

## 2008 Susanna Greiss Lecture: Leo Tolstoy and *War and Peace*

by Anthony P. Briggs

Reviewed by Jen Guernsey

Tony Briggs seems a bemused, and continually surprised, spectator in his own life, and he almost had me convinced that his standing before us at the ATA Conference to speak on his myriad accomplishments, most notably his 2005 translation of *War and Peace*, was no more than the result of a long series of happy accidents, rather than the result of his own brilliance and hard work. Briggs grew up extremely poor in the north of England, but fatefully was selected to attend one of the leading grammar schools in the country—happy accident number one. That prestigious education eventually propelled him to Cambridge. He credits his admission to Cambridge in great part to the fact that on the entrance exam, he chose to translate the required French poem into rhymed verse, thus ensuring that he stood out from the crowd of applicants—happy accident number two. Briggs narrowly missed being eligible for a scholarship, however, so he had to fulfill a term of national service before entering Cambridge. During that military service, he was assigned to learn Russian—happy accident number three. After receiving his Master’s degree from Cambridge and his Ph.D. from the University of London, he spent a year working in industry—which he quickly determined did not suit him—and then began teaching, eventually landing at the University of Birmingham, where he specialized in Pushkin.

Which brings us to happy accident number four. Penguin Books asked Briggs to review its Tolstoy collection. Briggs did so and particularly recommended re-translating *War and Peace*, since two generations had passed since the last translation. At that point, he suggested himself as the translator, sent out some sample chapters, and—happy accident number five, I suppose—got the job.

The very act of reading *War and Peace*, Briggs pointed out, is used in our culture as a metaphor for any daunting and onerous task. He reminded us of a scene from the 1960s television comedy *Get Smart* in which a character prevents a murder by stopping the bullet with a copy of *War and Peace*. When the character is asked how he knew the trick would work, he replies, “Nobody gets through *War and Peace*!” The novel certainly is daunting, at least by the numbers: 600,000 words, 500 named characters, 366 chapters. The best way to eat an elephant, however, is one bite at a time. Briggs strove to translate a chapter (about

3-1/2 pages) a day; the entire project took four years. Along the way, he solicited help from his family, asking his pregnant daughter to help him find the right words to describe Lise’s uncomfortable condition, or having his wife spend hours reading his translation to him aloud. Who says translation is a solitary occupation?

Briggs was quick to point out that the main challenge of translating *War and Peace* was not the length of the book, but rather that the act of translating anything involves numerous possible ways to render even the simplest sentence. To illustrate this point, he had the audience perform an exercise using a single, short, relatively simple sentence from the novel: И Наташа, поцеловав мать, встала и пошла к двери. (In one version, “Giving her mother a kiss, Natasha got up and headed for the door.”) So that non-Russian speakers could play along, he provided us with a literal translation to start with: “And Natasha, having kissed her mother, got up and walked to the door.” Piece of cake, right? But then he started pointing out the numerous translation decisions we would have to make to translate



Anthony P. Briggs

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## 2008 Susanna Greiss Lecture *Continued from page 1*

just that simple sentence. Do we start the sentence with “and,” which is frowned on in some circles, or do we omit it entirely or use another word such as “then” or “so”? “Having kissed” is technically correct but very awkward-sounding in English, so how do we work around that? Does Natasha “get up,” “stand up,” “arise”? Does she “walk to the door,” “walk toward the door,” “head toward the door,” “head for the door,” “make for the door,” or some other variant? Having thus primed our minds, Briggs had us all write our chosen translations on slips of paper, which his wife Pam dutifully tallied. Out of 36 submissions, only three translations coincided exactly; in all the others, there was some variation. Briggs has used this same sort of exercise with even larger audiences, but obtained much the same result—a tiny bit of overlap, but hundreds of different versions. And this variation is spread over just nine words; consider the nearly infinite number of possible variants for a translation of 600,000 words!

I suspect that it is partly Briggs’ appreciation for the multitude of possible “correct” translations that leads him to be very restrained in his critiques of the other translations of *War and Peace*. He took pains to point out that he thought the novel needed re-translation simply because the other translations were dated, not that they were poor (though every translation has its unfortunate moments, some of which he pointed out). That is not to say that he does not hold some strong opinions about his own translation choices. One issue that has long been thorny in the translation of *War and Peace* is what to do with the French, which constitutes about 5% of the earlier editions. Many translators leave the French in, some provide translations of the French in the footnotes, but Briggs chose to render the French all in English. He felt that leaving in the French would hinder a modern English-speaking reader’s comprehension of the novel, while providing translations in footnotes would make the book disjointed and awkward. He also felt justified in his choice by Tolstoy himself, who in 1869 cut out all of the French from *War and Peace*, though he reconstituted some of it later. Tolstoy also had endorsed the translation done by Aylmer and Louise Maude, who likewise had translated the French. Regarding translation controversies in general, Briggs noted that when it came to literary translation, he came down in staunch opposition to the *буквалисты* (“literalists”). Again, he looked to Tolstoy for support, citing Tolstoy’s quote about a translation of the Gospels: “It is the spirit of the gospel that is followed, rather than the strict letter, which killeth.”

While Briggs is an enthusiastic and engaging speaker with interesting tales of translation challenges and philosophy, the best aspect of this year’s Greiss lecture by far was Tony Briggs himself, not to mention his wife, Pam, who was an immediate hit among SLD conference attendees. Briggs seemed entirely at home among us, his fellow translators, exuding heartfelt warmth towards us as respected peers intimately familiar with the struggles of a translator. His firm conviction that his positions as respected professor and literary translator were the result perhaps of some talent, but more of just happy coincidence, seemed to convey that he thought all of us as capable of translating *War and Peace* as he, if we just set our minds to it—a heartening message to take home from the conference.

*Editors’ note: it should be mentioned that Tony Briggs’ second talk at the conference, devoted to the upcoming centennial of the publication of Edward Fitzgerald’s Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam was just as interesting and entertaining as his War and Peace talk.*

**OFFERS OF WORK FROM EMPLOYERS AND CLIENTS ARE PUBLISHED FREE**



## ADMINISTRIVIA

Becky Blackley, SLD Administrator

Greetings to all SLD members!

I hope you have enjoyed the holiday season and are looking forward to a bright new year.

It's hard to believe that a full year has passed since I wrote my first Administrivia column for the *SlavFile*. It has been a rewarding experience to serve as your administrator, and I eagerly look forward to continuing to serve until our next annual meeting at the ATA Conference. The 2008 annual conference in Orlando was, of course, the highlight of the year for the Slavic Languages Division. If you were unable to attend the conference, you can read about the SLD sessions that were presented there in this and subsequent issues of the *SlavFile*. You will also find the minutes from the SLD annual meeting below. Next year the 50<sup>th</sup> (!) ATA Conference will be held in New York City, October 28–31. Mark your calendar now. This will be a grand celebration you won't want to miss.

If you have an idea for a presentation for the 2009 conference, please be sure to submit your proposal to the ATA (not to the SLD) by the **March 9** deadline. You can find the short proposal form on the ATA web site under "Conferences and Seminars." Please be sure to mark the "topic" for your presentation as "Slavic Languages," even if the subject matter concerns legal or medical translation, terminology, or technology, etc. If you list the topic area as, for example, "Medical" (rather than "Slavic"), your proposal will be sent to the Medical Division for evaluation. Those divisions

might not consider your proposal to be as relevant to their members as the SLD would. Note also that a presentation labeled, for instance Medical, may well be scheduled at the same time as a Slavic session, eroding the number of speakers of your language who may attend. If you mark the topic as "Slavic Languages," then the proposal will come to the SLD for initial approval. The final approval of all presentations, of course, will be made by the ATA Conference Coordinator, aka conference organizer.

This will be an election year for the Slavic Languages Division. If you are interested in running for either the Administrator's or the Assistant Administrator's position, or if you want to nominate someone else, please contact one of the members of our nominating committee: John Riedl, chair ([jriedl@wi.rr.com](mailto:jriedl@wi.rr.com)), Fred Grasso ([frdgrasso@satx.rr.com](mailto:frdgrasso@satx.rr.com)), or Irina Knizhnik ([irinak@bikinfor.com](mailto:irinak@bikinfor.com)). Serving as a division officer is an excellent way to become more involved with the division and its members. It is not a daunting task, and I encourage all of you to consider volunteering some of your time to help the division fulfill its various functions. More information on the requirements for holding division offices and the responsibilities of each officer can be found on the ATA web site under "Divisions>Division Elections."

Of course, you don't have to be an officer to help the SLD. We are always looking for contributions to the *SlavFile*, as well as for volunteers to help out with the annual conference activities.

Now enjoy this issue, and I'll "see" you in the spring!

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## SLD MEETING MINUTES

Orlando, FL, November 8, 2008

1. Call to order
2. Request for volunteer to take the minutes
3. Acceptance of agenda
4. Approval of minutes of last year's meeting

Becky Blackley, SLD administrator, called the meeting to order and asked for a volunteer to take the minutes. Jen Guernsey volunteered. The agenda for the meeting was accepted, and the minutes of the 2007 division meeting were approved.

### 5. A Word from the Administrator, Becky Blackley

Becky noted that the assistant administrator, Elana Pick, was unable to attend the meeting for family reasons. Becky offered her congratulations to SLD member Boris Silverstein for his re-election to the ATA board, and she offered her thanks to those SLD members who had presented at this year's conference.

Becky outlined some of the communications problems the division has been experiencing this year with ATA

Headquarters' decision to no longer send out a broadcast email exclusively dedicated to announcing the publication of each quarter's *SlavFile*. Instead, HQ embeds the information in an email that provides ATA-related news on a broad variety of topics. However, it is felt that many who previously read *SlavFile* are overlooking the embedded announcement. While the division has created a listserv to provide *SlavFile* notifications, only 13 members are on it. Lydia Stone, *SlavFile* editor, also maintains her own personal notification list. Becky assured us that the issue has been brought to ATA's attention, with Lydia instrumental in pushing it, and ATA has promised to resolve the issue in the near future.

### 6. Report of the *SlavFile* Editor – Lydia Razran Stone

Lydia Razran Stone, *SlavFile* editor, reported that the above-mentioned communications issues have been particularly disappointing to her since she feels that the

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## SLD MEETING MINUTES *Continued from page 3*

*SlavFile* has been better than ever this year. She specifically mentioned Elana Pick's initiative in proposing an issue dedicated to interpreting, as well as Lynn Visson's recent contributions. Lydia also mentioned that the division now has a partnership with a commercial translator publication in Russia, *Mosty* (see page 10). She noted that the communications issues and publication/notification schedule limited outreach to first-time conference attendees this year. Lydia reminded everyone that members can request ATA Headquarters to mail them a hard copy of the *SlavFile* if they prefer not to rely on the electronic version. However, she noted that the hard copy is simply an ordinary printout, not the bifold publication of the former hard-copy *SlavFile*.

In response to a question about whether the involvement of speakers of Slavic languages other than Russian (SLOTR) was welcomed, Lydia replied emphatically yes. However, several SLOTR members in the audience noted that *SlavFile* articles sometimes appear in Russian, or contain Russian, and this material is not intelligible to many SLOTR speakers. Lydia accepted the suggestion that any article in Russian be published with, at a minimum, an accompanying abstract in English. It was also brought up that some conference sessions in SLD are billed as being in English but contain extensive exemplary material and/or discussion not comprehensible to those who have not studied the target language.

Paul Gallagher proposed that instead of publishing *SlavFile* on a quarterly basis, the articles be uploaded on a continuous basis, thereby providing members the incentive to check the site regularly. Some members responded that they preferred to get the *SlavFile* as a quarterly publication. The *SlavFile* editorial and copyediting staff ultimately rejected the suggestion as a continuous flow of articles would be more difficult for the *SlavFile* staff to manage.

### 7. Website update – Nora Favorov

Nora noted that her schedule is not permitting her to pay adequate attention to the website, and she requested help in coming up with content and keeping the site updated. [After the meeting, John Riedl volunteered.]

### 8. 2009 Annual Conference in New York

Becky stated that next year will be an election year for the administrator and assistant administrator positions, and indicated that she is looking for volunteers to serve in these positions as well as to serve on the nominating committee.

A discussion of options for the SLD Banquet in New York ensued. Lydia noted, and it was generally agreed, that this year's banquet was underwhelming. It was suggested that emphasis next year be placed on finding a venue that was conducive to conversation, preferably a private room or at least a space that is not noisy. Becky noted that we do have the option of arranging a banquet in the conference hotel, which has the advantage of ATA Headquarters taking care of all of the registration and money collection.

