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František Heiser

INTERDISCIPLINARITY AS AN IDEAL, CRUCIAL SUBSTRATE FOR COMPLEX AND ORIGINAL PHILOLOGICAL SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH (THE VERSATILE V. I. DAL AND HIS SUPREME PHILOLOGICAL WORKS)

ABSTRACT

The present scientific paper deals with the work of the unmissable Russian linguist, brilliant ethnographer and lexicographer, tireless collector of folklore material and at the same time an important writer of the middle of the 19th century – Vladimir Ivanovich Dal, whose 220th anniversary of birth we are commemorating this year. The actual legacy of his culminating, monumental lexicographical work, on which he worked for 53 years, the extensive and, from the point of view of linguistic diachrony and synchrony, Explanatory Dictionary of the Living Great Russian Language, forms the basis of this paper. In it we also find another of Dal's excellent, original and fascinating works – Proverbs of the Russian People. In the present paper we can also get acquainted with V. I. Dal's lively contacts with A. S. Pushkin, V. A. Zhukovsky and other prominent personalities of the time, as V. I. Dal was not only a philologist, but also a renowned physician, a sailor, the founder of the Russian Geographical Society, a prominent ministerial official, the author of textbooks on zoology, botany, physics, logic, and so on. The present article further acquaints us with the reactions of prominent linguists and other personalities of Russian spiritual life to the work of V. I. Dal, among whom we include, for example, Jan Baudouin de Courtenay, Ferdinand de Saussure, M. P. Pogodin, V. G. Belinsky, Andrei Belov, Vladimir Nabokov, Mikhail Sholokhov, Sergei A. Yesenin, A. I. Solzhenitsyn and others.

KEYWORDS

Russian language; Russian literature; Russian fairy tales; folklore; ethnography; Explanatory dictionary; legends; features; clauses; proverbs; sayings; stories; short stories; riddles; superstitions; funny stories.

1 Introduction

The anniversaries of important linguists and writers are an excellent opportunity to evaluate their lifelong scientific research and pedagogical work, to recall and confirm the current results of their scientific research and to indicate the prospects for further development of scientific fields on which their professional interest was predominantly focused. Science detached from the practical application of its results in the university educational process, and subsequently in direct teaching practice, would be a dead ground from which the seed of further knowledge and further inspiration for quality, serious and qualified preparation of university students for their future profession would not sprout.

For those who took a part in a dignified reminder of the scientific, pedagogical and human career of the Czechoslovak university professor Roman Mrázek, whose dominant areas of scientific research were mainly the comparative composition and syntax of the Russian language, morphological-syntactic laws of the Russian language in comparison with Czech and other Slavic languages, further synchronous and diachronic processes in the vocabulary, as well as etymology and historical development of Slavic languages, also includes our fraternal, sincere thanks.

This paper about the interdisciplinarity and originality of philological scientific research is connected with a fundamental, unmissable personality of Russian and European philology - Vladimir Ivanovich Dal, whose 220th birth anniversary we are solemnly commemorating (coincidentally, Professor Mrázek and V. I. Dal were both born in November).

We remember Vladimir Ivanovich Dal as an outstanding Russian linguist, brilliant ethnographer and lexicographer, tireless collector of folklore material, but also as a prominent writer of the mid-19th century. He was a man whose broad-spectrum scientific interests are still astonishing after 220 years, he was a military physician, epidemiologist, a professional sailor, a prominent ministerial official, the main founder of the Russian Geographical Society, the author of textbooks in zoology and botany, who also had the natural sciences at heart, which explain the functioning of the world based on natural laws, physics and logic.

Vladimir I. Dal is the central point of this paper. Vladimir Dal, as the author of a grandiose, and at the time unbeatable and unsurpassed, supreme lexicographic work – *Толковый словарь живого великорусского языка* (*Tolkovyy slovar' zhivogo velikorussskogo iazyka*; *Explanatory Dictionary of the Living Great Russian Language*), which he worked on for 53 years. Vladimir Dal, as the author of the invaluable *Пословицы русского народа* (*Poslovitsy russkogo naroda*; *Proverbs of the Russian People*). Vladimir Ivanovich as the author of *Цыганка* (*Tsyganka*; *Gypsy Woman*), *Русские сказки. Пяток первый* (*Russkie skazki. Piatok pervyy*; *Russian Fairy Tales. The First Pentad*), *Картины из русского быта* (*Kartiny iz russkogo byta*; *Pictures of the Ordinary Russian Life*), *О поверьях, суевериях и предрассудках русского народа* (*O pover'iyakh,*

sueveriiakh i predrassudkakh russkogo naroda; On Beliefs, Superstitions and Prejudices of the Russian People).

