are adults ageing between 22 and 35-78 respondents (67.9 % and 67,83 % in both surveys respectively), less than one third are about the age of 35 and 50 – 23 people (18.87 % and 20,00 %), whereas the age group of 51 – 120 years of age are around 7 % each and people in the segment of 14–21 years of age are least represented. Hence, such age stratification implies some previous education and language training.

*Native language*. About 55 % of all respondents indicated Ukrainian as their native language, 45 % – stated Russian for this position. It infers a considerable cultural distance between the users and English native speakers determining the language of translation and requiring the use of linguacultural notes.

*Education.* The majority of the intended users don't have a specialized linguistic/philological qualification of BA / MA (43 %), about a third of all has philological higher education qualification (33 %), 5 % – hold higher pedagogical education, whereas less than 20 % don't have higher education at all. Hence, the compilation of AD should be oriented for non-linguists.

*Language learning motivation.* The majority of the respondents learn a foreign language for "themselves" (83.02 %) (i.e. self-improvement, communication, travel abroad etc.), job promotion is a strong motivation for 7 subjects (13.21 %), and only 2 persons (3.77 %) were considering language practice for the sake of passing the international language exams.

Foreign language competence and learning style. We asked the participants to choose one of the positions characterizing their L2 learning style. Around one-third of all the potential users are independent (but seldom fortunate) learners (36 %), about 41 % of all keep changing language tutors, about 18 % – quitted attempts to learn a language, and 10 % have succeeded mastering a foreign language at the advanced level. Therefore, most of the intended users are in the process of learning a foreign language and are likely to adhere to self-directed and teacherfacilitated individual classes.

*Typical challenges.* We asked to identify what activity the respondents find most challenging. Speaking turns out to be the most difficult activity for 45 % of respondents, the rest have experienced difficulties with listening (about 30 %), writing (19 %) and reading (6 %). To specify the possible problems related to L2 production the following section of the survey encouraged the respondents to indicate how confident they were in a certain kind of activity based on a gradual scale of self-assessment. We deliberately

did not use any specific scale of L2 proficiency level as far as the goal was to trace the general relative tendency of the respondents' answering the question: "How do you assess your skills in ...?" The answers might range between excellent, good, satisfactory and unsatisfactory. Most of the intended users struggle with productive skills at the level of phrase, sentence and text. The highest scores were granted to pronunciation (20 % – excellent, 30 % – good, 30 % – satisfactory), guessing unfamiliar word while reading (43 % - good, 28 % - satisfactory) and while listening (17 % - good, 49 % - satisfactory). The subjects gave less optimistic scores to memorizing new words (28 % - satisfactory, 42 % - unsatisfactory) and recollecting necessary topical words in communication (28 % - satisfactory, 46 % - unsatisfactory). The rest of the skills got the lowest points, i.e. combining words in phrases (58 % - unsatisfactory), semantic paraphrasing (69 % – unsatisfactory), transformative paraphrasing (81 % – unsatisfactory), the accuracy of sentences (61 % - unsatisfactory), coherent and cohesive text building (69 % - unsatisfactory), starting, maintaining and ending a conversation with proper communicative formulas/expressions (66 % unsatisfactory). These results might account for the traditional receptive methods of teaching adopted in Ukraine in the previous decade.

Dictionary usage motivation. To identify most frequent dictionary searches the respondents were asked how they use dictionaries. Most of them (94.3 %) need a dictionary to find out the meaning, usage and transcription of the unfamiliar word, 79.3 % are interested in the disambiguation of similar words. Equally important are such questions as the search of synonyms/antonyms, phraseological units/ idioms and collocations to verbalize the intention of the user (75.5 %). Polysemy (finding all the senses of the same word) seems to be less important (66 %). It is interesting to note that around 56 % are trying to use a dictionary for building their own sentences and texts, whereas around the same amount of participants (53 %) don't consider dictionary to be an appropriate instrument for systematic learning of words and collocations.