It was generally thought that it would be worth leaving the hotel for the banquet in New York, given the wide variety of venues available there, but that the hotel might be a better choice for 2010 (Denver). The primary site suggested for this year was Samovar, which has an upstairs room we could reserve, but is a bit pricey. Nora mentioned that Lynn Visson had suggested a buffet-style event would hold costs down. Elana Pick had previously volunteered to provide assistance arranging next year's banquet, as she lives in New York.

Becky solicited suggested topics and presenters for sessions for the 2009 conference. The suggestions were:

- Ask Megan Lehmann and Eugenia A. Tumanova to do the technology session they had planned for this year but cancelled.
- Ask Robert Taylor to reprise his popular financial presentation.
- Paul Gallagher was asked to reprise his presentation on making translations read like originals.
- Fred Grasso and Tom Fennell were asked to do a follow-on legal presentation, perhaps with the added involvement of Maksym Kozub.
- Emma Garkavi suggested a presentation on terminology management.
- It was reported that Vladimir Kovner wants to propose a poetry reading, perhaps as an evening activity.
- Jen Guernsey and John Riedl volunteered to do a presentation related to pharmaceuticals.
- Christina Sever suggested a presentation on medical records.
- Nora Favorov volunteered to do a session on clever solutions to translation problems and on improving English writing.
- Nora Favorov suggested that someone do a session on translating personal documents (e.g., birth/death/divorce certificates, educational records).

Becky reminded the audience to mark their presentation proposals as SLD, rather than technology or something else; otherwise, they might be scheduled in conflict with SLD sessions.

### 9. Additional Business

Becky provided two product recommendations: one for Jost Zetzsche's [www.translatorstraining.com](http://www.translatorstraining.com), where for \$35 one can compare the many CAT tools that are available; and another for a Herman Miller office chair.

Lori Gelman indicated that she was recruiting Slavic translators. She was encouraged to place a free advertisement in the *SlavFile*.

Vadim Khazin noted that English > Ukrainian certification is available, but as of yet no one has taken the exam.

The meeting was adjourned.

## Driving Translators to the Goat Farm

Michele A. Berdy

Every once in awhile, I consider giving up translation and starting a goat farm. Goats are nice. Their milk can be turned into really expensive cheese. They are small enough to fit in the back of your car when you need to take them to the vet (which cannot be said of cows). If you give them food and milk them on time, they're happy. And best of all, they never argue with you about your translation or your strange desire to be paid for your work.

If you work with translators or translations, here are a few things translators wish you knew about us and the work we do.

1. Переводчики переводят на свой родной язык (Translators translate into their native language). Yes, yes, I know: There are lots of exceptions to this rule and a few experienced translators who translate competently — and sometimes even brilliantly — out of their native language. But for each uniquely talented translator who can produce good texts in a foreign language, there are thousands who do it badly.
2. Just for the record: Родной язык понимается как язык, который человек усваивает с раннего детства без специального обучения (Native language is understood as the language that a person masters from early childhood without special instruction). Generally, your native language is what you grew up speaking, usually in an environment where everyone around you spoke that language. Studying in school from an early age, spending a semester abroad, watching a lot of movies, or speaking it occasionally with a grandparent doesn't make you a native speaker. Sorry.
3. So even if you know the language your text is being translated into, don't assume that you know more than your native speaker translator. If I had a nickel for every time a client thought хорошие перспективы should be translated as “good perspectives” instead of “good prospects,” right now I'd be writing this at my beach house while being served a mojito on a tray. If something strikes you as wrong: Спросить, прежде чем ругаться (Ask be-

fore you yell). You might say: Почему вы одно и то же слово переводите по-разному? (Why did you translate the same word differently?)

4. If you have not followed Rule No. 3 and are still arguing with your translator, don't be surprised when you hear two mutually contradictory phrases about dictionaries: Так написано в словаре (That's what's in the dictionary) and Мало ли что там в словаре написано (There is lots of nonsense in the dictionary). We use the first phrase when we are trying to convince a client that, say, “plant” can mean an industrial building and not something in your garden. We use the second phrase when we are trying to convince a client that, say, “roadster” does mean an open car with no roof at all, but it cannot be used as synonym for a 2008 model convertible.
5. If your company or organization has a style book or a glossary, give it to the translator before he or she begins work. If you don't have one, provide the translator with similar translations done in the past. Переводчики не читают мысли (Translators don't read minds). If your company is called Газуралтехпром, your translator will render it Gazuraltekhprom unless you tell him or her that the standard English name you use is Ural Gas Technologies.

6. Be honest about the length and nature of the translation job. If you say: Надо перевести простой текст -- совсем немного (We need a simple text translated -- it's not much at all), your translator will not expect 15 pages of complicated text.

7. Please, pretty please, on the day before the deadline, don't send the translator a corrected version of the text with the changes unmarked. When you do that, we start thinking about goat farms.

Michele A. Berdy is a Moscow-based translator and interpreter and was the SLD's 2006 Greiss lecturer.

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Photo by Alexander Antonov

# The Question of Mutual Intelligibility in Ukrainian

Roman B. Worobec



In an article by Olga Collin in the Winter 2007 issue of *SlavFile* with the intriguing title, “Some Thoughts on the Ukrainian Language: How Two People Can Speak Ukrainian, Yet Not Understand Each Other” ([www.americantranslators.org/divisions/SLD/slavfile/winter-2007.pdf](http://www.americantranslators.org/divisions/SLD/slavfile/winter-2007.pdf), page 4), the author describes her experience as a medical interpreter for the Ukrainian-speaking community in Chicago. She cites instances where she, a speaker of current literary Ukrainian from the south of Ukraine, experienced difficulties in understanding speakers of the western varieties of the language.

My guess would be that in most cases the crux of the intelligibility problem among Ukrainians from different backgrounds may lie in different patterns of intonation and accents, different idiomatic expressions, more vestiges of archaic Slavic elements in the western dialects, and their greater exposure to Central and Western European languages. In some cases, receptivity can also be a problem, although this obviously was not a factor here. Since the language of a diaspora community tends to lag behind the language in the original homeland—particularly when there were political barriers that hindered direct contacts for decades—it may appear quaint or perplexing. That would obviously apply to the case of a recent Ukrainian immigrant (post-Soviet collapse) from the eastern or southern region communicating with earlier immigrants, largely from the western regions. It is not immaterial to this discussion that the eastern and southeastern areas of Ukraine are commonly described as Russian-speaking because of their dominance by Russia in the past, and the western regions as Ukrainian-speaking. In addition, we should keep in mind that the older immigrants have undergone decades of American and Canadian anglicization.

Interestingly enough, however, non-Ukrainians from across the globe who acquired standard Ukrainian as adults seem not to have such difficulties with regional speakers and often fail to detect dialectical differences, whether dealing with Ukrainians from Kamchatka or the century-old Ukrainian settlements in Brazil. While the Slavic languages exhibit a moderate degree of mutual intelligibility, much depends on the level of passive exposure of each speaker to the other’s language, and this would certainly be another factor to consider. Speakers of other Slavic languages who have not had lengthy exposure to Ukrainian will inevitably have trouble understanding even everyday speech, let alone the nuances of a special register like medicine.

The article contained some examples of linguistic distinctions that could be debated. However, the claim that *Good Morning!* is *Слава Ісусу!* [Slava Isusu] in the West and *Добрий день!* [Dobryi den’!] in the rest of Ukraine is

definitely questionable. The latter is the standard greeting across Ukraine. *Слава Ісусу!* is a contraction of the proper religious greeting *Слава Ісусу Христу!* [Slava Isusu Khrystu!] with the colloquial meaning of *Praise the Lord!* Since the abbreviated version has been deliberately used as an offensive form in Soviet times, it should be avoided. One can’t go wrong with the standard greeting *Добрий день!* or its one-word form *Добридень!* [Dobryden’!] recommended in all guidebooks. An analogous situation prevails in German: *Guten tag!* is the general greeting, and *Grüss Gott!* is reserved for special communities and occasions.

Equally problematic in the light of modern scholarship is the claim that Russian became the dominant language in what is today central Ukraine in the 8th century—half a millennium before the existence of Moscow was recorded—and that Ukrainian is derived from Russian. To speak of distinct languages rather than dialects in the 8th century and to state that Ukrainian bifurcated from Russian is unwarranted. So what language did they actually speak in the medieval polity now popularly referred to as Kyivan Rus’? When asked that question, the preeminent Russian historian Vasilii Kliuchevskii (1841-1911) replied that they spoke like Ukrainians do now (*“Тогда разговаривали так, как сейчас хохлы”*). Professor Michael Flier, a Harvard specialist in East Slavic languages, writes that “Despite the romantic-nationalistic claims of the nineteenth-century Russian academic establishment, neither the Ukrainian language nor its source dialects were ever derived from the Russian language.”

Although I differ with some of her assertions, I fully agree with Olga Collin that “The cultural and linguistic gap between the western and eastern parts of Ukraine has proved difficult to bridge,” and I would put the emphasis on the cultural gap.

Roman Worobec may be reached at [rbw@inbox.com](mailto:rbw@inbox.com).

## JOB OPPORTUNITY

We are looking for a native Russian speaker to provide linguistic review of the Russian version of a software application. The position is on-site in South Jordan, Utah at the client site. Neither relocation or housing is offered. Native Russian fluency, two years of translation experience and familiarity with computers is required. If you are interested or can refer someone--please contact:

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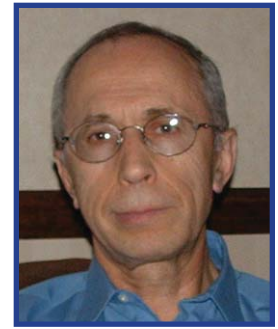
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## IDIOM SAVANTS: IDIOMS THAT HOLD WATER

Vladimir Kovner and Lydia Stone

The most interesting thing about this set of idioms is how much overlap there is between Russian and English. It is particularly intriguing that some essentially identical idioms do not appear to come from a common source such as the Bible or Aesop's fables. If you have additional water idioms, a suggestion for our next topic, or are able to contribute idioms in another Slavic language, please contact Volodia ([Vkovner250696mi@comcast.net](mailto:Vkovner250696mi@comcast.net)) or Lydia ([lydiastone@verizon.net](mailto:lydiastone@verizon.net)).



### EQUIVALENT AND NEAR EQUIVALENT WATER IDIOMS

- 1. Вилами по воде писано** (поговорка): неизвестно, сбудется предполагаемое событие/обещание или нет. Literally: written on water with a pitchfork. A chance in a thousand; something that remains to be seen. *English equivalent: Written in/on water* (archaic).
- 2. Вместе с водой выплеснуть и ребёнка**: вместе с плохим и не существенным отбросить и хорошее, существенное. *English equivalent: To throw out the baby with the bath water.*
- 3. В мутной реке рыбу ловить**: извлекать выгоду, пользуясь чужой бедой, чужими неурядицами/затруднениями. *English equivalent: To fish in troubled waters. Related English idiom: To pour oil over troubled waters*: to restore calm. Успокаивать.
- 4. Воды утекло (немало)**: прошло много времени. Literally: considerable water has flowed. **A great deal of water has passed (flowed) under the bridge/over the dam (since then).** *Related English idiom: Water over the bridge/under the dam*: describing something past and unalterable that thus should be forgotten. Невозвратное прошлое; (поговорка) было да сплыло.
- 5. Водить воду на ком-либо**: пользоваться чьей-то безотказностью в делах/поручениях/работе. Literally: to use someone to carry water. **To use someone as a water boy.** To make some one do your dirty (difficult or menial) work. (Поговорка) **На обиженных/сердитых воду возят**: ироническое выражение по отношению к тому, кто обижается, сердится.
- 6. Как с гуся вода**: о человеке, которому безразлично/наплевать, что другие люди думают о его/её поведении/поступке. Literally: like water off a goose. *English equivalent: Like water off a duck's back.*
- 7. Как (холодной) водой окатить/как ушатом (холодной) воды окатить**: охладить пыл, рвение; привести в замешательство. *English equivalent: To dash cold water on someone (someone's plans, etc.).*
- 8. Мутить воду**: умышленно запутывать дело; разводить склоки. **Muddy the waters.** *Additional Russian muddy water idiom: Воды не замути* (тихий, мирный, скромный). Literally: he/she will not muddy the waters (said of someone quiet and unassuming). *English equivalent: He wouldn't hurt a fly.*

- 9. Носить воду решетом/в решете**: выполнять бесполезную работу. *Synonymous Russian idiom: Толочь воду в ступе* (to pound water in a mortar). *English equivalent: To carry water in a sieve.*
- 10. Пройти огонь, воду (и медные трубы)** (поговорка): о человеке, побывавшем в сложных жизненных ситуациях; которому выпало на долю много трудностей, тяжёлых испытаний. Такому человеку ничего не страшно. *English equivalent: To go through fire and water. Related English idiom: Come hell or high water.* Used when someone is determined to do something (or something is certain to happen), no matter what the difficulties or dangers. Будь, что будет! Была не была! Во что бы то ни стало; несмотря ни на что; хоть умри (но сделай).
- 11. Сажать на хлеб и воду**: ограничивать в питании; сажать на голодный паёк. *English equivalent: To put on bread and water.*
- 12. Чистой/чистейшей воды**: самый настоящий. Literally: of clearest water. *English equivalent: Of the first water* (of highest quality).
- 13. Чувствовать себя, как рыба в воде**: в своей сфере; непринуждённо. To feel like a fish in water, i.e., to feel completely at home. *Related English Idioms: 1) To take to [something] like a duck to water*: to feel immediately at home. Чувствовать себя, как дома. 2) **To be like a fish out of water** (to be out of one's element). Чувствовать себя, как рыба, вытасенная из воды/на берег; чувствовать себя / быть не в своей стихии/не в своей тарелке.

