

## CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE NOUNS 'DEBT'/'DUTY' IN RUSSIAN AND ENGLISH WITH RESPECT TO TRANSLATION PROBLEMS

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**Abstract:** The article investigates correspondency between national world view in source and target languages and problems related to the concepts rendering while translating texts from English into Russian and vice versa. The aim of this research is to study one of the important concepts representing Russian national world view i.e. a conceptualized word DUTY/ДОЛГ on the one hand, and two corresponding English words such as DUTY and DEBT, on the other hand. In order to show the discrepancies between those concepts in English and Russian cultures, comparative research technique has been used. The author compared data excerpted from the British National Corpus (BNC) and the Russian National Corpus (RNC). As a result, it is necessary to underline that mutual understanding of interlocutors who use different systems of cultural, social and moral values, is based on the adequate perception of the concepts represented in different languages. Otherwise, dissimilarity of those concepts predetermines lack of understanding and may even cause communicative failure (especially in case of choosing inappropriate word in target language in the process of translation). While translating literary texts an interpreter should take into account the shades of meaning as well as the crucial differences in national world view between source and target languages.

**Keywords:** national world view, source language, target language, cultural implications



## **Introduction**

The last few decades have given rise to a long-standing debate over linguocultural aspects of translation. It is necessary to state that national world view is one of the crucial factors which should be taken into account in translation process. Hence, James argues:

The cultural implications for translation may take several forms ranging from lexical content and syntax to ideologies and ways of life in a given culture. The translator also has to decide on the importance given to certain cultural aspects and to what extent it is necessary or desirable to translate them into the target language (TL). The aims of the source text (ST) will also have implications for translation as well as the intended readership for both the ST and the target text (TT) (James, 2002, p. 3).

Nevertheless, distinct and consistent conception of linguocultural component in translation process has not still been developed. It is obvious, of course, that our knowledge about the world surrounding us is reflected differently in different languages; thus, languages distinctive features should be considered as the bridge between reality and perception. Moreover, the manifold process of translation should also include such factors as dissimilarity of cultural, social and moral values, rating scales, presented in different languages and forming the national world view.

## **Materials and methods**

The main aim of the study is to find out the interrelation between conceptualized national world view, on one hand, and problems of literary translation on the other hand. To show the discrepancies between English and Russian national world views I have excerpted the data from the Russian and British National

Corpora as a material for the research, exactly the phrases containing polysemantic Russian word 'ДОЛГ', and two English equivalents, such as 'DUTY' (moral) and 'DEBT' (financial).

In order to clarify linguocultural factors and their influence on translation process, I have focused on the following research questions:

- What are the main semantic differences between perception of the given concept in English and Russian?
- What is the impact of those differences on the process of translation from English into Russian and vice versa?

Firstly, those research questions allow us to summarize a wide range of cases containing those words; secondly, they give the opportunity to show linguocultural differences which influence both translation process and text perception in source and target languages.

So, it was necessary to compare the dictionary entries of the Russian word 'ДОЛГ', and the English 'DUTY' and 'DEBT' and then, to analyze the short fragments from two language corpora with the words mentioned before. Therefore, it is possible to state that my research methodology combines semantic analysis and corpus-based approach.

## **Results**

### **The impact of the national world view on translation practice**

Language is considered to be one of the most important cultural phenomena; that is why it influences the native speakers' perception of surrounding world. This is the bedrock with far-reaching implications upon translation. Every language represents

information in its own way, which means that all the languages transform the results of mental activity using their own means. They also create additional views containing extra-logical types of information, which supplement the result of logical perception (Kornilov, 2003).

Thus, investigation of language key concepts which reflect the system of words' meaning is topical both for linguistics and translation studies. First of all, it is necessary to reveal some concepts which seem to be the most important for source and target languages because of their place in the national world view. The discovery of such key concepts in SL (source language) and TL (target language) can help translators to understand the peculiarities of national identity and thereby enable them to use this kind of information most effectively. Such aspects as the historical relevance of national world view should also be taken into account in the process of translation.

