

**SPANISH GLOSSARY OF THE CARIBBEAN REGION: STATE OF THE ART AND  
OBSERVATIONS**

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**Dilyara D. Yakubova**

*Kazan Federal University, Institute  
of Philology and Intercultural  
Communication; Tatarstan  
Academy of Sciences, Institute of  
Applied Semiotics; e-mail:  
[suleymanovad@gmail.com](mailto:suleymanovad@gmail.com), tel.:  
89178526408*

**Elena A. Pleuchova**

*Kazan Federal University, Institute  
of Philology and Intercultural  
Communication*

**Alsu Valeeva**

*University of Osuna*

**Abstract.** The countries of the Caribbean region occupy an important niche of the modern world community. The key to the understanding of the mentality of people who live in them is in the language; accordingly, the study of the corresponding national variants of Spanish language is becoming more urgent. The vocabulary of the Spanish-speaking countries of the Caribbean is the result of an integrated comparative study of the national variants of Spanish language of the Hispanic Caribbean countries and it reflects the biosphere characteristics of each of them. The glossary is a bilingual lexicographic resource created on the basis of available dictionaries and Internet resources, with data verification by field and corpus methods. The creation of the glossary was preceded by the development of a database of nouns that are characteristic for the countries of the region under study, containing detailed information on each of them. The work on the database revealed numerous discrepancies in the data contained in different lexicographic sources, which determined the need for additional studies. In the course of the corpus study, the search was performed for the contexts of disputable lexeme use in the linguistic corpora of Spanish language; in the course of the field survey, the representatives of each of the countries of the region were asked to verify the relevance of one or another lexeme or clarify its meaning. The article contains the description of the methodology to create a glossary, describes its current state and gives some observations made by the authors during its creation.

**Key words:** Spanish language, Spanish varieties, Caribbean region, lexicography resource, glossary, field research, cultural studies

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Hispanic world is heterogeneous. Each of the Hispanic countries has its own cultural identity, which is inevitably reflected in language. The development of each language variant is influenced by a number of factors – historical, political, geographical and other ones, making it unique. At the same time, the commonality exists between certain linguistic variants, which raises the issue about the possibility to combine several linguistic varieties into a single group.

This is the case of the linguistic variants of the Caribbean region, which unites 11 countries or their parts: Venezuela, Guatemala, Honduras, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and Puerto Rico. At the moment, there is no unambiguous answer to the question of whether "Caribbean Spanish" exists as a separate language entity, or it is a set of several language options [Alba, O. *El español del Caribe: unidad frente a diversidad dialectal* [The Spanish of the Caribbean region: unity vs. 1992)]. In any case, the common geographical boundary determined the presence of a number of linguistic characteristics shared by people from different countries of the Caribbean [Yakubova, D., Pleuchova E., García Muñoz R. 2016]; at that there are no lexicographic resources describing the lexical originality of this region.

The glossary of the Spanish-speaking countries of the Caribbean is designed to fill in the developed niche. It does not aim to answer the question about the presence or absence of "Caribbean Spanish". It contains lexical units and their definitions that are characteristic for each of the countries of the region under study, which makes it an indispensable tool for carrying out both comprehensive and comparative studies on this region.

When the glossary was created, we took into account the relationship and mutual influence of the national language variants both with the Pyrenean version of Spanish language, and with the native languages, the influence of the biosphere, social, political and historical factors on the formation and the development of each national variant.

## 2. METHODS

The dictionary was formed on the basis of the lexical base especially created for this purpose, the

filling of which was carried out by the method of continuous sampling from various lexicographic sources. The most famous and modern dictionary of Latin America is the Dictionary of Americanisms from the Association of Spanish Language Academies, which includes the Royal Academy of Spain [Diccionario de americanismos [Dictionary of Americanisms].2016]. The comparison of the information on the vocabulary of the Caribbean countries with the data of the Spanish-Russian Dictionary of Latin America [Spanish-Russian Dictionary. Latin America 2004] revealed numerous inconsistencies, such as: 1) many lexemes are present only in one of the dictionaries; 2) even if a lexeme is represented in both dictionaries, its definitions, as a rule, do not coincide partially or completely; 3) the dictionaries indicate different regions of a lexeme distribution [Yakubova, D., Pleuchova E., García Muñoz R. 2016]. The corpus and field studies were carried out to resolve the found discrepancies.

In the course of the corpus study, the search was made first of all for the contexts of disputable lexeme use in the linguistic corpora of Spanish language [Corpus de Referencia del Español 2017; Corpus PRESEEA [Electronic resource]. 2017.]. Since we resort to the resource of field research not for the purpose of complex description of Spanish national variants, but for the specification of individual data, the method of elitization was chosen to implement the field study. The study was conducted remotely in the format of the questionnaire, and a separate questionnaire consisting of 30 questions was formed for each country. Based on the characteristics of the material being studied, two types of questions were developed: 1. If a lexeme in one of the dictionaries is absent: "Do you know this word? What does it mean?". 2. When the definitions differ in different dictionaries: "Is it true that this word means ""? If not, what is its real meaning?".

