

## **Semantic and Cognitive Specificity of English Verbs to Destroy, to Demolish, to Ruin and their Equivalents in Russian Translation**

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**Abstract:** The research is focused on correlative analysis of British National Corpus (BNC) and Russian National Corpus (RNC) data related to destroy-meaning. In our opinion, the most productive way of finding correlations between different world views is to compare lexical structure and pragmatic meaning of some key concepts represented in National Corpus. In course of study, the following procedures took place: analysis of semantic structure of words related to the appropriate semantic field; finding the most typical contextual realizations of those words and the corresponding concepts standing the correspondence between Russian and English concepts of destruction. Speaking on the data, it is necessary to underline that in RNC 905 entries related to the key concept have been found also there are >2000 (2087) entries related to the corresponding words. On the other hand, there are 1002 entries related to the key concept in BNC whereas the amount of corresponding meaning is close to 3000. The semantics of destruction demonstrates a complexity in terms of combinatorics, ambiguity and an extensive system of meanings both in Russian and in English. Because of that it requires consideration of various aspects of the meaning and use of lexical and syntactic construction with destroy-meaning for an accurate reproduction of the source language text semantics.

**Key words:** Concept, British National Corpus, Russian National Corpus, semantic structure, translation, source language, target language

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Cognitive analysis of key concepts which form national world view is considered to be one of the main trends in modern linguistics is related to cognition of conceptual world view. It presupposes designing principles that will allow us to describe significant elements of that phenomenon. According to V.Z. Demyankov while exploring language as a cognitive mechanism that plays an important role in encoding and transforming information, cognitive linguistics operates a number of categories. Those cognitive categories and notions reflect patterns in specific forms whereas native speaker of a certain language accumulates knowledge in his consciousness. At the same time, we totally agree with Geeraerts (2006) who pointed out that “we should not just describe concepts and categories by means of an abstract definition but that we should also take into account the things that the definition is about, if we are to achieve an adequate level of knowledge”.

**Literature review:** Pointing out some discrepancies based on different perception of the same concepts in the process of translation, we should study some peculiarities of the concept as the main linguistic phenomenon and their relation to translation process.

“The concept is traditionally treated as the main object of research in contemporary cognitive linguistics. It came to linguistics from conceptualism (a medieval philosophical movement which states that some key general concepts (universals) do not exist independently of particular things.

The concept is regarded as the basic unit of cognitive sphere of a person. Rational and emotional side of a concept are merged and fixed in different ideas, evaluations, emotions, myths, etc. which form a single conceptual space represented in certain units of the language. The emotional component is also based on cognitive background of a concept and it is very important in course of disclosure of the content and form of universal cultural concepts. Focusing on the status

and interpretation of concept in modern linguistics. Nemickiene pointed out that “in the Russian science for instance, the term “concept” is not monosemantic and the competition of the terms such as “concept” (Likhachev, Stepanov, Lyapin, Neroznak, etc.) “linguoculturema” (Vorobiev), “mythologema” (Lyahteenmyaki, Bazylev), “logoepisteme” (Vereshchagin, Kostomarov, Burvikova) continues since the early 90’s. However, during the recent years it becomes apparent that the term “concept” according to its frequency of use is much ahead of all other coinages” (Nemickiene, 2011).

At the same time, one of the most important principles of our work is based on statement by Evans and Green (2006): “as language provides a means of construing reality in alternate ways and moreover, remains connected to conceptual representation, it has a transformative function: it can influence aspects of nonlinguistic cognition. That is language doesn’t merely reflect conceptual representation; it can influence and affect it”.