There are two different approaches to the national world view. According to Kazakova (2008, p. 267), the first one is the integral approach that interprets the national world view as a general language content, which is stable and at the same time slowly evolving, and the perception of the surrounding world is examined as a very complicated phenomenon. It is based on different segmentation of the world represented in different languages.

The second is traditionally called the **differential approach**, which takes into account special characteristics of a certain language. It is based on the comparison of different languages. First of all, this approach is aimed at the investigation of mismatched concepts, lacunae related to historical and cultural backgrounds. In order to convey all shades of meanings, especially in literary translation, the translator/interpreter should bear in mind both of the above-mentioned approaches. Their skills are also based on the understanding of the following aspects of national world view:

- The existential aspect related to objective reality and the position of human beings in it;

- The cognitive aspect which is aimed at perception and interpretation of the surrounding world;
- The axiological aspect dealing with human's attitude to life and especially - to key values represented in a particular language; and,
- The action aspect representing practical use of the values mentioned before, for the purpose of cognition and transformation of the surrounding world.

All the aforesaid aspects are presented in the key concepts such as *duty*, *consciousness*, *kindness* etc. forming the national world view in a certain language to increase our knowledge and understanding of the world.

### **Cultural implications of the noun 'Долг'/'Duty' in Russian and English**

Cultural implications are considered to be one of the most important factors in translation. As stated above, it is impossible to translate accurately and, especially, understand 'the soul' of a literary text without understanding of cultural implications. For this reason, to understand and translate a text means to form a specific cross connection between its semantic contents and culture.

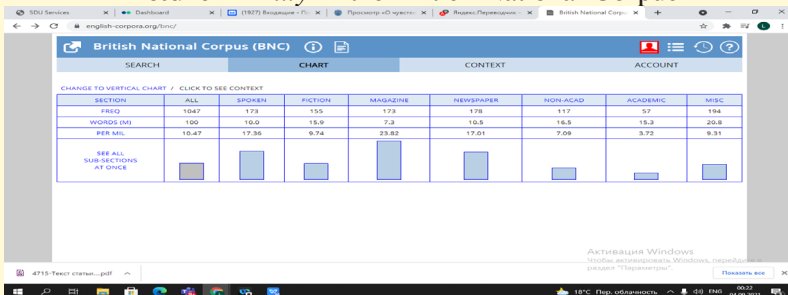
Admittedly, the concept of *duty* (долг) is one of the most frequently used notions in Russian culture: as it is indicated in the National Russian Corpus, the word *duty* (долг) is represented in 5 311 documents, or 12 140 entries (National Russian Corpus). As a result, lexical entries in various dictionaries including online ones, indicate that this concept shows a variety of meanings such as:

*ДОЛГ/DUTY* - The same as obligation. To do one's duty. To discharge one's duty. Civic duty. *Duty* - bound/ex officio. Well-doer a moral person; one who does good. *Pay a last tribute to* (figurative meaning): honor/venerate smb's memory. \* The first

thing, in the first place (in Russian it is a colloquial expression) – first of all, uppermost, initially; firstly, at first; from / at the beginning (This system of meanings is represented in Ozhegov's Dictionary, which is one of the well-known Russian dictionaries). Charge, commitment, duty, incumbency, liability, obligation. In general, person's duty contains moral imperative related to God, citizen's duty and duty of the family man; all these types of duty can be compared with borrowed money or things ... Duty is rather general, whereas liability is private, personal; debt involuntary, the duty is conditional; something, which should be done unconditionally because of public interests and/or moral certainty' Syn.: obligation, commitment. (Thesaurus of Great Russian Language by V. Dal, 2009)