2 Significant milestones of the professional life and work of V. I. Dal

Vladimir Ivanovich Dal (1801–1872) was born in present-day Ukraine in Lugansk. His pseudonym Kazak Lugansky also comes from there. His parents were highly educated. The father was of Danish descent, his mother was of German descent. Johan Christian Dahl (later adopted the Russian name Ivan Matveyevich Dal), was known as a theologian, physician and linguist. He spoke several languages: German, English, French, Latin, Greek, Idish, Old Jewish and Russian. Grandma o V.I. Dal from his mother's site according to available sources, came from a family of French Huguenots, followers of Calvinism, who had a very close relationship with Russian literature.

It is very interesting that V. I. Dal also considered the Russian Empire, not Denmark, to be his real homeland. From the age of 13, he studied at the St. Petersburg Naval Cadet Corps. He was awarded the rank of lower officer “michman”. The stay in this school and everything related to the student years and work on the Black Sea Fleet was described in the legend *Мичман Поцелуев, или живучи оглядывайся* (*Michman Potseluev, ili zhivuchi ogliadyvajsia; Michman Potseluev, or the Living Look Back*).

In 1826, he began to study medicine, following his father's example, at the University of Dorpat, which in 1893 was renamed to the University of Yuryev. It was one of the oldest universities in the Russian Empire, today located in Estonia and its official name is the University of Tartu. Already during his university studies, he begins to publish his first verses in the magazine *Славянин* (*Slavjanin; The Slav*). Three years later, he published his first prose, legend *Цыганка* (*Tsyganka; Gypsy Woman*).

During the years 1828–1829, he found himself on the battlefield of the Russia-Turkish War, when he proved to be a brave, operative, resourceful officer and military physician, for which he was awarded the Order of St. Vladimir of the 4th degree by Emperor Nikolai I Pavlovich. In 1831 he also took part in the Polish campaign and during the years 1839–1840 he actively participated in the Khivan campaign. V. I. Dal was a very skilled surgeon and ophthalmologist, he even had an excellent orientation in homeopathy.

In 1832 V. I. Dal also publishes an excellent work *Русские сказки из предания народного изустного на грамоту гражданскую переложенные* (*Russkie skazki iz predaniia narodnogo izustnogo na gramotu grazhdanskiu perelozhennye...*; *Russian Fairy Tales Born of Oral Tradition and Translated for Civic, Folk Education*). Dal again proved to be an excellent writer and storyteller. Imperial censorship also found criticism

of tsarist power in his tales, so they wanted to imprison him. However, he was saved by Vasily Andreyevich Zhukovsky (1783–1852), a Russian poet and literary critic who was the teacher of the successor to the imperial throne. These books were destroyed, a few copies have been preserved. One of them was given to the Russian genius poet Alexander Sergejevich Pushkin. It was V. Zhukovsky who introduced V. I. Dal with Pushkin. In this context, it should be mentioned that after the “blockade” of *Русские сказки* (*Russkie skazki; Russian Fairy Tales*) V. I. Dal continues to work on *Естественная история Оренбургского края* (*Estestvennaia istoriia Orenburgskogo kraia; Natural History of the Orenburg Region*).

He travelled a lot in the Southern Urals, his passion was to collect folk and ethnographic material, but at the same time, he was fascinated by the natural sciences. Dal’s rich collections of fauna and flora have so impressed experts in those fields that in a short time he gets to the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences, its mathematics and physics department, and becomes a valid member-correspondent.

He transformed all the collected materials on the ethnography of numerous nationalities, especially Russians, Bashkirs and Kazakhs, into his works, such as: *Охота на волков* (*Okhota na volkov; Hunting for Wolves*), *Башкирская русалка* (*Bashkirskaiia rusalka; The Bashkir Mermaid*), *Майна* (*Maina*), *Обмирание* (*Obmiranie; The Stiffness*), *Башкиры. Этнографический очерк. Описание башкирцев и их образа жизни*; *The Bashkirs. An Ethnographic Feature. Their Characteristics and Way of Life*).

V.I. Dal in the footsteps of his parents, in addition to Russian, had an excellent command of 12 other languages, very well acquainted with the Turkish languages, which represent one of the branches of the Altai languages (Altai-mountain massif in central Asia, on the borders of Russia, Kazakhstan, China and Mongolia). Dal was therefore considered in Russia to be one of the founders of turcology (Turk-Tatar languages).