### RUSSIAN IDIOMS WITHOUT WATERY ENGLISH EQUIVALENT:

- 1. Вывести на чистую воду**: разоблачить кого-либо. Literally: to bring into clear water. To expose or unmask someone, bring something to light, to call someone's bluff.
- 2. Выйти сухим из воды**: вывернуться; выйти из какой-то сложной, неприятной ситуации без потерь/без ущерба/незапятнанным; удачно выбраться из передраги. Literally: to emerge dry from the water. Get off scot-free; come out smelling like a rose.
- 3. Десятая (седьмая) вода на киселе**: очень дальний родственник. Literally: tenth (seventh) water used for making fruit jelly. Very remote relative, e.g., fourth cousin twice removed.

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## IDIOM SAVANTS *Continued from page 7*

4. **Как в воду глядеть:** как будто заранее знать; угадывать будущее; правильно предвидеть события. Literally: as if seen in the water. To be sure one knows something clearly in advance. To see it (something in the future) as plain as day.
5. **Как в воду кануть:** пропасть бесследно. Literally: as if it had sunk in the water. To disappear without a trace. To seem to have disappeared off the face of the Earth.
6. **Как в воду опущенный:** имеющий унылый, печальный вид. Literally: as if immersed in water. To look as if one has lost one's best friend.
7. **(Как) воды в рот набрать:** упорно хранить молчание. Literally: as if someone had taken water into his mouth. Silent; as if the cat had got someone's tongue.
8. **Концы в воду:** скрыть все следы о каком-то неблагоприятном поступке/преступлении. Literally: the ends in the water. And no one will be the wiser...
9. **Лить воду на чью-то мельницу:** помогать кому-то своими речами/действиями; приводить доводы, факты в чью-нибудь пользу. Literally: pour water on (someone's) mill. To help someone, play into someone's hands.
10. **Много воды (в докладе/речи/сообщении и т.п.):** много слов и мало мыслей. Literally: there was a lot of water (in that report, speech, etc.). That [report, etc.] was extremely wordy, full of hot air.
11. **Не разлей вода (или Водой не разлить кого-либо):** о тесной дружбе; о неразлучных друзьях. Literally: you cannot even separate them by pouring water over them. They are inseparable (friends).
12. **Обжегшись на молоке, дуют на воду (пословица):** однажды нарвавшись на неприятность, люди становятся сверх-осторожными. Literally: they who have burned themselves on milk, will blow (to cool) water. Once bitten, twice shy. The burned child fears the flame.
13. **Похож(и) как две капли воды:** о большом сходстве. Literally: as similar as two drops of water. Like two peas in a pod.
14. **Тише воды, ниже травы:** о скромном, тихом человеке. More quiet than the water, lower than the grass. Very quiet and unassuming. Quiet as a mouse / meek as a lamb.
2. **Blow someone out of the water:** to completely (but not physically) destroy something, a rival, idea, argument, etc. Сокрушить идеи, аргументы, планы и т.п. конкурента/оппонента/соперника/кого-либо и тем самым сокрушить кого-либо (не физически). *Related idiom:* Dead in the water: completely destroyed unable to function, e.g., of a campaign, organization, idea, etc. В безвыходном положении; в состоянии глубокого кризиса; на мели.
3. **Cast your bread upon the waters:** to act charitably without thought of gain or acknowledgment. From the Bible. "Отпускай хлеб твой по водам." (Из Библии. Экклезиаст. 11-1): будьте милосердны/делайте пожертвования / занимайтесь благотворительной деятельностью, не думая о выгоде и не ожидая ответной благодарности.
4. **Dull as dishwater (sometimes ditchwater):** very dull in any sense. Смертельно скучный; тоска зелёная.
5. **In hot (sometimes deep) water:** in trouble. В беде; в горе; в опасном, трудном положении. To get into hot water. Попасть в беду; запутаться, "влипнуть."
6. **Jerkwater town:** a very small uninteresting town. (From trains stopping at unimportant towns solely in order to take on water for their boilers.) Маленький, захудалый провинциальный городок/городишко; полустанок.
7. **Keep one's head above water:** survive, if only just barely. Сводить концы с концами.
8. **Long drink of water:** a very tall person. Очень высокий человек.
9. **Oil and water do not mix:** said of two things (or people) that are incompatible or completely unlike. Масло с водой не смешиваются. Так говорят о двух несовместимых, абсолютно разных вещах, идеях, и т.д., или о двух людях, которые во всём расходятся во взглядах или имеют совершенно дисгармонирующие индивидуальности.
10. **On the water wagon:** having vowed or decided to stop drinking alcohol. (Frequently, shortened to "on the wagon.") Дать зарок/обещание не пить (спиртные напитки).
11. **Something doesn't hold water:** some argument, explanation etc. is illogical, full of holes. Необоснованный, нелогичный (аргумент/довод и т.п.).
12. **Still waters run deep:** statement that very quiet people may be deep thinkers, in either good or bad sense. Тихие воды глубоки; (пословица) в тихом омуте черти водятся.
13. **Test the waters:** to gauge relevant public reaction to some plan before it is put into place. Прощупывать ситуацию (с целью определять возможные последствия каких-либо действий/возможную реакцию на какие-либо действия).

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## ENGLISH IDIOMS WITHOUT WATERY RUSSIAN EQUIVALENTS:

1. **Blood is thicker than water:** family (blood) relationships are more important and have a greater claim on an individual than any other type of relationship, and possibly any other consideration. Дословно: кровь гуще воды. Узы кровного родства сильнее других уз; голос крови не заглушить; (пословица) своё дитя и горбато, да мило; свой дурак дороже чужого умника.





## CONFERENCE NEWCOMER'S REPORT

Monika Pilecka

At a certain point in my preparations to fly from Poland to Orlando, reaching the stage when everything would finally be ready seemed an unattainable goal: the only family car broke down, the print shop on which I relied to produce eye-catching business cards and resumes let me down making me go to another,

where—of course—they had no colored paper and I had to put up with what they could do at the last moment, then the kids behaved as if they were about to fall ill again... Time, instead of ticking calmly at a steady pace, was rushing headlong—there was no stopping for me either. At last on Monday night, acting as the family general, I put the kids to bed murmuring I-love-you-honeys and I-will-be-back-very-soons and covered the fridge with notes containing emergency doctors' phone numbers, the info on medicine dosages for the little ones, alternative routes to the kindergarten during rush hour, etc.

My suitcase was packed (resumes and business cards on the very bottom, underneath my favorite clothes, along with a fancy power outlet adapter my geek husband lent me), and my carry-on luggage ready (I had slipped in a pair of pajamas with a vague, strange idea that I might need them on the plane), and a novel as well.

Tuesday morning was very bad. I was late, missed the plane, the next plane was late due to dense fog in Munich, Germany. I was rerouted, and arrived in Orlando six hours later than originally planned. My suitcase was either lost or delayed; nobody at the airline knew. But I did have my pajamas... The whole journey lasted 24 hours—taking jetlag into account, you can guess how I felt. Reaching the hotel

bed was a huge relief. And time slowed down considerably...

On Wednesday morning, before heading to the pre-conference sessions I tried to get registered—and my badge was not there! I am far from being superstitious, but I thought “Should I really be here?” Luckily for me the issue was quickly resolved, I attached the “First time attendee” and the “Certified” ribbons to my badge and started—going upstairs—my full immersion in this professional event. Believe me, I did need that...

I got acquainted with many people during the pre-conference sessions, including Ewa, a Polish interpreter from Chicago, who in the evening introduced me to most of the Polish translators and interpreters present at the event.

I had my long-awaited chance to network, learn and compare—and also to feel rising within me pride at belonging to such an amazing, vibrant and inspiring community.

As a freelance translator I live a solitary professional life. Meeting colleagues in person meant a lot; I felt as if I were recharging my batteries.

Finally, my suitcase made it after 24 hours, so I had my business cards and resumes and I could put them on display in the Crystal Room. The job marketplace was one of the elements of the conference I value the highest. I have been contacted by several agencies whose representatives picked up a copy of my resume there. I do hope to benefit a lot more from all these contacts in the future.

Apart from introducing myself and building a network of colleagues and—hopefully—friends, I had another business-related goal: learning. I chose sessions very carefully and many times I regretted that two sessions I found interesting

*Continued on page 10*

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### IDIOM SAVANTS *Continued from page 8*

14. **Water, water everywhere (but not a drop to drink):** quotation from “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” by S.T. Coleridge, used in situations where something appears to be abundant but for some reason is not available for a projected or necessary use. О чём-то, что вроде бы есть в изобилии, но по каким-то причинам никак не использовать (напр., пить воду из грязного пруда).

15. **Watering hole:** a bar (jocular). Бар; пивная.

16. **Water down:** make less intense, less complicated, more palatable but by implication also less substantive or effective. Лишать остроты; сглаживать; сделать более обтекаемым; смягчать.

17. **You can lead a horse to water (but you cannot make him drink):** you can give someone all the prerequisites or opportunities for doing something, but that does not mean he will do it. Дословно: можно отвести лошадь на водопой, но невозможно заставить её пить. Смысл: можешь дать кому-то всё необходимое, чтобы сделать что-либо, но это не значит, что он будет это делать. (Пословица) Силою не всё возьмёшь (у Владимира Даля: Силой не возьмёшь). Сравните: Насильно мил не будешь.

18. **You never miss the water till the well runs dry:** things that are always present may not be appreciated until they cease to be so. Дословно: ценность воды не узнаешь, пока колодец не высохнет. Смысл: цену кого-либо или чего-либо узнаешь, когда потеряешь. Что имеем - не храним, потерявши - плачем (Козьма Прутков).

## CONFERENCE NEWCOMER'S REPORT *Continued from page 9*

were taking place at the same time. I attended several ATA sessions, including the ethics workshop and the session about the ATA's mentor/mentee program. All the sessions I attended were relevant—my care in choosing had paid off every time.

When discussing the choice of sessions with one of my Polish colleagues, I was told that most SLD sessions are for Russian speakers; therefore I might not find anything interesting in the SLD track. Well, I must admit I was not discouraged by this remark, as I try hard not to have any preconceived notions and prefer to form opinions on my own. I attended the SLD session devoted to complementary language partnerships and the welcome was more than warm. The content was extremely inspiring. I do want more!

I visited the exhibitors' hall several times, primarily making sure not to overlook any potential outsourcer and taking care to introduce myself to all seeking an EN>PL translator certified by ATA.

Summing up, I can say that all my goals were achieved—and also many other areas of potential development or improvement have revealed themselves.

Apart from the intellectual and professional benefits, I brought home a special trophy, namely a pink flamingo, which Maria, my roommate, won in the prize drawing and then gave me. Every night the bird, my kids' new favorite bath toy (very well taken care of, I can tell you!) reminds me of my time at the conference.

Last, but not least, please allow me to express my gratitude to an ATA member to whom I owe an enormous amount. In the summer of 2001, during my first trip to the USA I met Ola Furmanek. For 5 consecutive weeks we translated and interpreted for a group of Poles being trained to operate a production line that was to be installed at the Polish branch of an American corporation in which I worked in Poland at the time. Ola became my first unforgettable and invaluable translation mentor by overseeing my work, providing advice on self-study, professional development and tools of the trade, as well as dozens of practical tips. Ola reassured me about my choice of profession. She also told me about ATA. I have followed her advice closely all these years. In 2007 I joined ATA and got certified. It has been a very good, beneficial move. I am proud to be an ATA member. Thank you Ola—I do hope to see you in New York in 2009!