*Type of media.* Most of the participants use mobile applications (45,8 %), about one third prefers using web-based dictionaries (33,3 %), around 12 % of users have an e-dictionary installed on the PC, and the same amount of 4 % each adheres to paper-based and paper plus e-version lexicographic sources.

The second questionnaire sought to identify the relevant *lexicographical search questions*. To provide some context of ALCCT use, we grouped all the questions into the four blocks and used illustrations from a similar combinatory thesaurus "SCHOOL" [20, p. 22–24]: (1) General topic "SCHOOL", (2) A single word "SCHOOL", (3) A single phrase "TO BE EXPELLED FROM SCHOOL" and (4) Sentences and texts in the situations related to the topic "SCHOOL". Each of them provides some context of use and a brief entry statement: "Imagine that you want to learn how to...? What would you like to find in the dictionary and how relevant is it PERSONALLY for you?". In the first block of questions, the participants were asked to assess how important it would be for them to find each item in the dictionary provided they were to speak in English on a topic SCHOOL. The response options offered a gradual scale: from "Yes! Important! 100 %!" to "Maybe... Let it be!" and "I don't care! It's extra! Hardly relevant!". As the results demonstrate, keywords organized in a network fashion are the most relevant for the block (see Table 1).

The idea of alphabetic listing was supported only by 10 % of participants. Still, 45 % of respondents consider including some topical texts into the dictionary. In the following block, we outlined for the participants a situation of learning a single word SCHOOL from the topic with the same name. It appears that the users are likely to need the transcription (56 %), translation into native language (68 %), usage (62 %), synonyms/antonyms of the word (72 %), disambiguation of synonyms (65 %), derivative word forms (68 %), and the word collocations (66 %). Other information types seem to be less significant, namely idioms (51 %), illustrations (49 %) and polysemy (50 %). The third block was concerned with a single phrase "to be expelled from the school". To learn it the users are likely to need: translation into native language (60.00 %), the example of usage (62.61 %), synonyms/antonyms (54.78 %), phrasal transformations (55.65 %), frequency (50.43 %) and systemic organization (51.30 %), while alphabetic arrangement and illustrations seem to be redundant (67.83% and 55.65% – indicated them as irrelevant). The final block related to production at the level of sentences about SCHOOL. For the majority of the participants, it would mean having in the dictionary the following information: patterns of simple (75.65 %) and complex/compound sentences (62.61 %), models of typical communicative situations (81.74 %), scenarios of starting, maintaining and ending a typical conversation on this topic (51.13 %), as well as modifications of sentences and syntactic paraphrasing (50,43 %). Meanwhile, grammar-based exercises seem relevant only to 47.83 % of respondents.

**IV. Concluding discussion.** As it follows from the results of the survey the AD intended user is an adult L2 learner with no linguistic or pedagogical educational background whose first language is Ukrainian or Russian. They use it for systematic L2 learning in speaking and writing, being driven by the motivation to master conversing on a certain topic for their personal development, travelling and informal communication. For this, users expect the AD to offer: - the onomasiological network-like content structure (i.e. a *conceptual thesauri*);

- the integrative semantic-syntactic description of the keywords and the most common types of phrases co-occurring with them (i.e. *combinatory dictionaries, combinatory thesauri, constructioncombinatory dictionaries*);

- a possibility for the immediate usage of the lemmas in their own sentences/texts as well as semantic and syntactic paraphrasing (i.e. *dictionaries of constructions / patterns*).

Hence, the results prove a demand of an *Active Learner's Constructive-Combinatory Thesaurus* to meet these *expectations*. To outline and illustrate the further *user needs* the research offers ALCCT "TRAVELLING". Its genuine purpose is to provide an enriched EFL-environment for independent or teacher-facilitated adults' practice of speaking and writing on a conversational English topic "TRAVELLING".