It corresponds to the English concept of *duty*, which is similar but not the same to the Russian *долг* because of its shades of meanings and collocations in Russian: honor/venerate smb's memory. \* The first thing, in the first place (in Russian it is a colloquial expression) – first of all, uppermost, initially; firstly, at first; from / at the beginning (This system of meanings is represented in Ozhegov's Dictionary, which is one of the well-known Russian dictionaries). Charge, commitment, duty, incumbency, liability, obligation. In general, person's duty contains moral imperative related to God, citizen's duty and duty of the family man; all these types of duty can be compared with borrowed money or things ... Duty is rather general, whereas liability is private, personal; debt involuntary, the duty is conditional; something, which should be done unconditionally because of public interests and/or moral certainty' Syn.: obligation, commitment. (Thesaurus of Great Russian Language by V. Dal, 2009). In the British National Corpus, there are 7806 entries for the *duty* (see Picture 1 *Duty* in the British National Corpus, which shows the representation of *duty* in a variety of texts) whereas for the *debt* there are 4301 entries only despite the popularity of financial and business texts.

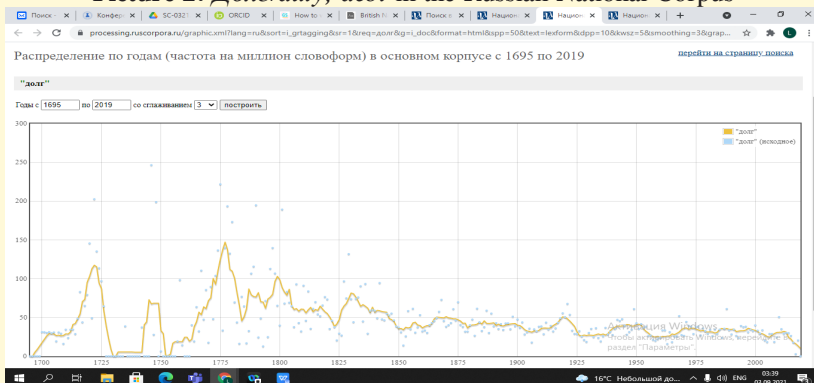
Picture 1: *Duty* in the British National Corpus



Source: British National Corpus

In the Russian National Corpus, the dynamics of word perception shows that the peak of its use took place at the end of the XVIII century, and after that it showed the downward trend; otherwise, it is still one of the most frequently used concepts in Russian language (thus, in 2012 the frequency was 32,02 per million as it is shown on the Picture 2 *Долг/duty, debt* in the Russian National Corpus):

Picture 2: *Долг/duty, debt* in the Russian National Corpus



Source: National Russian Corpus

It corresponds to the English word *duty*, which is similar but not the same to the Russian *долг* because of its shades of meanings and collocations in Russian: **DUTY** – (duty, -ties

1. a task or action that a person is bound to perform for moral or legal reasons;
2. respect or obedience due to a superior, older persons, etc filial duty;
3. the force that binds one morally or legally to one's obligations;
4. a government tax, especially on imports;
5. a) the quantity or intensity of work for which a machine is designed and b) a measure of the efficiency of a machine;
6. the quantity of water necessary to irrigate an area of land to grow a particular crop;
7. a) a job or service allocated and b) (as modifier) duty rota; do duty for - to act as a substitute for; synonym: office, function, service; such meanings as 'divine service' *He did Sunday duty in a neighboring parish*, and 'productivity, processing power, power, throughput'; 'engine power'; duty of water (*гидромодуль*).

As indicated, a comparison of dictionary entries shows that the evident diversity of meanings represented in the English language, is seemingly poor and monotonous in the same system of the Russian language. Thus, there is no correspondency between Russian *долг* and *церковная служба* (church service); *работа, производительность, режим (машины)*.

Additionally, all the examples given below prove the statement about hidden contextual and sometimes unpredictable variety in shades of meanings peculiar for the Russian language. For example:

For that cause, the nobles could resist the crown; if they failed, then it was the *duty* of the common people to resist them (Wormald, BNC).

Her *duty* is like the *duty* not to set fire to the forest which entails the *duty* to put out any fire one started (Raz, BNC).