In 1833–1839, Dal’s fictional *Были и небылицы Казака Луганского* (*Byli i nebylitsy Kazaka Luganskogo; The Stories of Kazak Lugansky*) were published.

V. I. Dal also took an active part in various military campaigns, which he embodied in his memoirs *Донская конная артиллерия* (*Donskaia konnaia artilleriia; The Don Cavalry Artillery*), *Письма друзьям из похода в Хи́ву* (*Pis'ma druz'iam iz pochoda v Khivu; Letters to Friends from the Expedition to Khiva*). For the sake of completeness, this is the Khanate of Khiva of the Turkish Uzbek nation in Asia, which has been the protectorate of the Russian Empire since 1873.

In 1832, V. I. Dal through V. A. Zhukovsky (1783–1852), a prominent Russian poet and literary critic, a representative of early Russian Romanticism, introduces A. S. Pushkin.

V. I. Dal gave the great Pushkin his book of fairy tales *Русские сказки. Пяток первый Казака Луганского* (*Russkie skazki. P'iatok pervyuj Kazaka Luganskogo; Russian Fairy Tales. The First Pentad by Kazak Lugansky*). And in return Aleksandr Sergejevich donates V. I. Dal’s manuscript version of his new fairy tale *Сказка о попе и работни-*

ке его Балде (*Skazka o pope i robotnike ego Balde; The Tale of the Priest and His Workman Balda*). This first meeting was of great importance, as A.S. Pushkin together with V. I. Dal go to the Orenburg region, where Dal accompanies him in the footsteps of Yemelyan Pugachev, whom Pushkin worked on in his work *История Пугачева (Istoriia Pugacheva; The History of Pugachev)*. Yemelyan I. Pugachev was a Don Cossack who was at the forefront of the peasant uprising in the Russian Empire in 1773–1775 during the reign of Ekaterina II – the Great (ruled in 1762–1796).

A. S. Pushkin after a dramatic duel with Dantes was in the medical care of a team of physicians, which also included Dr. V. I. Dal, who i.a. recorded all the circumstances and the course of treatment of the mortally wounded Pushkin. Even before the tragic duel of A. S. Pushkin, he gave Dal a rare ring with an emerald, because he realized that his end was near. The autopsy of the body of a Russian genius was performed by I. T. Spassky and Dr. V. I. Dal.

Since 1841, Dal has worked at the Ministry of the Interior in St. Petersburg as the head of the minister's office, but he also works at the ministry that managed the ownership and registration of the land. In the next eight years, Dal's literary work flourished. His works are marked by the principles of the natural school. Dal is also the author of textbooks on botany and zoology, which were written in the living Russian language. These textbooks were also beautifully illustrated by A. P. Sapozhnikov.

He received a reprimand and a stern warning for his short story *Ворожейка (Vorozheika; The Witch)*, in which censorship immediately saw criticism of the Tsarist top. He was suggested to move to Moscow for work, V. I. Dal then decided on the provincial city of Nizhny Novgorod, where he lived for 10 years. It was here that he was able to devote himself fully to linguistic activities, working tirelessly on the *Explanatory Dictionary of the Living Great Russian Language*. He did incredible things for this city – he built two hospitals, organized various courses for farmers, such as tailoring, blacksmithing, beekeeping, gardening and others. He also supported budding writers such as N. A. Dobrolyubov, P. Melnikov-Pechersky.

It is in Nizhny Novgorod where he publishes his interesting works *О наречиях русского языка (O narechiach russkogo iazyka; On the Dialects of the Russian Language)*, *Матросские досуги (Matroskie dosugi; Sailors' Spare Time)* and a number of articles dealing with the relationship between education and enlightenment, the everyday life of the Novgorod people, customs and their traditions.

In the provincial city of Nizhny Novgorod, his many years of work on *Пословицы русского народа (Poslovitsy russkogo naroda; Proverbs of the Russian People)* continue. The first attempt to publish them dates back to 1853, unfortunately, it was unsuccessful. It was not until later, in the more liberal period of Alexander's reforms. We have in mind the reign of Emperor Alexander II Nikolayevich – the Liberator.

After the stay of V. I. Dal in Nizhny Novgorod comes the Moscow period of his work. Here he completes *Proverbs of the Russian People, Полное собрание сочинений*

(*Polnoe sobranie sochinenii; The Complete Works*), *Повесту (Povesti; Novels)*, *Солдатские досуги (Soldatskie dosugi; Soldiers' Spare Time)*, *Два сорока бывальщчинок для крестьян (Dva sороka byval'shchinok dlia krest'ian; Two Forty True Stories for Peasants)* and others.