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## “Is a Puzzlement”

Lynn Visson

That awkward and ungrammatical phrase “is a puzzlement” has remained engraved in my mind since the first time I saw the musical *The King and I*. (Frankly, it sounded very much like the kind of thing my father might have said, all the more

so since both he and Yul Brynner, the actor playing the King, were native speakers of Russian.) Alone on the stage, the King muses aloud that “is a puzzlement” why the arrival of his children’s English governess has led to the upheavals and moral breakdown now plaguing his kingdom.

King Chulalongkorn clearly was not to blame for his grammatical errors and poor English. But what is an educated American or Englishman to do when a foreigner with a fairly mediocre command of English takes it upon himself to “correct” the speaker’s use of King’s English? Grin and bear it? Argue? These questions have haunted me since childhood. My parents, who were part of the first wave of Russian émigrés who left during the years preceding and following the 1917 revolution, first lived in Sweden, Denmark and Germany, then settled down in France, and in 1941 were forced to move once again, this time to America. When I arrived on the scene shortly afterwards, my parents, like most of their friends and contemporaries, took it for granted that any child would do what they had had to do, i.e., become fluent in four languages by the age of five. As a result, I was raised speaking Russian, French and German. The surrounding environment, however, ensured that English was my native language.

In addition to their native Russian, my parents had an excellent command of French and German. By the time I was 12, though, I was the resident expert on any questions involving the proper use of English. I rather enjoyed the role of English arbiter in return for all the times I had to turn to them regarding the mysteries of Russian and French. That understanding concerning the unquestioned division of linguistic expertise was a given in our family. And the tradition kept on going. In the 1970s my father wrote his memoirs of his years as Director of Exhibitions at New York’s Wildenstein Gallery, and since his written English was not on the level of his spoken English, he was counting on my editing the book. Following his death shortly after completing the manuscript, I reworked the text, which was subsequently published in the US and in Russia.

My knowledge of Russian, however, was uneven. The fact that I never attended school in Russia made itself felt whenever it came to putting pen to paper, or Cyrillic text to a PC. Though I am relatively confident of my ability as a nearly bilingual cow to moo in Russian till my fellow bovines come home, to this day I am careful to submit all my

writings in Russian intended for publication to the watchful eye of a native speaker who is either an academic colleague or a professional editor.

On the other hand, some 40 years devoted to studying and working with Russian language and culture, and ongoing contacts with Russian colleagues and friends in both the US and the country of my roots have helped to bridge the gap between my written and spoken Russian. A decade of teaching the language and literature in American universities, 24 years at the United Nations interpreting from Russian and French into English (and occasionally from English into Russian), years of travel to Russia to lecture and teach translation and interpretation in Russian, and speaking Russian day in and day out with my husband, a Moscow intellectual who left the USSR some 30 years ago, have served to make me, for practical purposes, bilingual. I maintain ongoing e-mail correspondence in Russian with numerous colleagues and friends, and though I occasionally notice a grammatical slipup in the letters of even highly literate and educated native speakers of Russian, it would never occur to me to flag such an error to the writer, or to “correct” someone to prove to him that he is “wrong.” On the other hand, all my friends know that I am always grateful for correction of an infelicity in my Russian.

Like my US colleagues who are engaged in interpreting and translating from Russian, I am acutely aware that the history of Russia has created a distinctive attitude among Russians both to their own language and to foreign tongues. Only those individuals who are either stone deaf or totally devoid of the slightest linguistic and cultural sensitivity can fail to notice the fierce and passionate love and devotion of Russians for their *родной, богатый, великий русский язык* (native, rich and great Russian language). This is a language which has survived the hailstorm of foreign (including German and Dutch) terms that first battered their way into Russian during the reign of Peter the Great, to be followed by the relentless march of French terms that accompanied the Napoleonic troops and the diction of Pushkin and his nineteenth-century contemporaries, and ultimately by the verbal Klondike of perestroika, which unlocked the linguistic gates to a flood of English management, banking, business, computer, slang and other terms which set up permanent outposts in all areas of the Russian language. The Russian mass media has – and with good reason – been bursting with angry reactions of readers, writers and viewers fulminating against the linguistic devastation wrought by this invasion of Anglophone terminology, ranging from *киллеры* to *хеджирование* to *ток-шоу* (hit men, hedging, and talk show). No need for a host of examples; we are all familiar with them. The modern protective Slavophile reaction to this Westernizing rampage by the English language is thoroughly understandable.

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## “Is a Puzzlement” *Continued from page 11*

There is, however, a major distinction in the attitude towards these two languages in the US and in Russia. In the United States, Russian has been taught for years in schools and universities, first by pre-war immigrants, later by the waves of émigrés who arrived following World War II and in the 1970s, as well as by several generations of US Slavists who devoted themselves to the study of the language. For decades, therefore, Americans had the opportunity to study Russian with native speakers, while most Russians were learning English from other Russians. The Russian émigrés in the United States were keeping up with their native language, and with changes in that language, while the English of the Soviet Union was frozen in a time warp.

To use a favorite Sovietism, it is well known to everyone that the USSR was a closed society, and that native speakers of Western languages who could serve as teachers and language editors were few and far between. Russian English-language textbooks and linguistic materials tended to be ideologically biased; Russian-born teachers of English unconcernedly transmitted old-fashioned and nearly archaic British expressions to students who passed them on to their students. For many Russian students, moreover, the British “dialect” was and still is the only acceptable version of the English language. The few native English-language editors, primarily aging American, Canadian and British Communists working in English-language newspapers such as the *Moscow News* or Progress Publishers, were at the mercy of Soviet editors who placed ideology over language and insisted on the “goal-directed steps” and “radiant future” characteristic of Marxist jargon.

Yet – and this is important in seeking an answer to the “puzzlement” – during those same decades in which dusty, arcane English was being handed down in Russian schools and colleges, the country saw a flowering of superbly qualified English-Russian translators, who both did outstanding theoretical work and provided brilliant renderings into Russian of world classics. The poetry of Burns as translated by Marshak, Shakespeare through the lens of Pasternak, or Salinger’s *Catcher in the Rye* as transformed by Rita Rait-Kovaleva, are classics of the art; many English-language translations of the Russian classics pale in comparison. The architecture and art of translation as practiced in Soviet Russia raised the bar to a level that was admired by translators worldwide. There was a very good reason for this; in an era where a joke told to the wrong person could lead to a twenty-year prison sentence or worse, translation was an ideologically safe haven. As compared to many other activities, translating classical Greek or Roman, or even nineteenth-century English poetry, was relatively innocuous.

While translators were penning their way to creative heights, interpreters were struggling. In addition to the shortage of native speakers capable of teaching and writing good English there was a near-total dearth of native speakers of English capable of interpreting, let alone of doing simultaneous interpretation. As a result, Russian-born in-

terpreters were obliged to interpret both from English into Russian and Russian into English. Practice worked its way backward into theory. While in the West – and in particular in international organizations such as the UN – interpretation for the most part was done from the foreign into the native language, Russian theoreticians touted the benefits of interpretation from the native into the foreign language. The de facto shortage led to theoretical underpinnings for the assumption that “native into foreign is better,” though anyone who has ever had to listen to a non-native speaker of English struggle to interpret from his or her native language into a foreign language is most unlikely to agree. As a result of being forced to work from Russian into English, many Russian interpreters accepted the notion that this was a “good thing,” and in fact a very good thing. The next logical and pragmatic – though rather dubious – step was to posit that Russian interpreters (i.e., native speakers of Russian) could do a better job than native speakers of English in interpreting from Russian into English.

There have, of course, been exceptions to the “into native is better rule,” in the form of some brilliant and virtually bilingual Russian (and a few US) interpreters who could work into both languages. Oleg Troyanovsky, Viktor Sukhodrev, Boris Belitsky, Yurii Klebnikov and Bill Krimer were a few of these stars of the interpretation world.

The closed nature of Soviet society and the desperate need for individuals with an excellent knowledge of English spurred Russian teachers, editors, translators and interpreters to perfect their English-language skills and doggedly cling to their chosen profession. No wonder they valued it so highly. This was their passport to excellent jobs, trips abroad, the chance to purchase foreign goods, read literature in English and legitimately engage in contacts with foreigners. Even when the society opened up, this attitude remained. Many of those who had clambered up to the peak of the English-language establishment firmly dug in their heels and refused to descend from those heights – or to allow native English speakers to join them there. These “foreigners” were trespassers, and that Russian monopoly on English was not going to cede its position lightly.

Perestroika unquestionably gave a major and irreversible jolt to the Russian English-language teaching and translation-interpretation elite. Foreign language-teaching books began to be published in Russia. Native English speakers were hired as teachers and editors (along with a very few translators and interpreters, who could hardly service the entire country’s needs), and Russian specialists in English found it vastly easier to go abroad for training and maintenance of their language skills.

Nevertheless, the effect of decades of isolation has left a strong stamp on Russian speakers of English. Years of studying English with teachers who had no contact with native speakers of English, and of learning from the ideologically sanitized world of outdated textbooks did not provide

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## “Is a Puzzlement” *Continued from page 12*

students with a knowledge of contemporary English usage. Language is far from static; it is constantly developing and changing. Usage changes as we speak. A little knowledge, said Francis Bacon, is a dangerous thing, and even “some” knowledge can be equally shaky. An individual completely ignorant of foreign languages is aware of the gaps in his knowledge, and may well look up to those who have mastered one or several tongues. But a полужнайка, someone with “little” or “some” knowledge, may have a highly exaggerated view of his mastery of a language.

Всезнайка (being a know-it-all) presents particular dangers for an interpreter working from a native into a foreign language. Regardless of what “knowing a language” means, and what “knowing Russian” or “knowing English” actually involves, one thing is crystal clear: under the pressure of the booth, the grammar, syntax and style of a simultaneous interpreter working into a non-native language rapidly disintegrate. A Russian who has excellent mastery of the English tense system may still have trouble with articles, syntax and style, and particularly with register. How can he also have an all-encompassing knowledge of the endless rules for proper punctuation, capitalization, letter and resume-writing? Of exclamations and interjections and acceptable and non-acceptable curse words? Only long-term exposure to the linguistic milieu can lead to true comfort with such issues, and with register. To phrase the argument in Chomskyan terms, a non-native speaker of the language, no matter how sophisticated his theoretical knowledge of grammar, will not be able to generate the same kinds of sentences as a native speaker. And a Whorfian would assert that a native speaker of Russian cannot have the cultural worldview determined by the English language. Nor will he be familiar with all the associations that English words and phrases bring to mind for a Briton or an American.

A Russian полужнайка can very easily turn into a всезнайка, categorically asserting “Я прав – Вы не правы” (I’m right, you’re wrong), as opposed to the American tendency to say, “Well, you have your opinion and I have mine.” That attitude seems to apply to notions concerning mastery of a language as well as to a host of other subjects. To go still further into the realm of national stereotypes and fixed ideas, the old-style презрение (contempt) for foreigners – the reverse side of the coin of the old Soviet superiority-inferiority complex/love-hate relationship with the West, which posited that anything Western was highly desirable, while at the same time у нас все лучше (everything is better here at home) – sometimes seems to have spilled over into a презрение (contempt) for the foreigners’ knowledge of their native language.

Here we return to the “puzzlement.” Throughout years of contacts with Russian native speakers who work as teachers, editors, translators and interpreters of English, dozens of my US colleagues and I have repeatedly encountered a thinly veiled attitude of “I know English better than

you do,” or, to tweak the words of Pete Seeger’s song, “This language is my language – it isn’t your language.” I repeat: neither I nor the overwhelming majority of my US colleagues who have not been educated in Russia – regardless of our fluency in the language – would ever venture to publish a piece in Russian that had not been carefully vetted by a native speaker of the language, a professional editor or an academic. Yet time and again I have seen native speakers of Russian blithely publish articles, abstracts, and even entire books without feeling the slightest need to submit them for review to a native speaker of English. In all fairness, this behavior seems far more characteristic of people living in Russia than of those living in the US, since ongoing immersion in an English-speaking milieu usually fairly quickly convinces émigrés that the locals have a solid grounding in their native English and do in fact know what they are talking about.

That’s for a start. Take any Russian academic journal and look at the list of titles and abstracts in English at the back. Quite frequently, these are unintentionally humorous. A Moscow journal with which I am associated decided to right this situation by inviting a native speaker of English – who is also an experienced professional translator and editor – to correct the translation errors in English of the Russian titles of articles in the journal. Well and good? Not quite so. A zealous member of the Russian editorial board promptly set about “correcting” the US editor’s English. I do not mean correcting possible mistranslations of the Russian into English, but literally “correcting” the English grammar of the native speaker, i.e., adapting it to “*Moscow News*-style” grammar, inserting error after error in the process. Result: refusing to have any further contact with the journal, the American quit in disgust. And a few months ago native English speakers working at the English-language *The Moscow Times* were told that some of the awkward phrasing in the English texts of Russian authors reflected “distinctive features” of their “specific style” and was not to be corrected.