The functional analysis of the data and formulation of the user needs usually relies on a commonsense analysis of a certain type of user situations, i.e. communicative, cognitive, and procedural [cf. 17, p. 278-279]. However, in the ALCCT-like sources, various types of user situations merge at different stages of dictionary use. Although it is an EFL dictionary concerned with L2 communication, the evidence of the neurocognitive and linguodidactic researches prove the plausibility of combining the subject area study with the lingual component [6]; hence, what is referred to as "cognitive user situation' [16] or rather a knowledge-oriented situation is treated in ALCCT as well. Moreover, the needs related to the application of the L2-linguistic and encyclopedic knowledge to the L2 text production involves a great deal of procedural memory and keeping track of the actual communication. Logically, the so-called "operative user situations" [17, p. 279] are to be served in ALCCT as well. Therefore, it is more reasonable to discuss not the types of situations [cf. 5], but the types of user needs occurring before, during and after the actual dictionary usage in the light of the relevant neurocognitive researches on L2 production. Consequently, the study offers *primary*, secondary and tertiary user needs.

**Primary user needs** concern types of data to be included [17, p. 283], i.e. <u>ALCCT lexicographic</u> <u>object (WHAT-factor?)</u>: most topical keywords with their synonyms and phrases (multiword expressions) as well as the most common sentence patterns of typical communicative situations within a target L2-domain. The registry selects the data from a specialized domain-specific corpus of the authentic texts on TRAVELLING. It allows identifying and marking with colours the three levels of lemma priority according to their frequency, status in the synonymy network and lingodidactic value. Hence, the ALCCT users can prioritize their lexical choice, form a native-like L2-prototypically and avoid the information overload.

Secondary user needs deal with the logic of navigation and the actual usage of ALCCT. These are satisfied in the process lingocognitive lexicographical coding (HOW&WHY-factors? - lemma structuring and semantisation). As it follows from the survey results, the keywords and phrases need to be organized based on their schematic meaning into a network-like conceptual model of the topic / *conceptual ontology* [19, p. 76], i.e. the visual part of ALCCT. The ontology implies a multilevel hierarchy of such levels: conceptual sphere, domains, parcels, and pivotal concepts with their conceptual attributes objectivized at the level of synonyms and collocations [ibid., p. 81]. The semantic-syntactic integrative description of lemmas forms a construction-combinatory portrait of a keyword/ a pivotal concept including such main phrasal construction-based sets, as AdjN1, N2N1, N1N2, N2PN1, N1PN2, VN, NVP [20, p. 21-22]. Each phrasal set groups the phrases according to the conceptual structure of their meaning. The entry design, whether of a keyword or a phrase, encompasses a lemma form, its translation into Ukrainian, a schematic cognitive definition, usage example from the corpus, cross reference of synonyms, antonyms, and constructional transformations (i.e. ways of paraphrasing a unit based on the general schematic meaning [ibid., p. 20]). Additionally, the thesaurus includes some lingoencyclopedic notes in case there are culture-specific concepts or highly idiomatic units. Multimodal means of semantisation include schemes, mindmaps, pictures, memes, audio- and video materials etc.

Tertiary user needs are concerned with the independent usage and automatization of lemmas in typical syntactic patterns and communicative situations (What-for? When? Where? Who-with? In what order? - usage / pragmatic dimension). They are satisfied in the *syntactic constructor*, i.e. the interactive part of the ALCCT. It comprises the four levels of L2 constructing: 1) simple sentence patterns with their variations, 2) complex and compound sentence patterns, 3) script-models of typical communicative (for dialogues and narration [cf. 15]), and 4) a set of cross-domain networks of idioms based on conceptual metaphor/metonymy for the development of creative speaking and writing. The conceptually relevant sets of lemmas are retrieved from the ALCCT visual part to be filled in the slots of the syntactic patterns. Thus, adult users can use the thesaurus as a sufficient tool for L2 independent learning.

Further specification of the user needs and the corresponding compiler's strategies (i.e. "lexicographic solutions" [cf. 17, p. 279]) as applied to the compilation of ALCCT "TRAVELLING' is the subject of another discussion. The current study proves a growing demand for active dictionaries and more cognition-oriented presentation of information in L2 learning tools. The future research is to ground the user perspective into an emerging framework of *cognitive lexicography* as a transdisciplinary endeavour bridging the relevant findings of neuroand lingocognitive science with the challenges faced by dictionary makers.

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