During the period 1841–1849 he published in St. Petersburg *Полтора слова о нынешнем русском языке (Poltora slova o nyneshnem russkom iazyke; One and a Half Words about the Contemporary Russian Language)*, the legend *Похождения Христиана Христиановича Виольдамура и его Аршета (Pokhozheniia Khristiana Khristianoviicha Viol'damura i ego Arsheta; The Adventures of Christian Christianovich Violdamur and his Arshet)*, *Сочинения Казака Луганского (Sochineniia Kazaka Luganskogo; Works of Kazak Lugansky)*, *О русских пословицах (O russkikh poslovitsakh; On Russian Proverbs)*, and especially *О повериях, суевериях и предрассудках русского народа (O poveriiaakh, sueveriiaakh i predrassudkakh russkogo naroda; On Beliefs, Superstitions and Prejudices of the Russian People)*.

In 1859 V. I. Dal retires from the official position of State Councillor, with the sole aim of completing two fundamental works: *Explanatory Dictionary of Living Great Russian Language* and *Proverbs of the Russian People*. Several editions of these *Proverbs* have been published, and for one of them the preface was written by the Nobel Prize winner for literature M. Sholokhov under the title *Сокровищница народной мудрости (Sokrovishchnitsa narodnoi mudrosti; Treasury of National Wisdom)*.

V. I. Dal throughout his life, collected folklore material, folk songs, fairy tales, captured interesting situations at fairs, constantly became acquainted with rich folk traditions. He knew how to play various musical instruments, he knew how to work on a lathe. He was also interested in spiritualism, studying and expanding his knowledge of homeopathy.

Towards the end of his life, he translated the Old Testament, which is the first part of the Christian Bible and a collection of books from the first millennium BC.

In 1871 he converted from the Lutheran faith to Orthodoxy.

V. I. Dal is a typical representative of Russian romantic nationalism, which in a sense tried to free Russia and the Russian language from Greek-Latin and German-French language influences. His literary and linguistic works were therefore saturated with Russian vernacular words, proverbs and sayings from the ordinary, everyday way of life of the people.

His supreme, and at the same time in terms of volume unsurpassed, lexicographic work is the already mentioned *Explanatory Dictionary of Living Great Russian Language*, which he developed himself and over which he worked continuously for 53 years! The dictionary contains more than 200,000 lexical units and more than 30,000 proverbs, sayings, riddles, and vernacular expressions. He dedicated his whole life to this lexicographic work. In the dictionary, we find an inexhaustible source of wealth of the Russian language, especially the wealth of Russian synonyms. Thanks to the tireless work of V. I. Dal thousands of Russian dialect forms

of words have also been preserved for contemporary science. In the lexicological processing of the Russian vocabulary, Dal preferred an appropriate dose of Russian purism and strongly recommended replacing incomprehensible, borrowed, foreign words with neoplasms that would be derived from the Slavic word base. He could not accept the expressive and arrogant use of words of foreign origin in the Russian language environment. Dal's word-formation was based primarily on the then living language of agriculture, which was criticized by opponents of his works. It should be emphasized that, despite his contemporaries' reservations about linguistic methods of vocabulary, his gigantic vocabulary, which can also be read as a work of art, created a solid Russian foundation and inspiration for masters of words such as Andrei Belyi, Vladimir Nabokov and others. He became a rare source of inspiration for important linguists, such as Jan Baudouin de Courtenay (1845–1929), a Russian linguist of Polish origin, a prominent Slavist, a pioneer of phonology and the founder of the Kazan school, as well as the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913), founder of contemporary linguistics, father of structuralism in linguistics, Indo-Europeanist and founder of semiology, theory of language significance. His grandiose *Explanatory Dictionary...* became a mythological symbol of Russian cultural identity.

V. I. Dal appropriately analysed and subsequently classified the rich lexicon from various areas of life, using the nesting way of organizing vocabulary on the basis of belonging to the language family or based on kinship relations in it. In the *Explanatory Dictionary...* there are the book, folk, dialect, professional words, an incredible number of phraseologies, and thousands of established speech connections. There are technical terms from individual crafts, from the peasant way of life, from medical practice, from the field of geology and botany, from the navy and the like. There are also rare words related to wedding ceremonies and other areas of social life. During his stay in Moscow, where he lived on Bolshaya Gruzinskaya Street, he published this epoch-making work. He was literally pushed into publishing by Mikhail Petrovich Pogodin (1800–1875), a well-known Russian writer, historian and philosopher, with whose generous help V. I. Dal in 1868 unanimously became an honorary member of the Russian Academy of Sciences. The entire dictionary was published in the years 1863–1866. He also received the gold Constantine Medal from the Imperial Russian Geographical Society for the first copies of the *Explanatory Dictionary...*. And after the publication of the entire *Explanatory Dictionary...* he was honoured by the Lomonosov Medal, whose 310th birth anniversary we commemorated on November 19, 2021. V. I. Dal was awarded also by The University of Dorpat (Tartu, Estonia) and, of course, Russian authorities in the field of lexicography, such as I. I. Sreznevsky, P. I. Savaitov and A. A. Kotlyarevsky.