The survey was conducted among 229 volunteers in all 11 countries of the region under study on the sites of Internet portals [Interpals [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.interpals.net> (reference date: 21.04.2017).; Facebook [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://facebook.com> (reference date: 21.04.2017).]. In addition to the answers concerning the main questions of the questionnaire, informants indicated their gender, age and their city of residence – the data that were taken into account during the processing of the questionnaires. When

the results of the field study were processed for each lexeme, the percentage of respondents was set who answered that 1) the indicated meaning of the lexeme is correct, 2) the indicated meaning of the lexeme is incorrect, 3) it is difficult to answer. Also the comments of the respondents were processed during analysis.

### 3. RESULTS

The glossary of the Spanish-speaking countries of the Caribbean is an alphabetical list of nouns in Spanish, containing the information about the country or the countries of distribution for each

lexeme, word-formative and thematic labels and the definition with a linguistic and a cultural reference. All information is presented in two languages - Russian and Spanish. The dictionary does not include all the information contained in the lexicographic database: in particular, the profanity, collocations, as well as those units and values whose relevance was not confirmed by the results of the field study remained beyond its limits.

At the moment the dictionary contains more than 10,000 lines. When one lexeme receives different definitions in different regions, each meaning is fixed in a separate line (Table 1).

Table 1. The structure of the specific vocabulary dictionary of Hispanic countries in the Caribbean.

Lexeme	INFORMATION IN SPANISH			INFORMATION IN RUSSIAN		
	Countries	Notes	Interpretation	Countries	Notes	Interpretation
abra	Ve, CR, PR, Mx, Ho, Ni	f, rur.	Claro abierto en un bosque por desmonte de la vegetación	Ven., C.-R., P.-R., M., Hond., Nic.	f. g., agricul.	A lumen in a forest, formed as result of vegetation reduction
abra	RD, Ho, Ni	f, rur.	Camino en un bosque o en una montaña	Dom.R., Hond., Nic.	f. g., agricul.	A forest or a mountain path
abra	Ve	f, rur.	Hondonada o abertura entre dos montañas	Ven.	f. g., agricul.	A hollow or a cleft between two mountains

The analysis of lexicographical source data makes it possible to observe that when several countries of distribution are indicated for a lexeme and one of them is a country of the Caribbean, the others are also often the countries of the Caribbean. As for the conceptual content of the Caribbean specific vocabulary, most of the lexemes refer to concepts associated with phenomena unusual for Spain, such as geographical location (Nicaragua: abajo 'oeste' (west)), flora (Cuba: abá 'arbusto euforbeo silvestre' (a wild shrub of eyebane family), fauna (Cuba, Puerto Rico: cabezón 'pez marino' (sea fish), the features of culture (Guatemala, Mexico: tascalate 'bebida preparada a base de maíz, cacao, achiote, azúcar y canela' (a soft drink made from toasted corn flour, cocoa, sugar and cinnamon).

The comparative analysis of lexicographical sources showed the frequent absence of linguistic cultural information during the translation of

lexemes, which is so necessary for the reflection of the national and the cultural specifics of the Caribbean region countries. Often the dictionary contains only the translation without interpretation or additional reference. For example, *cabial cabiay* (Colombia) is used to refer to "capybaras" [Diccionario de americanismos [Dictionary of Americanisms].2016]. However, the search for information on the Internet allows us to clarify that this lexical unit comes from the Guaraní language: "Mamífero roedor, el mayor de los existentes, de América del Sur, que se mueve en tierra con poca rapidez pero nada muy diestramente. Es vegetariano y se defiende con tal fiereza que puede ser peligroso para sus atacantes" [Enciclonet [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.enciclonet.com/articulo/cabiay/> (reference date: 21.05.2017)]. (A mammal, the largest rodent in South America, moving in the ground with little speed, but very skillfully. It is a

vegetarian, and defends with such ferocity that it can be dangerous for attackers) (Here and further the translation is ours).

The field studies showed significant discrepancies between the data of lexicographic sources and the opinions of respondents. Thus, according to the Dictionary of Americanisms, the *acabose* lexeme in a number of countries, including the Dominican Republic, has the meaning "situación catastrófica, desastre producido por el hombre" (a catastrophic situation, a technogenic catastrophe), while 100% of respondents in the Dominican Republic claim that the lexeme does not have this meaning. In some cases, opinions were divided: in Guatemala, for example, 30% of respondents agreed that the word *acelerado* means "un rápido progreso del caso por las autoridades", 50% disagreed, and 20% found it difficult to answer.

Also, during the analysis the respondent comments are taken into account. The main types of comments are the following ones:

1. The respondent states that the meaning is correct, and adds an explanatory comment or a synonym. For example, the question of the native speakers of the Panamanian version of the Spanish language: "¿Es verdadero o falso que una bebida refrescante hecha de fruta natural se llama *chicha*?" ("Is it true that the refreshing drink made from natural fruits is called *chicha*?"); the answer: "Verdadero, aunque solo al jugo natural de naranja se le dice *chicha*" (This is true, although only freshly squeezed orange juice is called *chicha*).