I wish these had been isolated incidents, but far from it. A recent issue of yet another academic journal published by a major Russian educational institution had a page of English titles of articles spiked with grammatical and spelling errors. When I pointed this out to the editor, he was incredulous. “That can’t be,” he remonstrated. “These were translated by one of our English teachers.” Point made. I had questioned the Pope’s command of Latin.

I am not about to trot out the old hackneyed argument that the native speaker is always correct. Native speakers, as we all know, can make mistakes both in speaking and in writing their native languages. There are linguistic slips, changes in usage, incorrect usages. Two eagle-eyed Russian editors and proofreaders have found various typos and slipups in various English texts of my books and articles, and I am most grateful to them for that. As a member of the editorial board of a Moscow journal, I have on occasion

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## “Is a Puzzlement” *Continued from page 13*

called the editors’ attention to various spelling and grammatical errors in the Russian texts of articles submitted for publication, and have caught a Russian editor using the wrong declensional form for a numeral. But I also have had to stand firm to keep 20th-century standard English phrases from being “corrected” by zealous Russian editors into Dickensian English parlance. How would a Russian speaker feel if his modern Russian prose were “corrected” by an English speaker to sound like Sumarokov? In the overwhelming majority of cases, though, the native speaker serves as both the standard and the judge of correct usage.

I recently translated a book by a distinguished Russian historian. Due to his highly limited knowledge of English, our entire correspondence and all our telephone conversations were conducted exclusively in Russian. The learned gentleman (who in fact had been living in the US for quite a few years and is one of the rather few examples of such a Russian who has remained relatively immune to the surrounding linguistic milieu), did not hesitate to “correct” my translation of “the late Mrs. Smirnova” to “the passed over Mrs. Smirnova,” and “the advice of Dr. Ivanov” to “the advices of Ivanovs.” Only the solemn promise – practically an oath – extracted from the author by our editor to the effect that there would be no more such “corrections” allowed me to finish work on the manuscript.

While working with another Russian author on the English text of his article, which was filled with incorrect English usage, I was constantly informed that all these forms “were in the dictionary” (which dictionary?) and were therefore by definition correct. Never mind that dictionary forms a) may be outdated and b) must be used correctly and in the appropriate linguistic-cultural context. That was fairly irrelevant, though, since, of course, he knew English better than I did. That was a given.

Perhaps the most mindboggling example of linguistic arrogance I have heard about was that of the Moscow film editor who busied himself “correcting” the English subtitles an American friend of mine had done for a Russian movie. When she objected to one of his “changes” (which was, in fact, a blatant mistranslation) she reminded him that she was a native speaker of English. He retorted that, “Я такой же носитель языка, как и Вы” (I’m just as much of a native speaker of the language as you are).

Things are not much better for interpreters. Some of the Russian delegates at international meetings are devoted aficionados of the sport of “catch the interpreter.” This game is played by monitoring every syllable uttered by the English-language interpreter and making as many “corrections” as possible. Of course, any interpreter – with whatever language combination – can make a mistake. There is no such animal as an infallible interpreter, and a delegate has every right to correct a real mistake. But this requires that the Russian delegate possess an excellent knowledge of the language into which the interpreter is working. A US interpreter was once interpreting a delegate who kept using the word *онаце-*

*ние*. Tired of repeating “fears” and “apprehensions,” the interpreter referred to “misgivings.” After a moment of deathly stillness – during which the interpreter (as so often happens) waited with thumping heart for the axe to fall – the delegate proudly announced, “Is mistake in the interpretation. We are not giving anything away.” What delegate wants, delegate gets. I was once forced to say “the occurring of the elections” instead of “the holding of the elections.”

Russian delegates who insist on English cognates as translations for words such as *адекватный* (sounds like “adequate” but means appropriate) or *корректный* (sounds like “correct” but means proper, appropriate) are in fact obliging the native speaker of English to come out with incorrect renderings. An English translation of a Russian text given to an English-language interpreter and marked “Read as written” can put the interpreter in the awkward position of saying some very odd things. How does a listener react on hearing a native speaker of English speaking thoroughly non-native English? How would a Russian-language interpreter react on being handed a Russian text with mangled verb aspects, jumbled case endings and preposition salad?

To use an English version of the Russian proverb, “В чужой монастырь со своим уставом не ходят,” or “When in Rome, do as the Romans do.” And “when in America, do as the English speakers do,” and without imposing a чужой устав (foreign code of conduct or customs). Never mind the basic tenets of common courtesy in cross-cultural communication; denying the obvious fact that a simultaneous interpreter’s knowledge of his native language is superior to that of a non-native speaker is both fraught with serious implications for linguistic communication and can lead to serious misunderstandings in international relations. I have no quarrel with a Russian interpreter who wishes to correct a native English-speaking colleague who has genuinely misunderstood the Russian original. And I am fully aware that today’s commercial market often requires native Russian interpreters to work “both ways” at a meeting, i.e., from English into Russian and from Russian into English, and to do the best possible job in this situation. But I will never accept the illogical conclusion of these “monitors” – and one with far-reaching consequences – that native Anglophone interpreters are simply unnecessary and can easily be replaced by native speakers of Russian.

So I would plead for some restraint on both sides. Many Russian professionals, editors, translators and interpreters have attained an extraordinary mastery of English, and post-perestroika Russian students of English have made phenomenal progress. In all fairness, many Russian students of English have long had a theoretical grasp of English grammatical structures that is considerably better than that of quite a few native speakers of English, and many American students of Russian have a better grasp than native Russian speakers of the subtleties of the rules of Russian grammar. That is natural, since the native speaker does not need to give constant thought to grammatical rules.

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# Javite se! (Make yourselves heard!)

Paula Gordon

Attention, *SlavFile* readers who are speakers of languages not Russian, and/or not speakers of Russian, and/or non-understanders of Russian! What can the Slavic Language Division offer us, and how can we get it?

Well, what do we want? Do we want a “place” or a “virtual space” to meet other translators and interpreters working in our language pairs? Do we want a newsletter we can use to communicate with each other? Do we want a venue to publish articles of interest to us? Do we want an umbrella for getting our presentations accepted into the annual conference schedule? Do we want moral support and advice in our attempts to reach like-language ATA members in order to try to get our language pairs accepted into the Certification Program?

The Slavic Language Division can and does offer all these things to us, but like ATA itself, SLD is member driven, so if we want something to happen, we have to be a part of making it happen. Notice I did not say, “We have to be *willing to work* to make it happen.” In fact, we don’t have to be willing to do anything. We can be unwilling, recalcitrant, even, but a chance encounter at an SLD meeting or an offhand comment while trying to slip out unnoticed could be the start of that something we *wish* would happen: two people talking in Bosnian, Belarusan, or Bulgarian, and a third can’t help but jump in; she didn’t know there were others at the conference who spoke that language (names can be misleading, and when there are no colored dots...).

Then a fourth, and suddenly translation agency reps are taking notice and handing out business cards; they’re recruiting in our languages! And why are there no sessions; and wouldn’t it be great to review the latest legal dictionary; did you hear there’s a technical dictionary in the works; I hate back translations; someone should explain about the cultural differences... Shall we go out for coffee? Let’s stay in touch. Shall we start a Yahoo group? Are there enough of us to convince ATA to add our language to certification? I heard someone say Paula knew something about that. Oh, the meeting’s over already, let’s run our presentation idea by Becky. Ahh, here’s Lydia. We can ask her about putting an announcement in the next *SlavFile*...

What do we want? It’s our division. When we make ourselves heard, things start to happen.

Next issue: *A joj!* (What have I gotten myself into?)

Paula Gordon translates Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian into English. Her call to like-language translators to join a tentative “effort to investigate the possibility” of establishing accreditation [sic] for any of the above South Slavic languages went out in the spring 2002 *SlavFile*. Her announcement that the Croatian-English and English-Croatian pairs were approved for certification went out in the fall 2004 *SlavFile*. She feels that beyond the qualified success of that effort (qualified because the Serbian and Bosnian pairs have yet to be established), the professional contacts and lasting friendships established along the way have made her initial “peep” worthwhile. Reach her at paula@dbaPlanB.com.

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## “Is a Puzzlement”*Continued from page 14*

But no American student of Russian would then take it upon himself to go about correcting the Russian – oral or written – of a native speaker. He would be considered by his American colleagues as just short of clinically insane. Nor would a native speaker of French, Spanish or German take it upon himself to correct the English of a native speaker of English. English-speaking Western Europeans have been in contact with native speakers of English for far longer than most Russians, and tend to have a much more accurate idea of what is actually involved in mastering the language.

English has emerged as a global language, and its study in today’s Russia is widespread. Unfortunately, not all Russian speakers understand that the claim to know English better than a native Anglophone and correction of his English (to use a completely inappropriate metaphor) makes the English speaker see red. One’s language is a part of one’s cultural identity, and these bounds and borders must be respected.

There are some thoughtful voices with whom it is possible to dialogue on this issue of “Russian English,” but unfortunately these still seem to be in a definite minority. That is why I have decided to take this issue out into the open and stop skulking around wrapped in the shawl of

linguistic politesse. Sorry, дорогие коллеги и друзья (dear colleagues and friends). While I’m always glad to help Russians who are studying and working with English, this language is my language; it isn’t your language. I would hope that one day we will be at the point when both Russian and English will be “our” languages, when the English language will no longer be the fiefdom of the Russian English-language elite, with native speakers relegated to the linguistic bleachers. And that then native Russian English teachers, editors, translators and interpreters will cooperate with their American English-speaking counterparts to produce the best possible English-language product. But work on that has to start now. As our new President has been saying, “Time for a change.”

A UN staff interpreter for more than twenty years, Lynn Visson holds a Harvard PhD and taught Russian language and literature at Columbia University. She is now teaching interpretation and translation at MIIS in Monterey and in Moscow. Her many publications on Russian language and culture, published in the US and Russia, include works on Russian-English simultaneous interpretation, *Wedded Strangers: The Challenges of Russian-American Marriages*, and *The Russian Heritage Cookbook*. *SlavFile*’s editors would like to add that at the ATA conference in Orlando (2000) when our scheduled Greiss lecturer had to cancel at the last minute, Lynn stepped in and, on very little notice, gave one of our best Susana Greiss lectures ever.

# SLOVENIAN POETRY IN TRANSLATION IV

Martha Kosir

## Jure Jakob

### VELIKI VOZ V ŽAREČI NOČI

Noben sneg, nobena sled v tem snegu, noben korak, ki bi puščal sledi, in nobeno telo, ki bi toplo delilo mraz,  
nebo, žareča tema noči, zvezde in nihče, ki bi gledal, nihče, ki bi rekel, tam je veliki voz,  
avtomobili na avtocesti, drveči snopi luči, vsak v svojo smer, drug tik ob drugem,  
do mesta, skozi mesto, mimo mesta, drug tik ob drugem, kovina okoli dizelskih src, gladke površine nad žilami iz bencina,  
na obvoznici, na asfaltiranem prstanu, ki diši po gumah in po roki, ki ga je snela s prsta, v neutrudno razžarjeni noči  
je moja roka ovita okoli prestavne ročice kot okoli upanja, pospešujem in zaviram, odhajam in se vračam, krožim,  
ko čakam, zaslepljen od tisoč luči, buden v veliki nespečnosti, in govorim, izgovarjam molitev, z usti meljem zrak,  
ko bo zapadel sneg, ko bo zametel noč, okoli katere je speljan ta prstan, po katerem se vrtim,  
ko bo bela odeja prekrila oči, se bom ustavil in noč se bo ustavila in veliki voz bo odtisnil veliko sled,  
od katere bo šla manjša sled korakov, od nekoga, ki bo prišel do vrat avtomobila, jih odprl  
in se nagnil do moje glave, ki bo uho, v katero bo zašepetal besedo, dolgo, neverjetno in čisto,  
kot je moje čakanje na veliki voz v žareči noči.

Jure Jakob was born in Celje, Slovenia in 1977. He graduated with a degree in philosophy and comparative literature from the University of Ljubljana, where he is continuing postgraduate studies in comparative literature. After several publications in major Slovenian literary journals that were met with a very positive response, he published his first book of poetry in 2003, titled *Tri postaje* (Three Stations), and won the Zlata ptica award for the best prospective young artist. For his second book of poetry titled *Budnost* (Awakeness) and published in 2006, he was nominated for the most prestigious Slovenian poetry award, the Jenko Award, and established himself in Slovenian literary circles as one of the principal voices of the youngest generation of Slovenian poets. In 2004 he was a guest at the International Poetry Festival *Dnevi poezije in vina* (Days of Poetry and Wine) in Medana, Slovenia, and in 2005 a member of the delegation of Slovenian writers at the Frankfurt Book Fair. His poetry has been translated into Croatian, Serbian, Macedonian, Slovak, Polish, German, Italian, and English.