So, there is no doubt that interrelation and overlapping of different national world view is influenced by non-linguistic cognition. Also, language influence and affect conceptual representation and this fact is really important for translation process (Evans, 2012). In accordance with Albert Newen, “conceptual representations are more abstract than simple discriminatory abilities and more basic than linguistic structures of a natural language”. It is necessary to point out that Newen dealt with the individuation of concepts and their explanatory role (Newen, 2013). He also suggested that “conceptual representations gradually emerge with three features: the capacity to identify and re-identify objects and properties, the (relative) independence from stimuli and an adequate level of abstraction involved in the classification (a classification that is not only based on simple stimulus generalization which is characteristic for non-conceptual representations). This perspective allows us to account for perception-based concepts. It will be shown that we in addition to perception-based concepts have to account for theory-based concepts as well”. On the other side, he pointed out that “at least some linguistic concepts have been shown to be rooted in our sensorimotor abilities” and this statement is very important for our material (concept of destruction) as being based on similar factors (Newen, 2013).

As our research is related to both cognitive and lingua-cultural studies, it is necessary to take into consideration some characteristics of national world view given by Bartminski (2009) “first, the linguistic worldview

is founded on the values professed by language speakers. Second, the linguistic worldview embraces socially entrenched or stereotyped images. Third a stereotype, its content and the structuring of that content can be systematically captured by the cognitive definition. Fourth, the linguistic worldview depends on the point of view and perspective on the world assumed by the conceptualizing subject. Next, the base linguistic worldview is intentionally adapted in discourse and functions in subjective variants called profiles. Finally, profiling is performed by the speaker (subject) of the utterance, who follows specific intentions and values” (Bartminski, 2009).

The correspondence between “individual” and “social” components in national world view are also one of the key points of analysis, because it should be taken into account in the process of translation as one of crucial factors. As it was stated by Kauffman (2007), “the “worldview of a society” example suggests that even if a worldview is ultimately carried by an individual, we should also not forget to analyse higher levels of systems or organizations with the relevant analysis at that level. Of course, this higher analysis has to be in fine reintegrated in a worldview of an individual”.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

In the frame of the aforementioned factors, concept of “destruction” was under our consideration. First of all, our choice of this concept was presupposed by the unbroken unity of its emotive and rational components. Before analysis of this semantic group, it is necessary to identify specific characteristics of the key concept which are represented in dictionary entries and labels.

So, for our research such methods as semantic analysis and comparative analysis of Corpus data were used. Passages containing the appropriate lexemes were extracted from Russian National Corpus (RNC) and British National Corpus (BNC) in order to:

- Analyze their semantic structure
- Find the most typical contextual realizations
- Find the correspondence between Russian and English concepts of destruction/ἄσχεση/ἀσχεση.

**Representation of destroy-meaning in British National Corpus and Russian National Corpus:** So, both Fig. 1 and 2 display similar proportions of key concept representation and total amount of entries. In our opinion, this fact should be treated as clear correspondence between similar concepts in Russian and English languages.