2. The respondent argues that the meaning is incorrect, and indicates why so. For example, the question to the inhabitants of Honduras: "¿Es verdadero o falso que una moneda de cincuenta centavos se llama *búfalo*?" (Is it true that a 50 cent coin is called *búfalo*?); the answer: "Falso, en mi país una moneda de 50 centavos se le llama *tostón*" (It's not true, in my country a coin of 50 cents is called *tostón*).

3. The respondent gives his definition of the word. For example, the question to the native speakers of the Venezuelan version of the Spanish language: "¿Es verdadero o falso que una cama amplia y lujosa se llama *cuja*?" the answer: "*Cuja* es una planta y un instrumento odontológico" (*Cuja* is a plant and a dental instrument).

In many cases, respondents provide their own variants of lexemes, which fit a definition. For

example, the *queso* lexeme ("jam from different fruits") was unfamiliar to all survey participants (although it is present in [4]), and for the name of jam from different types of fruit the native speakers offered such options as *tutifruiti*, *mermelada*, *jalea* and *pulpa*. Even in the cases where the majority of participants claim that they know the lexeme, they usually offer other ones, more relevant options to express the same meaning. For example, instead of *abajo* ("lower river current") – *bajo*, *rio abajo*, *curso bajo*, instead of *abandono* ("negligence, untidiness") – *desidia*, *flojera*, *pereza*.

Corpus studies showed that many of the lexemes selected from the dictionaries did not reveal contexts: for example, this refers to 50% of the Nicaraguan and 58% of Venezuelan interjections analyzed. These results confirm the need of creating specific national corpora of Spanish language varieties.

The comparison of the data obtained from lexicographic sources with the results of field and corpus research, reveals many cases when dictionaries give several definitions to lexeme, and only one meaning or not all of them are realized in the contexts of linguistic corpora. For example, from two meanings of the *botadero* lexeme ("a path in the mountains", "a garbage pit") only the second one has the contexts of use in the CREA corpus. The opinion of informants in this case coincides with the data of the corpus: the *botadero* lexeme was known to them only in the sense of "basurero, lugar al aire libre donde se depositan grandes cantidades de basura" (a dump, an open space where a lot of garbage is dumped). However, in some cases corpus data do not coincide with the opinion of the respondents. Thus, the lexeme *cuchilla* according to the CREA and PRESEEA corpora has the meaning of "knife" [6, 7]; while informants define this word as being used in Guatemala at the present time in the sense of "street corner" or "the separation of two streets".

#### 4. DISCUSSION

In existing lexicographic resources, the vocabulary characteristic of all Latin American countries is collected, while the glossary of the Spanish-speaking Caribbean countries is the only lexicographic resource uniting the lexical units of the countries of this region. It is a convenient tool to analyze the lexical identity of the Caribbean region. So, the results of the work allowed to carry out the series of studies on the description of Spanish language variants [Klimchak, O.V.,

Gazizova, L.G., Ricardo, G.M. 2015], the peculiarities of flora and fauna names [Gazizova, L. 2015], the ways of emotion expression [Dunyasheva L.G., Noskova A.I., Gazizova L.G. 2016 ] and the transfer of realia in the linguistic varieties of the Caribbean region, the view of linguistic variant carriers on the meaning and the use of a number lexemes, the evolution of Spanish language in Latin American countries and the peculiarity of the language situation in the countries of the region [Gazizova L.G. 2015].

During the compilation of the dictionary, the data of the Dictionary of Americanisms from the Association of Spanish Language Academies [List of the countries of the Caribbean region. 2017 ] and the Spanish-Russian Dictionary of Latin America were analyzed, and the discrepancies between them were determined. In the course of the field studies, the view of native speakers was taken into account, which made it possible to specify which of the meanings of lexemes are relevant ones. All the information in the dictionary is presented in Russian and Spanish, which makes it accessible to Russian-speaking and Hispanic readers and is convenient for conducting comparative studies.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The Spanish glossary of the Caribbean region is a lexicographic resource in Russian and Spanish, which, in addition to the list of nouns, provides their interpretations, the countries of use, and grammatical and semantic marks.

The intermediate result of the work is the database of nouns, compiled on the material of existing dictionaries. The analysis of lexicographical source material showed that, despite the absence of a separate label for the Caribbean region, several countries in the region are listed as the distribution zone for many lexemes. It is noted that most of the lexemes name the concepts associated with atypical phenomena for Spain, such as geographical location, flora, fauna, culture, etc.

When the database was compiled, the inconsistencies between the material of different sources were identified, which necessitated the conduct of corpus and field studies. The questioning of 229 representatives from 11 countries of the region showed significant discrepancies between the data of lexicographic sources and the opinions of respondents. During the analysis of corpus data, numerous cases of the

absence or incomplete realization of lexeme words in corpus contexts, as well as the inconsistencies in corpus data with the respondents' opinions were revealed. In this regard, the urgency of the task was noted concerning the creation of national corpora of Spanish language varieties.

The created glossary is a convenient tool to implement complex and comparative studies on the peculiarities of linguistic culture in the countries of the Caribbean region.

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