### THE BIG DIPPER ON A RADIANT NIGHT

No snow, no tracks in this snow, no step that would leave behind a track and no warm body to share the cold with,  
the sky, a glowing darkness of the night, the stars and nobody to watch, nobody to say there is the Big Dipper,  
cars on the highway, beams of light racing each in its own direction, side by side,  
into the city, through the city, by the city, side by side together, metal around diesel hearts, smooth surfaces above the gasoline veins,  
on the bypass, on the asphalt ring that smells like tires and like the hand that took it off its finger, on a restless radiant night  
my hand is wrapped around the stick shift as if around hope, I accelerate and brake, leave and return, circle  
while I wait, blinded by the thousand lights, awake in great insomnia, and I speak, I utter a prayer and grind the air with my mouth,  
when the snow falls and covers the night enclosed by this ring around which I spin,  
when the white blanket covers the eyes, I will stop and the night will stop and the Big Dipper will leave behind a huge track  
that will leave behind a smaller track of someone who will approach the car door, open it,  
lean toward my head, my ear and whisper a word, long, incredible, and pure  
as is my waiting for the Big Dipper on a radiant night.

### JOB OPPORTUNITY

The International Criminal Court is seeking to add to its roster of freelance translators and revisers in the following: languages, Albanian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Georgian, Latvian, Polish, Serbian, Slovak and Slovenian. Their Vacancy announcement with further details about applying can be found at [www.icc-cpi.int/jobs/vacancies/970.html](http://www.icc-cpi.int/jobs/vacancies/970.html)

Martha Kosir works as a professor of Spanish at Gannon University, [kosir001@gannon.edu](mailto:kosir001@gannon.edu).



# SLAVFILE LITE: NOT BY WORD COUNT ALONE

Lydia Razran Stone



It is Thanksgiving Day and even though I know this holiday (and possibly even the December biggies) will be far in the past by the time you read this, I am

starting this column with a poem of thanksgiving written by Adam Zagajewski, a Polish poet who currently teaches at the University of Chicago. I am ignoring the delay because this poem is so beautiful, so appropriate to the day, the state of the world, and the *SlavFile*, and because it segues so perfectly into what I want to talk about next.

Thanks to Ursula Klingenberg for finding the Polish original for me on the web.

## 2009: A YEAR OF ANNIVERSARIES

In this year of the 50th ATA Conference, we have noticed that the current SlavFile issue is the 50th one edited by Lydia Stone. Additionally, this is Associate Editor, Nora Favorov's 26th or 20th issue (depending on whether you count her de facto or formal assumption of these duties.) In lieu of cards and gifts, readers wishing to congratulate us are asked to send a modest contribution (in the form of articles not money) to future issues of SlavFile.

### Spróbuj opiewać okaleczony świat

Adam Zagajewski

Spróbuj opiewać okaleczony świat.  
Pamiętaj o długich dniach czerwca  
i o poziomkach, kroplach wina rosé.  
O pokrzywach, które metodycznie zarastały  
opuszczone domostwa wygnanych.  
Musisz opiewać okaleczony świat.  
Patrzyłeś na eleganckie jachty i okręty;  
jeden z nich miał przed sobą długą podróż,  
na inny czekała tylko słońca nicość.  
Widziałeś uchodźców, którzy szli donikąd,  
słyszałeś oprawców, którzy radośnie śpiewali.  
Powinieneś opiewać okaleczony świat.  
Pamiętaj o chwilach, kiedy byliście razem  
w białym pokoju i firanka poruszyła się.  
Wróć myślą do koncertu, kiedy wybuchła muzyka.  
Jesienią zbierałeś żołędzie w parku  
a liście wirowały nad bliznami ziemi.  
Opiewaj okaleczony świat  
i szare piórko, zgubione przez drozda,  
i delikatne światło, które błędzi i znika  
i powraca.

### Try to Praise the Mutilated World

Translated by Clare Cavanagh

Try to praise the mutilated world.  
Remember June's long days,  
and wild strawberries, drops of rosé wine.  
The nettles that methodically overgrew  
the abandoned homesteads of exiles.  
You must praise the mutilated world.  
You watched the stylish yachts and ships;  
one of them had a long trip ahead of it,  
while salty oblivion awaited others.  
You've seen the refugees going nowhere,  
you've heard the executioners sing joyfully.  
You should praise the mutilated world.  
Remember the moments when we were together  
in a white room and the curtain fluttered.  
Return in thought to the concert where music flared.  
You gathered acorns in the park in autumn  
and leaves eddied over the earth's scars.  
Praise the mutilated world  
and the gray feather a thrush lost,  
and the gentle light that strays and vanishes  
and returns.

The English version appeared, along with another appropriate poem, last Sunday in the "Poet's Choice" column of the *Washington Post Book Review* compiled by poet Mary Karr. The column, as is legally required, cited the English source (*Without End* [Farrar Straus Giroux 2002]) without however giving the name of the translator or even indicating that the poet (who after all teaches in a U.S. university) had not written it originally in English. I always notice lack of translator acknowledgement, and every once in a while, something (in this case the irony of the omission in a column devoted to appreciation) pushes me over the edge and I take action. In this case I fired off the following letter to Mary Karr care of the *Washington Post*.

Dear Ms. Karr,

Thank you for publishing Adam Zagajewski's beautiful poem in time for Thanksgiving. However, as a translator of poetry, I am dismayed that the name of the translator was not included. While in my experience, poets are virtually always thankful when someone produces a good or even decent translation of their poetry, the achievements of poetic translators too frequently go thankless in the public eye when their names are not cited. By the way, the name of the translator in this case is Clare Cavanagh. I know that it is legally required to cite the name of book publishers responsible for the commercial availability of poems, but surely the trans-

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lator is responsible for a work's availability to English speakers in an even deeper sense. Poets know how valuable their translator's contribution is and rarely fail to thank them, sometimes effusively. Shouldn't other poets who cite their work do the same?

Best wishes for the holiday and thank you for your column,

I do not yet know if this letter will be published and I have not heard directly from Ms. Karr. Admittedly, everyone is busy before a major holiday. However, Ms. Cavanaugh, who is a college professor, must also be busy and when I forwarded the above letter to her, she immediately sent me an appreciative note.

Once you sensitize yourself to lack of translator acknowledgments, they crop up everywhere. In October, the *New Yorker* published a glowing two-page review of a restaging of a British version of Chekhov's *The Seagull*. Numerous quotations from the play suggest that something other than the undoctored Garnett translation was used. Yet not one word is said about the person(s) who generated the English words. Do reviewers even realize that someone in addition to Chekhov is responsible for them? Translators no less than actors and directors are responsible for the stunning implementation of a playwright's work. Why should the former's name be omitted when reviewers are so scrupulous in naming the others?

Can you stand one more example? My book club is reading Eastern European humor this year. One English book in the lot has no translator name anywhere on the cover or front pages, but instead proudly identifies itself as "a definitive version fully revised by the author." An author's note explains that because he had "a priori confidence in the translator," he "barely read" the translation when it was submitted to him and published for the first time, but only later found he was dissatisfied. Nonetheless, perhaps the name of the translator should still be on the manuscript as well as in this negative afterword. I have not given the name of the author, translator or book, because it is very likely that bad feeling exists on this matter and I have no basis for choosing sides.

Finally, I want to cite a related omission. Fairfax County, where I live, in 2007 had a population of over 1 million, a median family income of over \$120,000, and 22 public libraries of varying sizes. I could not find out the total size of the book collection, but nearly 6 million library visits have already been logged in 2008. After reading *Twelve Chairs* in Russian, I searched the library data base for an English version since I was curious about the translation. To my astonishment, my county had no copy of this classic in any language! Shocking!

Although my faith in my local library has been eroded, I was able to borrow an English translation of *The Twelve Chairs* from a fellow book-club member. Evidently there has only been one published English translation in the past 50+ years, that by John H.C. Richardson, made in 1961 and

reissued by Northwestern University Press in 1997.

I had a particular mission in searching for the English translation. After having produced, with the help of Vladimir Kovner, English renderings of a list of the "winged words" from this novel that have become standard Russian allusions, I wanted to check ours against the published translation. Here is the short list of nontrivial discrepancies I found.

Russian original: *Пролетарий умственного труда*. Our rendition: "Proletariat of mental labor"; Richardson's: "Member of the proletariat intelligentsia." My comments: I think R's translation misses the irony and humor.

Russian original: *Пострадавший отделался легким испугом*. Our rendition: "The victim escaped with a mild fright"; Richardson's: "The victim was unhurt except for slight shock." My comments: Since Ostap Bender goes to the newspaper office to complain that published assertions that he was frightened constituted libel, fear seems better than shock.

Russian original: *Мы с вами чужие на этом празднике жизни*. Our rendition: "You and I are strangers at the holiday of life"; Richardson's: "We're out of place in all this festivity." Comments: I think it is a mistake not to render the sentimental sententiousness of the original.

Russian original: *Гигант мысли, отец русской демократии и особа приближенная к императору*. Our rendition: "This great thinker, father of Russian democracy, and a person close to the emperor"; Richardson's: "This is a person close to the emperor, the mastermind and father of Russian democracy." Comments: It is unclear to me whether mastermind is meant to refer to Russian democracy or be a general description. Great thinker seems to better render the grandiose nature of Bender's phrasing.

Russian original: *Скажите... А двести рублей не могут спасти гиганта мысли?* Our rendition: "But tell me, wouldn't two hundred rubles save the great thinker?" Richardson's: "Won't twenty rubles save the mastermind?" Comments: Either a mistake, or at some point someone adjusted the exchange rate in the Russian.

Russian original: *Теперь я уже должен жениться, как честный человек*. Our rendering: "Now, as an honorable man, I will have to marry her"; Richardson's: "I'll have to make an honest woman of her now." Comments: Richardson's translation misses the humor of Bender's self-righteous reference to his own honor.

Russian original: *"Словарь негра из людоедского племени "Мумбо-Юмбо" составляет 300 слов*. Our rendition: "The vocabulary of a cannibal from the Mumbo-Jumbo tribe amounts to 300 words"; Richardson's: "The vocabulary of a Negro from the Mumbo Jumbo tribe amounts to three hundred words." Comments: Richardson's omission of the word "cannibal" may obscure the meaning of the reference in the chapter title.

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# CONFERENCE PRESENTATION REVIEW

## ON LEGAL TERMINOLOGY, THE JURY IS STILL OUT

A review of “Translating Legal Russian Into English”

Presented by Fred Grasso and Tom Fennell

Reviewed by Irina Knizhnik



One of my favorite aspects of our annual ATA Conferences is getting to hear fellow translators talk about their day-to-day experiences, the problems they have come across and the solutions they have come up with. This is something I can never get too much of. So I was really looking forward to the presentation given by Fred Grasso and Tom Fennell at the 49th ATA Conference in Orlando entitled “Translating Legal Russian into English.” Mr. Fred Grasso, an attorney, became a freelance translator after a career with the government, while Mr. Tom Fennell has switched to freelancing after spending a dozen or so years working for U.S. businesses in Russia.

Fred Grasso dealt briefly with the general principles of contractual documents, pointing out the four requisite elements of a valid contractual document: agreement (договоренность), consideration (встречное удовлетворение), legality (законность) and (legal) capacity (правоспособность, дееспособность), for which the English mnemonic phrase turns out to be All Cats Love Catnip. Here are some of the suggested translations for other legal terms:

оферта	offer
акцепт	acceptance
отказ от акцепта	rejection
встречное удовлетворение *	consideration
имеющий исковую силу; могущий быть принудительно осуществлённым в судебном порядке	enforceable
обратить взыскание	execute judgment (enforce collection)
исполнение	performance
исполнение существенных условий; исполнение во всем существенном	substantial performance
нарушение	breach
существенное нарушение	material breach
нарушение (договора) до наступления срока исполнения	anticipatory breach
неисполнение обязательств; ненадлежащее исполнение обязательств	default
сохранение силы	survival clause
исключающее положение	saving (severability) clause
толкование	interpretation (avoid “construe” or “construction” if at all possible)

\*As Fred remarked, unlike US common law, the Russian Civil Code is concerned not only with “legal consideration,” but also with “adequate consideration.” Except under extraordinary circumstances, the courts will not save a contracting party from a bad deal.