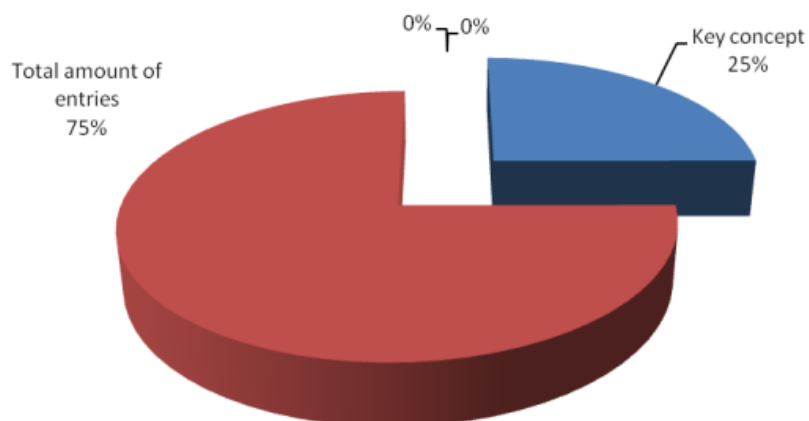


Fig. 1: Destroy-meanings in BNC

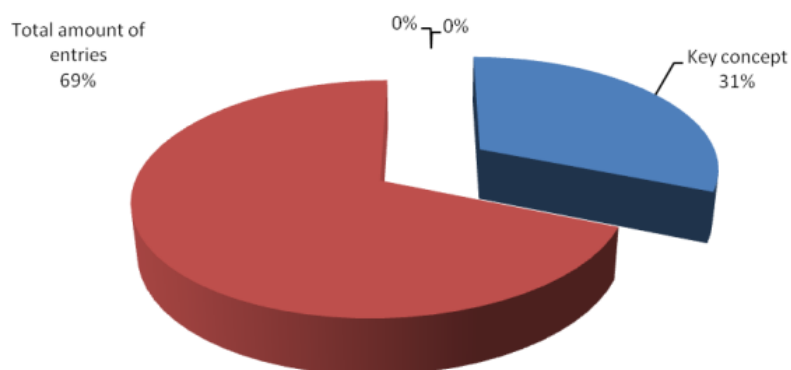


Fig. 2: Destroy-meanings in RNC

**Semantic valency and collocational patterns with destroy-meaning:** V.V. Vinogradov pointed out that “most of the words and their meanings are limited in their valency by internal and semantic relations of the language system. These lexical meanings can occur only in connection with strictly defined range of concepts and their verbal designations. There is no reason for such a restriction in logic or proprietary nature of the denoted objects, actions and phenomena. These limits are specific, and they are based on the rules of correspondence between meanings of words related to the certain language”. Also, “cognitivists claim that the meanings associated with linguistic units such as words, for example, form only a subset of possible concepts. After all, we have many more thoughts, ideas and feelings than we can conventionally encode in language” (Evans and Green, 2006).

Besides that, actualization of different shades of word meaning in different contexts is the most difficult area of translators’ work. As it was pointed out by Baker (2011), the combinatorial ability of words is limited.

As well as words, idiomatic (collocational) patterns have their special meanings which can be associated with specific culture. This peculiar feature of patterns and the fact that the logic of idiomatic patterns is as a rule, unpredictable is the reason for many traps and difficulties in translation process. On this basis, we consider the problem of finding correspondences within semantic paradigm of Russian destroy (*razrushat*) and English to destroy. Such kind of analysis may demonstrate lack of dictionary use, on the one hand and the appliance of those sets of meanings which are represented in corpora British National Corpus (BNC) and Russian National Corpus (RNC), on the other hand.

Thus, Russian synonymic paradigm consists of 36 synonyms, conveying different shades of this concept: destroy (*gubit*), decompose (*razlagat*), destroy (*unichtozhat*), ruin (*portit*), ruin (*rasoryat*), to break (*narushat*), obrushat (*obrushat*), break (*lomat*), ruin (*razvalivat*), crush (*razlamyvat*), ruin (*rushit*), split (*razbivat*), trash (*gromit*), tilt (*oprokidyvat*), to undermine (*podryvat*), guzzle (*proedat*), expand (*razvorachivat*), distribute (*raznosit*), blur (*razmyvat*), corrode (*razyedat*), Raze (*cyedat*), destroy (*krushit*), bring down (*obrushivat*),

explode (vzryvat), bomb (bombit), sprinkle (rassypat), torpedo (torpedirovat), disassemble (razbirat), lead to disorder (privodit v rasstroistvo), converting in ruins (prevrashat v razvaliny), compared with the ground (sravnivat s zemley), to undermine (podtachivat), disorganized (dezorganizovyyvat), frustrating (rasstraivat). In RNC we found 905 entries related to the key concept and >2000 entries related to the corresponding words. On the other hand, there are 1002 entries related to the key concept in BNC whereas the amount of corresponding meaning is close to 3000.

At the same time, Collins English Dictionary represents a set of meanings which does not cover all the variety of contextual implementations of the specified use of it in different speech situations, e.g.:

- To ruin, spoil, render useless
- To tear down or demolish, break up, raze
- To put an end to do away with extinguish
- To kill or annihilate
- To crush, subdue or defeat
- (Intransitive) to be destructive or cause destruction (Evans, 2012)

As it was pointed out by N. In. Vladimov, “the basic procedures that are available to the researcher in the process of the corpus analysis, include the following elements:

- Search of a specified word or word combination in the corpus
- Representation of search results with consideration of surrounding words
- Count of the number of cases of the word use in the corpus
- Sorting of search results in accordance with the required parameters

In our opinion, the algorithm which can guide the translator while searching for corresponding variants can be classified as follows.