Moreover, there are no such antinomies in English as duty – love, duty – emotion (symbolized by Russian word ‘heart’), and referential relations in the pair of concepts such as duty – fairness, which are widely represented in Russian:

**Table 1**

<p><i>Государь по возвращении своём во дворец написал к нему трогательное письмо, в котором между прочим находится следующее: «Если бы я послушался сердца, то был бы уже при тебе; но долг меня удерживает (В. А. Жуковский. Письмо к А.И. Тургеневу, 1977)</i></p>	<p>As soon as the Emperor returned to the palace he wrote a pathetic letter to him; and by the way there were the following words in the message: “If I obeyed my <b>heart</b>, I would already have stayed with you; but <b>duty</b> held me” (V. Zhukovsky. Letter to A. Turgenev, 1977)</p>
<p><i>Долго спорили в груди моей долг и склонность, противная сану моему, долго, но любовь торжествует. Пламед. Вспомни свой долг и мой (Неизвестный. Пламед и Линна, 1829).</i></p>	<p>Debt and kindly feelings which are incompatible with my dignity, had been contending in my <b>heart</b> (in case of direct translation, the word <b>breast</b> should be used instead of <b>heart</b>) for a very long time, but love triumphed. Plamed. Remember your <b>duty</b> and mine. (Unknown author. Plamed and Lylla, 1829)</p>

See also the following extracts from the Russian National Corpus (the parallel corpus exactly), which represent the correspondence between Russian and English concepts.

Table 2

<p>She might not wonder, but she must sigh that her father should feel no degradation in his change, should see nothing to regret <b>in the duties and dignity</b> of the resident landholder, should find so much to be vain of in the littlenesses of a town; and she must sigh, and smile, and wonder too, as Elizabeth threw open the folding-doors and walked with exultation from one drawing-room to the other, boasting of their space; at the possibility of that woman, who had been mistress of Kellynch Hall, finding extent to be proud of between two walls, perhaps thirty feet asunder. [Jane Austen. Persuasion (1816)   Джейн Остин. Доводы рассудка]</p>	<p>Нет, она этому не удивлялась, но она вздыхала при мысли, что отец ее не замечал унижительности переменившихся обстоятельств, что он так легко сложил с себя тот <b>почетный</b> долг, какой налагает жизнь на плечи каждого помещика, и окунулся в суетность ничтожных городских удовольствий; и она вздыхала, и улыбалась, и недоумевала, когда Элизабет, раздвигая перед нею двери и важно водя из одной гостиной в другую, восхищалась их просторами; и это она-то, бывшая хозяйка Киллинч-холла, находила достаточным для своей гордости расстояние между двумя стенами в каких-нибудь тридцать футов! [Jane Austen. Persuasion (1816)]</p>
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In some cases, in the target text the word *долг* replaces the idiom, e.g.:

Table 3

<p>I wonder that the very pride of this Mr. Darcy has not <b>made him just to you!</b> (Jane Austen. Pride and Prejudice (1813)   Джейн Остин. Гордость и предубеждение)</p>	<p><i>Казалось бы, одна лишь гордость должна была заставить младшего мистера Дарси выполнить по отношению к вам свой <b>долг!</b></i> (Jane Austen. Pride and Prejudice (1813)   Джейн Остин. Гордость и предубеждение (И. С. Маршак, 1967)</p>
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Correspondingly, the second meaning of this word is related to and used in the area of finance:

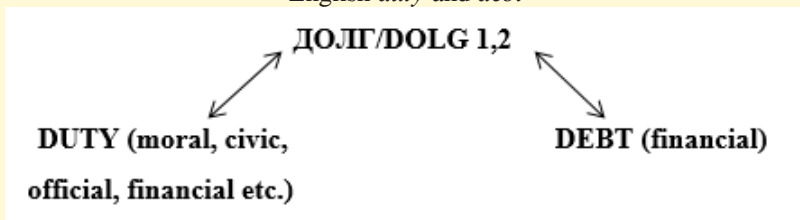
## DOLG (2)

Something borrowed (related to money). To borrow (with the subsequent return). To contract debts. To enter, get into debt (to make many debts). To live in (on the money borrowed on credit). Completely in debt (too much debt). Does not get out of debt (as usually, owing somebody else). One good turn deserves another (idiom). \* In debt to the armpit (a saying) being obliged, infinitely grateful to somebody. Not to be in debt - to pay back the same; debt.