*Fred Grasso (left) and Tom Fennell discuss a challenging translation issue with legal translator Maksym Kozub, a visitor from Ukraine.*



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**LEGAL TERMINOLOGY** *Continued from page 19*

Mr. Tom Fennell’s part of the presentation concentrated on “Plain English” as opposed to legalese. His opinion is that we are always working on trade-offs between faithful rendition and beautiful language.

Tom shared with us some interesting and useful translations of corporate terms and procedural and administrative terminology. Tom’s choices are compelling because they are rooted in Russian business and legal realities.

арбитраж	arbitrazh [state, commercial]
экспертиза	expert conclusion, report, study
акт	statement
учредительные документы	constituent documents
устав	charter (not articles of association or articles of incorporation); by-laws
положение о филиале / представительстве	Regulation (internal corporate regulation) on branch governance
холдинг	group, kholdink
контракт	contract
договор	contract/agreement
соглашение	agreement
заключать	enter into/execute/conclude
подписать	sign
приложение	attachment (annex, addendum, exhibit, schedule)
акт	statement, report (not ‘act’)
договор подряда	contracting contract
договор присоединения	contract of adhesion (not “accession”)
вред – ущерб – компенсация – возмещения ущерба	Harm vs. damage (qualitative vs. quantitative/monetary); damage is both a type of harm AND the compensation for it
владеть	possess; own; have
товар, работы, услуги	goods; work; services
срок	time period; term; deadline
условия	terms vs. conditions
позволять	make it possible; enable, facilitate (vs. allow)
поручительство	surety vs. guarantee
торги (конкурсы, аукционы) / тендер	auction, competition, tender; “tyendyer”
в лице; уполномоченный	as represented by; as authorized by
неотъемлемая часть	integral (not “inalienable”)
экземпляр	counterpart (not “copy”)
округ	circuit
кассационный суд	cassation appeal court
постановление – решение – определение	judgment (not “resolution”); decision; ruling
заявитель	plaintiff (claimant)
ответчик	defendant (respondent – civil, arbitration; appellate)
ходатайство	petition, request, motion
письменные объяснения	clarifications/comments (not “explanations”) vs. brief
удовлетворить иск / отказать в иске	grant/dismiss, not “refuse” claim
небрежность, халатность; небрежный, халатный; неосторожный	negligence, negligent
небрежность истца; контрибутивная небрежность	contributory negligence
преступная небрежность / халатность	criminal negligence
грубая / явная небрежность	gross negligence
субъект Федерации	constituent entity of the Russian Federation (not “subject”)
орган	authority, authorities, body, agency
предписание	compliance order (not “prescription”)
бытовой / хозяйственный	household/consumer/ utility/convenience
коммуникации / инженерные сети	utilities, utilities lines
объект	facility (or “object” if structure has no roof)

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## LEGAL TERMINOLOGY *Continued from page 20*

If some of these translations seem controversial to you, you are not alone. The presentation was frequently interrupted by lively discussion: Which is the correct translation for the Russian дополнения: supplements, exhibits, enclosures or, in fact, all of the above? What, if any, is the mutual correlation among the Russian terms договор, контракт, соглашение and the English terms agreement and contract? Is it true that the English doublet "terms and conditions" could be correctly translated into Russian by its lonely counterpart "условия"? The contribution of our guest from Kyiv Maksym Kozub made the discussion even more useful. Unfortunately, time was too short for us to arrive at any definitive conclusions or, for that matter, for the speakers to cover all the material they had prepared for their presentation.

Russian legal documents tend to be written in long sentences, and, according to Tom, there's nothing a translator can do because clarity is more important than brevity. I myself feel, however, that a translator may very well be justified in breaking up such sentences. This is because the English language lacks two of the major "road signs" the Russian language uses to guide the reader through a long sentence: gender and declension (or case endings).

Mr. Fennell is against using so-called deictics (e.g., here-with, hereunder, etc.) in legal translations. As far as I understand, this may be the beginning of a dangerous grassroots movement and the next thing you know anyone will be able to understand a legal document without a lawyer, God forbid.

Mr. Fennell also made some valid points about troublesome general terms.

Both speakers walked the proverbial extra mile to share their hard-earned knowledge with us and have fully earned our gratitude. I, for one, would like to see more presentations like this, firmly grounded in our day-to-day work and aimed at sharing the real problems we face and the fruit of our research.

Irina Knizhnik is a Washington-based translator with over 30 years of experience. Currently she is a technical translator at the USPTO and a part-time freelancer. She can be reached at irinak@bikinfo.com.

## SLAVFILE LITE *Continued from page 18*

Russian original: *Заседание продолжается!* Richardson's: The hearing is continued... This can hardly be called a poor translation, but still I think this key phrase, which is cited who knows how many times per day on the territory of the ex-USSR with all kinds of ironic and sarcastic implications, deserves a less bland rendition. On the basis of another famous phrase of Ostap's, I feel justified in concluding that *заседание* refers to a court proceeding and suggest "Let deliberations resume" for the English version.

If you think this column is mainly complaints, I cannot disagree with you. Here is another topic, and a brief one at that.

Holiday suggestions: If we are lucky, this issue will reach our readers before America's winter gift-giving orgy is a memory and a VISA bill. In this period of high fuel costs and economic anxiety, thermostats are turned down and go into their nightly Arctic period far before many freelancers have put the final period to their evening's work. May we suggest for the translators on your gift list as well as for you own wish list: cozy slippers, a warm and preferably light weight robe, and especially a space heater to place under the computer desk. Lest you think I am hinting about my own wish list, let me firmly state that I had supplied myself with all these items, some in duplicate (indeed my husband refers to the back of the bathroom door as "the 50 contiguous bathrobes"), well before the current crisis. I freely admit to being a *мерзлячка* (Russian for a person of the female persuasion who is very sensitive to cold). I was delighted when I discovered this word, since it seems to take the onus for my lack of tolerance off me personally and imply it is a matter of typology. However, I frequently confuse this non-judgmental term with its sound-alike and proclaim when reaching for an extra sweater, "*Я мерзавка!*" (I am a *bitch*.)

Happy winter everyone!

## 2009: A YEAR OF CHANGE FOR SLAVFILE TOO!

We are pleased to announce that ATA Hq will resume direct notification of all SLD members when a new issue of SlavFile has been posted on the SLD section of ATA's website and possibly other news of relevance to members. We will continue to post announcements of a new issue's availability on the Yahoo Russian Translators Club (to join contact Nora Favorov at [norafavorov@bellsouth.net](mailto:norafavorov@bellsouth.net)). Readers are encouraged to send us the names of other websites (especially those devoted to non-Russian Slavic languages) on which we should post this information.

SLD members who wish to receive a hardcopy of SlavFile through US Mail (at no charge) may request this service from ATA Hq by clicking Modify Division Membership on various page of the ATA website. Logging in with a member number is required to do this.

After discussion with SLD members who specialize in languages other than Russian and do not read Russian, we have decided to institute a policy that all Russian words in articles are to include English translations. On the rare occasion that we publish articles in Russian we will provide an English summary.

# CONFERENCE PRESENTATION REVIEW

## Software Tools for Slavists, Part II

ATA 2008 Conference Presentation

Reviewed by Nora Seligman Favorov

When work pours rather than rains, I feel like someone who's forced to bail out my rowboat with a tin can because there isn't time to row ashore and get a bucket. Words needing to be translated just keep rushing in and I know that if I had a bigger bucket, or rather if I had better translation tools at my disposal, it would be easier to keep head above water.

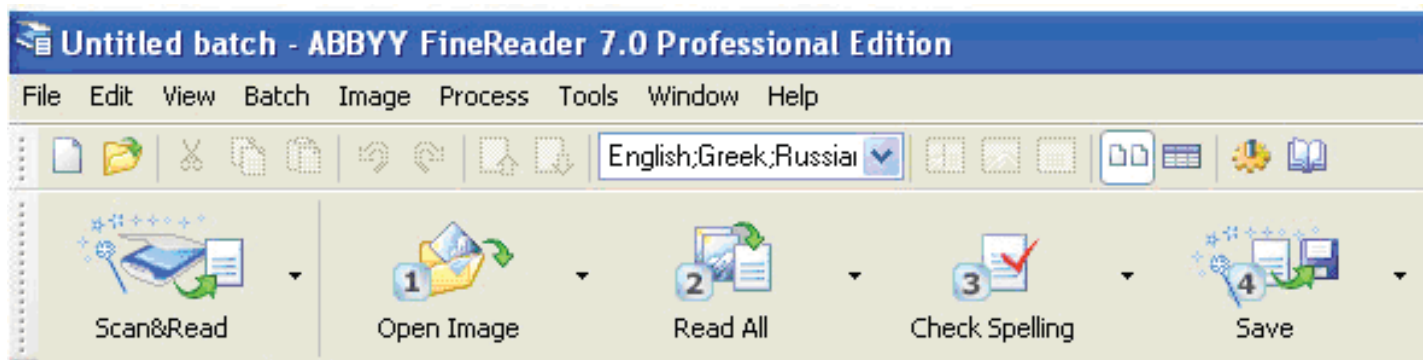
But what a lot of research it takes to figure out what tools are worth investing in! Before I've managed to make sense of Trados vs. Wordfast or Lingvo vs. MultiTran, the next deadline is upon me. I must say, I've gotten pretty efficient with that tin can, but for some jobs, a bucket would sure come in handy.

This year in Orlando, people who, unlike me, have put thoughtful and systematic work into researching these tools—namely, Becky Blackley, Fred Grasso, Jen Guernsey, and John Riedl—shared the fruits of their labors with us. Part I, which will be reviewed in a later issue of *SlavFile*, focused on WordFast and Trados. Part II covered ABBYY FineReader OCR software and electronic dictionaries. **The presenters' excellent PowerPoint presentations can be found under the "Additional Resources" tab on the SLD website** (Google: SLD ATA).

### ABBYY FineReader (Jen Guernsey, presenter)

to a metal copyholder next to my monitor, to clipping enlarged (using my photocopier) small print pages to the copyholder. Still, there was a lot of squinting and a lot of neck pain.

My great leap forward came several years ago when, on Jen Guernsey's recommendation, I purchased ABBYY FineReader. This allowed me to translate all jobs using my "preferred method," even if they arrived as paper or PDF. This preferred method is as follows: After typing out my translation of each paragraph, I would read it once for style, then go through it word for word and make sure nothing had been mistranslated or omitted, deleting a few words of source text at a time. This was much faster and safer—about 25% faster, I would estimate—than trying to keep track of where I was on a piece of paper, no matter how ergonomically it was displayed. That 25% improvement in my speed probably represented about a 5% improvement in translation speed and a 20% improvement in proofing speed. It was also handy to be able to generate source text word counts without having to count manually and guesstimate.



As the ABBYY site explains, "Optical Character Recognition, or OCR, is a technology that enables you to convert different types of documents, such as scanned paper documents, PDF files or images captured by a digital camera into editable and searchable data." At our 2007 ATA conference in San Francisco we concluded our SLD meeting by going around the room and having everyone introduce themselves and summarize some efficiency they had introduced into their T/I practice. Several people, including yours truly, mentioned OCR software. In my case, I had been through a slow progression that advanced from placing paper translation jobs alongside my keyboard (the sharp pain in my neck ended that practice pretty quickly), to propping them up under my monitor, to clipping them

As Jen pointed out in her presentation, anyone who uses a CAT (Computer Assisted Translation) tool (such as Trados or WordFast) and occasionally receives paper or PDF assignments really needs OCR software, for obvious reasons. She also mentioned something I have also noticed. When you submit a translation with the graphics scanned in, which happens naturally with FineReader, some less tech-savvy clients are simply amazed and start to regard you as some sort of genius.

Jen also talked about the timesaving feature of being able to import tables. I must say that this is something I have not yet mastered, but I am slowly marching up the learning curve. If you have a lot of tables to import, I recommend you invest in learning to use the manual layout

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(see below) and spellchecking features which, Jen explained, are key to clean table conversion. Once, back in my early FineReader days, I had a job that arrived in PDF that included an endless (multiple pages) table with nothing but numbers. I tried to convert it with FineReader, but there were just too many distortions. I approached Jen, and she managed to reproduce the table flawlessly using FineReader. As she mentioned during the presentation, she has other clients (besides me) who hire her simply to convert files to Word—no translation involved.

It should be pointed out that Jen and I both use FineReader 7.0, so all references are to that version, although the version currently for sale is 9.0.

I won't repeat here all the basic facts about FineReader—what file formats it goes into and out of; the languages it supports; all its bells and whistles. For that, I recommend you go through Jen's PowerPoint. Her slides also compare the advantages and disadvantages of FineReader vs. the competition (of which there isn't much). For now I'll just expand a bit on the bullet points contained in slide No. 10 of her presentation—Tips & Tricks.