Defining the same style of the translated lexemes in source language and search for matches with similar stylistic properties in target language; study of semantic specificity of the translated lexemes in source language and search for semantic correspondences in target language); identifying specificity of co-occurrence and finding pragmatic details in source and target languages.

The aforementioned sequence allows us to discard those variants of translation where the mismatch to the original lies on the surface being determined by various stylistic markers.

In our case, the first thing to note is stylistic neutrality of corresponding lexemes in Russian and English languages. Therefore, the main translation difficulties will be related to semantic peculiarities and co-occurrence of the words.

At the next stage of analysis, the most appropriate solution of translation problem is to identify the following semantic groups in source and target languages to find the corresponding variants:

- Physical destruction of some material objects (may take place because of various reasons)
- Complete destruction of a certain material object
- Accompanied by emotive associations (usually negative)
- With no emotional colour
- Destruction of a virtual object
- Breaking community rules
- Moral destruction (soul, personality, moral values etc., are demolished in that case)
- Semantics of destruction accompanied by rather positive than negative connotations (i.e., to destroy/demolish evil plans, plots, etc)

According to our data, in quantitative terms semantic groups 1, 4 and 5 are the predominant ones. Thus, it is obvious that metaphoric connotative meaning of destroy prevails over direct meaning. So that, redefining direct meaning of the aforementioned examples shows the certain shift that presupposes re-thinking of the lexeme (both in case of independent functioning and in collocations) in course of pre-translation analysis and translation process.

In English, as it was already indicated that the incomplete compliance to the Russian conceptual sphere destruction takes place. That leads to translation difficulties and (in some cases) to inaccuracies in Russian text rendering when it is transferred into English. Those facts correspond to the situation characterized by D. Buzadzhi who pointed out that “the reproductive tactics demonstrates natural co-occurrence in target texts”.

Analyzing contexts containing such lexemes as destroy, demolish, ruin etc., represented in BNC we faced to the number of meanings corresponding to physical destruction of both animate and inanimate objects (including global destruction of them: we identified 415 cases of it while investigating 3011 extracts represented in BNC), e.g., save our planet before we humans destroy it; people were also worried that electro-magnetic fields could destroy the body’s

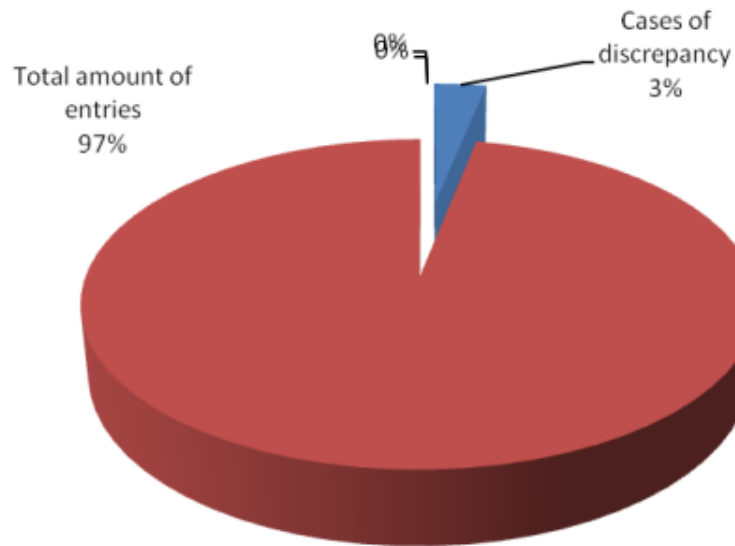


Fig. 3: Assymetry of destory-meaning in BNC and RNC

resistance to infection is a potentially primary agent of mass destruction with an unprecedented capability to destroy the physical integrity of the planet and threaten our existence as a species; Mike Tyson in his heyday, mean, moody and ready to demolish an other world title opponent; work at Bawdsey and our intelligence got wind of plans for a massive attempt to demolish the research station. Because of this, work was transferred to the south coast but despite extra sales, many shopkeepers are facingruin. Worst-hit are clothing and shoe stores where sales crashed.