Russian literary critic, aesthetician and revolutionary democrat Vissarion Grigoryevich Belinsky (1811–1848, born in Helsinki, lived to be only 37 years old, and in 2021 we commemorate his 210th birth anniversary) told about V. I. Dal: “this is

the first great talent in Russian literature after Nikolai Vasilyevich Gogol, see for yourself.” In 2022 in connection with N. V. Gogol (1809–1852), an excellent Russian novelist and playwright of Ukrainian origin, we will commemorate the 170th anniversary of his death.

Immediately after the first edition of the dictionary, V. I. Dal added, in connection with the next edition, new and diverse lexical material in its rich content counting 5,000 corrections and about two thousand new words and phrases from various areas of society.

V. I. Dal was also visited by well-known Russian businessman and art collector Peter Mikhailovich Tretyakov (1832–1898), the founder and first director of the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow, saying that he wanted to immortalize the famous lexicographer. V. Dal agreed and his portrait was painted by an excellent Russian painter of the second half of the 19th century Vasily Grigorievich Perov (1834–1882).

Explanatory Dictionary... of V. I. Dal also inspired Aleksey Mikhailovich Remizov (1877–1957, Russian writer, artist and calligrapher), Sergei Aleksandrovich Yesenin (1895–1925, beautiful Russian poet, representative of neo-Christian poetry and lyricism), Aleksandr Isayevich Solzhenitsyn (1918–2008, Nobel Prize winner for literature, excellent writer, poet and essayist).

3 Brief overview of current lexicographic activity in Slovakia

In conclusion, I would like to briefly mention high-quality, hitherto unsurpassed Slovak lexicological sources. Absolute priority belongs to the five-part translation dictionary: *Large Russian-Slovak Dictionary*, which is the work of a team of authors M. Filkusová, E. Kučerová, V. Dorotjaková-Lapárová, O. Malíková, E. Sekaninová, published by the Slovak Academy of Sciences in the 60s of the 20th century during the time of Czechoslovakia. The dictionary contains 4380 pages of words and phrases, which is by far the best even after more than 60 years since its publication.

Endless thanks to Professor Isachenko for the birth of this great dictionary work. Further to Professor L. Ďurovič, Professor J. Horecký, Professor J. Svetlík, Professor M. Bakoš, N. A. Kondrashov, J. P. Vasilyev, Associate Professor D. Kollár, J. Ferencík, and all those who contributed to the birth of this great translation dictionary.

Even today, translation dictionaries from various publishers are published, it is a necessary, current activity, but, unfortunately, they do not reach the level and quality of lexicographic processing of the *Large Russian-Slovak Dictionary* from the last century. We have dictionaries from the Lingea publishing house in mind, for example: *Russian-Slovak, Slovak-Russian Large Dictionary* and others.

Veda Publishing House of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in 1979 begins publishing the first volume of the voluminous 6-volume *Large Slovak-Russian Dictionary*

of authoritative authors: V. Dorotjaková, E. Fifiková, M. Filkusová, I. Kothaj, M. Laciok, M. Masárová, M. Petrufová, M. Šefranková, A. Španková, P. Ďurčo, B. Haasová, A. Jarošová, J. Benkovičová, K. Sakanová, A. Šebestová, T. Grigorjanová. This Slovak-Russian dictionary contains completely more than 95,000 words on 4553 pages. The first volume of this dictionary was published in 1979 and the last in 1995. Many thanks also go to the Institute of Slavic and Balkan Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR and the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow.

Katarína Gajdošová from the Institute of the Czech Language of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic has published an interesting publication entitled *Slovak-Czech and Czech-Slovak Bilingual Lexicography / Development Review from the 19th Century to the Present*. In 2011, the inspiring publication was published in Brno.

Returning to Vladimir Ivanovich Dal, whose 220th birth anniversary we reverently commemorate, his wise thought cannot be overlooked: “There is no less life in the word than in the life of the man himself.”

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