It also corresponds to another English word - **DEBT**: debt *в долг* — on credit / trust *брать в долг* — borrow *давать в долг* — lend *делать долги* — contract / incur debts *не делать долгов* — pay one's way *влезать в долги* — get / run into debt *процать долг* — remit a debt; (кому-л) acquit somebody of a debt *платить долг* — pay a debt •• *долг чести* — debt of honor *быть в долгу у кого-л* — owe, be indebted (to) *он у него в долгу* — he is in his debt, he is under an obligation to him, he is beholden to him *быть в большом долгу перед кем-л* — stand heavily in somebody's debt; owe very much to somebody *остаться в долгу перед кем-л* — be indebted to somebody ... >> *долг* burden, credit, debt, duty, encumbrance, obligation, office, owing, score, tie.

It is also possible to view the correspondence between the concepts in the Russian and the English languages as partially coinciding sets of meanings (see Picture 3. Partial correspondence between the Russian *долг* and the English *duty* and *debt*):

**Picture 3:** Partial correspondence between the Russian *долг* and the English *duty* and *debt*



Source: compiled by the author

As a matter of fact, many examples show that the word ДОЛГ (2), used in the language of finance in Russia, also demonstrates the undercurrent meaning related to morality and fairness:

**Table 4**

<p><i>Неужели с каждой вишни в саду, с каждого листика, с каждого ствола не глядят на вас человеческие существа, неужели вы не слышите голосов... Владеть живыми душами — ведь это переродило всех вас, живших раньше и теперь живущих, так что ваша мать, вы, дядя уже не замечаете, что вы живёте в долг, на чужой счёт, на счёт тех людей, которых вы не пускаете дальше передней...</i> (Чехов, А. Вишневый сад, 1987, 5<sup>th</sup> edition)</p>	<p>Think, Anya, your grandfather, your great-grandfather, and all your ancestors were serf-owners, they owned living souls; and now, doesn't something human look at you from every cherry in the orchard, every leaf and every stalk? Don't you hear voices? Oh, it's awful, your orchard is terrible; and when in the evening or at night you walk through the orchard, then the old bark on the trees sheds a dim light and the old cherry-trees seem to be dreaming of all that was a hundred, two hundred years ago, and are oppressed by their heavy visions. (Chekhov, A. <i>Cherry Orchard</i>, 2003, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition)</p>
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It is necessary to point out that the keyword combination - *вы*

*живёте в долг, на чужой счёт*/ sponging on; living on other peoples dime - which contains the most important information about the protagonists, in English translation has been totally omitted. Probably, this difference of perception is determined by different attitude to this concept in English and Russian picture of the world. For Russian people, this situation nominated by the word *долг*, is evaluated negatively; but in English it seeming a minor question.

On the other hand, there are also some identical elements in perception of the concept *ДОЛГ* (2)/ DEBT in the frames of national image of a world because both Russian and English languages represent typical associations with **burden (of debts)** that convey negative emotions and, thus, have high expressive potential.

Table 5

<i>И в самой Фай Родис сквозь бремя долга и тревогу за будущее этого народа пробилась уверенность в успехе земной экспедиции.</i> - about moral duty/ And in Fai Rodis herself, through the burden of <b>duty</b> and anxiety for the future of this people, the confidence about success of the Earth expedition has been increased. (Yefremov, A. Chas byka, 1969, 87)	she found to her horror that he had left a crippling <b>burden of debt</b> and that his principal business enterprise – about financial aspects of life (BNC)
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Apart from that noun *duty* may also be accompanied by the semantic component 'payment'. In this case, source text in English and target text in Russian draw closer together not only in semantic and stylistic aspects but also in their axiological and conceptual background. Look at the following example:

Table 6

<p>No, my good sir,' said Mr Pecksniff, firmly, 'No. But I have a <b>duty</b> to discharge which I owe to society; and it shall be discharged, my friend, at any cost!' Oh, late-remembered, much-forgotten, mouthing, braggart <b>duty</b>, always owed, and <b>seldom paid in any other coin</b> than punishment and wrath, when will mankind begin to know thee! When will men acknowledge thee in thy neglected cradle, and thy stunted youth, and not begin their recognition in thy sinful manhood and thy desolate old age! Oh, ermined Judge whose <b>duty to society</b> is, now, to doom the ragged criminal to punishment and death, hadst thou never, Man, a <b>duty</b> to discharge in barring up the hundred open gates that wooed him to the felon's dock, and throwing but ajar the portals to a decent life! (Dickens, Ch. 1966 (8<sup>th</sup> edition))</p>	<p>О, неоплаченный, часто забываемый, крикливый, хвастливый <b>долг, который редко платят иной монетой</b>, кроме наказания и гнева, — когда же человечество вспомнит о тебе! Когда же люди признают тебя в твоей заброшенной колыбели и в искалеченной юности, а не в греховной зрелости и жалкой старости! О судья в горностаевой мантии, чей долг перед обществом ныне состоит в том, чтобы осуждать бродягу в лохмотьях на кару и смерть, неужели ты не знал, что истинный твой <b>долг</b> — захлопнуть сотню открытых ворот, ведущих на скамью подсудимых, и распахнуть настежь врата, ведущие к достойной жизни! (Ч. Диккенс, 1978 (3<sup>rd</sup> edition.)</p>
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## Discussion

As it is stated by A. Bochkaryov (2019, p. 24),

according to the Russian National Corpus (with the total amount of more than nine thousand entries), it looks like a rule for the native speakers of Russian to feel a sense of duty to everyone and everything ... — to the world, to the people, to the Motherland, to the Lord, to the conscience, to the party, to Russia, to the country, to the government,

to the people, and also to society, memory, relatives, family, husband, wife, parents, mother, father, children, grandchildren, history, tradition, city and its inhabitants, boss, subordinates, weak, suffering, literature, art, life, the dead, nature, Europe, and so on. At the same time, the duty to the Motherland and the country (civil duty) does not coincide in any way with the duty to the husband or wife (marital duty), the duty to parents, mother and father (filial/daughter duty)-with the duty to the party (party duty), the duty to the Lord (Christian duty) — with the duty to guests (the duty of hospitality), the duty to history (historical duty) — with the duty to the suffering (the duty of mercy).

The given study shows that the correspondence between the two English words on the one hand and the one Russian word on the other hand is not complete. It is also possible to state that the spheres of the national world view represented by these concepts do not correspond to each other.

It is necessary to point out that simultaneous use of two meanings ('financial' and 'moral') in Russian translation made target text more expressive. It should also be considered as a way of personification inducing additional connotations. Generally, this extract needs detailed pre-translational and linguistic analysis, and strong axiological potential of the word *duty* will be taken into consideration either by native speakers or by Russian-speaking readers using target text and perceiving cultural implications of this concept in accordance with their national world view. Finally, both translators and linguists need not only take an active role as mediators between cultures, but they also intend to offer insights into cultural implications (Nikevi-Batrievi & Kneevi, 2008).

## Conclusion

It is necessary to underline that mutual understanding of communicators using different systems of cultural, social and moral values, is based on adequate perception of key concepts represented in different languages. The data from national language corpora prove the hypothesis about the discrepancy and partial correspondence between two concepts in English language, on one hand, and the target texts in Russian, on the other hand. Thus, all implications which take place in the process of literary translation, should be based on competency in semantic and axiological spheres of source and target languages. Translator/interpreter as a mediator between different cultures should also take into account the shades of meaning expressing differences in national world view.

As it is indicated here, cultural implications in translation practice should be considered as one of the most important factors. Taking them into account and use a variety of data provided by language corpora, translators build intercultural bridges and make a great contribution into the process of mutual understanding.

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