Those meanings are quite typical and frequent in the process of translation they are reproduced with the required degree of accuracy. In English texts, much clearer correlations exist between destruction and terror than it is observed in extracts represented in Russian National Corpus. His pregnant girlfriend on a flight with a bag which contained a bomb timed to destroy the aircraft and its 350 passengers in mid-flight; the superlative German troops would swiftly destroy the inferior Red Army and that a new Blitzkrieg victory was already in sight; to destroy the Napoleonic terror so, today in 1943 they look to us to destroy the terror of National Socialism. Second World War despite the fact that it was ostensibly being fought to destroy Hitlerism. In RNC this parallel is not actually represented; it is mostly about the destruction of material objects, endowed however, specific meaning. In that case RNC focused on examples containing different shade of meaning (destroy is an equivalent rather for defeat than for destroy).

It is much more difficult to recreate in translation those of usage or of the destruction of the virtual object, or the destruction of a moral factors such us credibility,

confidence, trust, e.g., flirt with elements of that and completely destroy our credibility with a lot of people whose votes we wanted. There were many cases of theft, misappropriation and favouritism which tended to destroy confidence in officialdom in general (about the destruction of trust, confidence) as exceptions to the rules multiply, most writers at least acknowledge that novel principles destroy the crispness and generality of such doctrines as consideration and privity (about creative principles where destructive role is rather correlated with the positive part of the emotive scale than negative qualification), strategy is demolished by public consultation then that's fortunate but in the second (unclear) demolish then your whole strategy tumbles down (unclear) (about strategy as a mental product); well, suppose he should resolve to ensnare a poor young creature and ruinher would you assist him in that? Also, a lot of opportunities for translators' creative work are represented both in BNC and RNC, especially in case of finding equivalents for synonyms with the component destroy in their meanings: Pamela: Yes, sir, you honour is to destroymine and your love is to ruin me; I see too plainly; They sprayed weedkiller on pensioner Martha Welsh's prized lawn to ruinher chances. But they didn't reckon with her burning ambition (Fig. 3).

If a translator whose native language is English, deals with the Russian texts containing the corresponding verb with different meaning (violate), it may result in confusing paronyms (break which corresponds to violate in Russian language is often replaced by ruin or destroy) because it makes sense in English. e.g., just realized wit the stresses and strains of more and more right wing pressure to destroy workers rights and drive

wages down (in Russian language rights can only be violated or broken) to pronounce upon other grounds of appeal and there by destroy the order of the house of lords by again quashing the conviction (the appropriate word for the order is to break), etc.

The asymmetry of semantic fields with the meaning of destruction in Russian and English is quite obvious in such cases as the following, for example, to reduce to zero: 'prison officers' leaders claimed that the Tories wanted to destroy jobs and the plans would reduce jail security.

### CONCLUSION

To sum up our analysis of BNC and RNC material (on the basis of representation of to destroy meaning) in the frame of national world view it is necessary to point out that the problem of compatibility/incompatibility of words that have different combinatorial possibilities and interlinguistics due to extralinguistic factors is one of the most complicated problems of translation. The semantics of "destruction" as it was shown on the basis of the aforementioned material has a complexity in terms of combinatorics, ambiguity and an extensive system of values both in Russian and in English which requires consideration of various aspects of the meaning and use of these buildings for a more accurate reproduction of the source language text semantics. So, the discrepancy of semantic and pragmatic factors influences the process of translation of the passages containing words with aforementioned meaning. In most of cases, there are no translation difficulties. Thus, among >3000 cases in English registereg in BNC, there are only 97 contexts with the lack

of semantic and pragmatic correspondence to the system of destroy-meaning in Russian. On the other hand, that system of meaning demonstrates clear correspondence in Russian and English national world view related to one of its key concepts.

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