- **Multiple languages:** This is a reference to the fact that you can set FineReader to “read” several languages at once. Because Jen does a lot of technical translation (from Russian to English), she mostly sets the recognition language for English, Greek, and Russian so that it will properly read any mathematical formulas or scientific symbols, etc. (If the interface selected is English, the default recognition language will always be English, and if you try to read a Russian text with the English setting, you will wind up with gobbledygook. The program will notice this and ask you to check the recognition language.) Setting the recognition language is easy using the pull-down menu at the top of the FineReader screen.

While there is no way to permanently change your default recognition language setting to be different from your interface language, Paul Gallagher did contribute a shortcut to loading your preferred combination every time you open FineReader. He writes: “Under Tools | Options | General, there are buttons at the bottom saying “Save...” (Saves current batch settings) and “Load...” (Loads saved batch settings). I save my settings here as an .fbr file and reload them each time I restart. Some settings will persist without this, but some must be saved or they are cleared. Language choice seems to be one that must be saved or will be lost.”

- **Manual layout:** Under the Process pull-down menu, FineReader offers something called “Analyze layout.” You can ask FineReader to do this for you or you can do it manually. If the software analyzes your layout, it will do a preliminary read of your file and try to identify what's a header, what's a table, what's the main body of the text, and what's the shadow in the crease between

pages—but it will often get it wrong. By going through the file manually identifying text, erasing smudges and shadows, and inserting vertical or horizontal separators into tables where they may be faded or fuzzy, you will wind up with a digital file that is much clearer.

- **Graphics within text/tables:** You can also delineate graphics and ask that they be treated as such (even within a table).
- **Export with formatting:** You have the choice of exporting a file (to Word, Power Point, Excel, html, etc.), retaining all formatting, retaining font and font size only, or without any formatting at all. Paul Gallagher again brought up a capability Jen was unfamiliar with, and afterwards she got the details from him. It turns out that if you want to save formatting options that go beyond the plain vanilla ones the toolbar menu offers you, you can again find a way to do this under “options.” To quote Paul: “Under Tools | Options | Formatting, click the 'Formats Settings...' button (sorry about the grammar). For each output file type, you have savable options. Once you find settings you like, save them as part of your .fbr file and reload them each time you launch the program. In fact, as far as I can tell, any of the options you choose on any of the Tools | Options tabs are saved in the .fbr file.”
- **Don't access from within Word:** This is something Jen learned from Becky. It is possible to access both FineReader and ABBYY PDF Transformer through a toolbar icon in Word, but this is not recommended, at least with current versions. You wind up with gibberish. If you convert the same file from within FineReader (or from within PDF Transformer), the results are quite good, even if you don't fix up the document beforehand using the spell check feature.
- **Recognition block for vertical text:** Jen clarified this point for me when I was writing this review. She wrote, “When I put together the presentation, I had no idea how to handle vertical or inverted text. Then Becky sent me some info about how she had handled a ‘table from hell’ in which she had to use the recognition block to get the vertical text right. But it turns out that this was an atypical situation (a fluke of that particular table). Normally, as I believe Paul [Gallagher] pointed out, FR can recognize inverted or vertical text whether it is a recognition block or a text block or a table block: right-click, properties, and then choose inverted, flipped, vertical text, whatever is needed. Also handy, I can see now that I am testing it out, is that you can set properties this way for a table as a whole, or for an individual cell or group of cells. I am quite indebted to Paul and Becky for teaching me this aspect of FR, as I run into this situation a lot and had always wrestled with it manually before.”

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### **Lingvo and MultiTran (John Riedl, presenter)**

Jen's presentation was followed by John Riedl's talk about two electronic dictionaries: Lingvo and MultiTran. Many of us smiled in recognition at the first slide in John's PowerPoint. It took us back to a dark day in the lives of translators, October 1, 2008, when the online version of MultiTran went down. E<>R translators all over the world were in a panic. I don't know whether or not the Internet version of MultiTran ever goes down "on purpose," so that we appreciate it as much as we did back on October 1st, but if it doesn't, it should.

In any event, for those of you who are now thoroughly addicted to looking up words by typing them into a digital dictionary and have forgotten (or never knew) what it was like to actually stand up from your desk and go to a bookshelf to find a word that isn't in the dictionary you keep at your elbow, having a good electronic dictionary on your hard drive is an excellent idea.

I myself acquired Lingvo 9.0 several years ago and have not used it very much. There are two reasons for this. The first is that I simply had a much better "batting average" with the online version of MultiTran. Thanks to the voluminous input of the MultiTran user community, it just answers more of my questions, providing more translations and more usage examples. The second reason I didn't turn to Lingvo more often is that it was created by Russians and therefore is more geared to people whose native language is Russian. In theory, this shouldn't make a difference, but it does. Kenneth Katzner (Wiley's 1994 English-Russian, Russian-English Dictionary) put a tremendous amount of thought into just what English words and idioms were equivalent to their Russian counterparts and understood what most native English-speaking students of Russian wanted to know about a particular Russian word. He framed his definitions appropriately. Take, for example, the word *заочник*. Lingvo (version 9) defines it as "student of a correspondence school/college/courses, external student." Katzner has "student taking correspondence courses." Both definitions are a bit dated (since distance learning came into fashion), but at least Katzner's expresses it in a way that is grammatically and stylistically correct and reflects general U.S. usage.

However, I must admit that writing this review has forced me to take another look at Lingvo. I can see that I was wrong to ignore it all these years. Furthermore, it appears that Lingvo has come a long way since version 9. The version John demonstrated (12) features 50 dictionaries, and the new version about to come out, Lingvo x3, features 58.

As John pointed out, it is easy to use Lingvo. Whether you're working in a Word file or reading a PDF file or an Internet page through IE or Firefox (and possibly other browsers), you just highlight a word, click Control +C+C, and up pop the entries for that word. This is certainly easier

than typing or pasting a word into the online version of MultiTran. You can also set it so that you just need to hover your cursor over a word for it to show a translation (personally, I find this setting winds up being more trouble than it's worth, but perhaps this is a matter of technique).

John's presentation includes screenshots that will give you an idea of what pops up on your screen when you look up a word using Lingvo. You can prioritize the dictionaries so that the most relevant definitions will be at the top of the page (i.e., if you're doing a medical translation, you'll want to give the medical dictionaries [Benyumovich and Rivkin] top priority).

Of the three dictionaries reviewed, Lingvo is the easiest to purchase in the States (at least at a reasonable price). It lists for \$79.99 on the ABBYY USA website ([www.abbyyusa.com/shop/Lingvo.htm](http://www.abbyyusa.com/shop/Lingvo.htm)) and can also be found on Amazon and eBay. The next version is already on sale in Russia and is being promoted on the website (Lingvo X3 coming soon to the U.S. market!). Lingvo is available for Pocket PC, Palm Handheld, and Smartphone (Windows Mobile and Symbian OS). If anyone has experience using these platforms, SlavFile would love to have a report on your experience. Like all the other dictionaries reviewed here, it does have a user dictionary. Personally, I have a whole folder full of tables and tables of glossaries. One of the appeals to me of finally investing in one of these dictionaries is that I could use it to organize them. Whether or not this would be a good use of my time (and better than putting my time and effort into WordFast or Trados (which could probably serve the same purpose better) is an open question.

I probably don't need to say anything about the online version of MultiTran, except to point out how it differs from the computer-based version. It is also worth pointing out the rather obvious fact that—since you can update your computer-based version of MultiTran through the online version—you wind up with a user dictionary with contributions by hundreds of translators, which has both its advantages and disadvantages. When you update, you can choose whether or not to have MultiTran update the website with your own additions to your user dictionary.

One difference between the Internet and computer versions is that, with the latter, when you look up a word (with the hotkey combination Control+C), you are not automatically given phrases. There is a button you can press to see phrases, but they are not neatly organized as they are on the website. There is a menu allowing you to select a particular category, but before you can make your selection, you have to wait for the phrases in every single category to load into your window. Furthermore, as Becky pointed out during her presentation, longer definitions run off the screen, so there is no way to see their "tail ends" (and there is no way to pull the window larger). When all the phrases have loaded and you select your category, then the text wraps

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around properly and you can see the complete phrase. But there's a Catch-22. If you take an interest in a particular phrase that runs off the page, you can't see what category it belongs to because the categories are given at the very end, out of sight. To see an example of this, go the SLD website and download Becky's file entitled MultiTran.ppt.

However, since the presentation, the folks at MultiTran sent John a new (Vista) version, which Becky has also sampled. According to Becky, this new version does solve the problem of the definitions running off the screen, up to a point. Phrases are organized into columns, and if the Russian text is longer than the column width, it extends over into the English column, and the English starts wherever the Russian ends. But you can now enlarge the window to view all the text. You can also now select the subject area without having to open all the phrases first.

But Becky had this to add: "They have now created a much worse problem in that the phrases are no longer in alphabetical order, and sometimes identical Russian phrases with different English translations are not sequential at all. If the list has hundreds of phrases, it's now almost impossible to find what you want. And when you do find it, you can't stop there, because there might be more information farther down the list. You really have to read through the entire list, which is tedious and often impractical. Let's hope they fix that problem soon."

### **Context (Becky Blackley, presenter)**

The single most valuable piece of Becky's extremely thorough review of Context 7.0 is the two-page chart that can be found on slides 7 and 8 of her PowerPoint comparing the three electronic dictionaries covered in this review. This chart compares all four dictionaries (Context 7.0, Lingvo 12, MultiTran PC, and MultiTran web) in terms of the most salient features. She and John even tried to compare their performance by using a list of 25 words, but eventually learned that it was next to impossible to come up with a scientific comparison. As Becky later explained to me, "Sometimes Lingvo had more definitions; sometimes it didn't have a word at all (биоразлагаемость/biodegradability). Similarly, sometimes Context was exceptional, sometimes lacking. Each dictionary turned out to be far superior to the others, depending on which set of words was chosen for comparison." A comparison was also complicated by the fact that the dictionaries all organize their entries differently, with Context giving all verb forms within a single entry but listing phrases separately, while Lingvo separates out imperfective and perfective verbs (for example), but provides phrases along with definitions.

One nice feature of Context that Becky discussed during her presentation was something called "smart collocations." While MultiTran and Lingvo both offer phrases that include the specific word being looked up, Context goes a step farther. You don't have to guess which words might be part of a phrase—if you hover your mouse over any word that is

part of a phrase, Context will note the words surrounding it and search its database to see whether or not any subset of them can be found in one of its phrases. To help us understand how this works, Becky created a file entitled "Context Smart Collocations Explanation.doc," which will also be made available on the website.

In the end, both Becky and John had to admit that all of these dictionaries have their advantages and disadvantages, and it is very difficult to give any kind of a definitive verdict about which is better.

If you are interested in purchasing a computer-based electronic dictionary (or two), I highly recommend going carefully through the PowerPoint presentations and also studying the list of dictionaries included in Context ([www.dics.ru/dics\\_en/](http://www.dics.ru/dics_en/)) and Lingvo ([www.lingvo.com/dictionaries/?Version=x3\\_Eng](http://www.lingvo.com/dictionaries/?Version=x3_Eng)).

### **A final word about ease of purchase**

As stated above, Lingvo is by far the easiest and least expensive of the three to purchase here in the States (although I have not seen a U.S. price yet for Lingvo x3).

As for Context, Becky's PowerPoint has extensive information about purchasing in Russia and through Russian Internet sites at prices under \$70. Although there is one site that offers to sell you Context here in the U.S. (<http://tiny.cc/bNbNj>), they charge \$495 and don't appear to even be selling the latest version. When Becky purchased Context three years ago, she had to jump through a number of hoops and use the address of a Russian friend. It may be possible to download it now and pay with PayPal. This is worth investigating. We'd love to hear from *SlavFile* readers who have more information about how U.S.-based translators can purchase Context.

Finally, while writing this review, I did something I've been planning to do for a while: I purchased a copy of MultiTran. The price has gone up a few dollars since John put together his PowerPoint—I paid \$160 via PayPal and was then sent a link from which to download it. (The dollar price goes up and down, and its relationship to the exchange rate is not entirely straightforward, so you may pay more or less than I did.) All this took several email exchanges with Andrey Pominov, MultiTran's creator. The site's instructions for setting up MultiTran to be compatible with Windows Vista are not exactly accurate. What worked for me was going to Control Panel/Regional and Language Options/Administrative, and then setting system locale for Russia. It is NOT necessary (or even helpful) to change the "Format" (first tab) to Russian (as the MultiTran help page advises). It changes your number and date displays, but does nothing for your MultiTran interface.

Happy Translating!