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## ЛИНГВИСТИЧЕСКИЙ АНАЛИЗ ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКИХ ТЕРМИНОВ В КУЛЬТУРОЛОГИЧЕСКОМ КОНТЕКСТЕ

## Аннотация

Данная статья является результатом сравнительного анализа пяти экономических терминов («business» – «бизнес»; «competition» – «конкуренция»; «salary» – «зарплата»; «boss» – «начальник»; «profit» – «прибыль») в контексте культуры России и США. Исследование показывает, что некоторые слова были заимствованы на обоих языках из разных источников (например, «salary» – «зарплата»), некоторые из них были заимствованы из одного источника (например, «business» – «бизнес»), а некоторые были получены из собственных оригинальных слов (например, «прибыль», «начальник»). Сравнение культурных контекстов и словарных статей показывает, что термины, проанализированные в данной работе, в первую очередь помогают понять, как две страны (Россия и США) могут быть культурно разными. Исследование также иллюстрирует, как эти термины разработали свои собственные дополнительные значения, характерные для их культурного и социального развития. Следовательно, определенные концепты могут быть преобразованы через призму культурного видения мира разных народов.

**Ключевые слова:** понятия «бизнес», «конкуренция», «зарплата», «начальник», «прибыль».

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## LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF ECONOMIC TERMS IN CULTURAL CONTEXTS

## Abstract

This article is the result of a comparative analysis of five economic terms ("business", "competition", "salary", "boss", "profit") in the context of the culture of Russia and the United States. The research shows that some words were borrowed in both languages from different sources (for example, "salary"), some of them were borrowed from one source (for example, "business"), and some were received from own original words (for example, "profit", "boss"). Comparison of cultural contexts and dictionary entries shows that the terms analyzed in this paper primarily help to understand how the two countries (Russia and the US) can be culturally different. The study also illustrates how these terms have developed their own additional meanings, characteristic of their cultural and social development. Consequently, certain concepts can be transformed through the prism of a cultural vision of the world of different peoples.

**Keywords:** terms "business", "competition", "salary", "boss", "profit".

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The present paper deals with one of extremely important aspects of cultural and linguistic analysis of some terms which are very often used in business language. This problem of studying key words in business used by different languages and cultures demands special care in using methods of analysis. From the point of view of meaning, connotations and typical linguistic and cultural contexts the key vocabulary that attracted our attention, which is going to be regarded in this research seems to be rather informative for the learners of languages and cultures.

The groups of words under the study in both languages, English and Russian, includes such terms as

- 1) *business* – *бизнес*
- 2) *competition* – *конкуренция*
- 3) *salary* – *зарплата*
- 4) *boss* – *начальник*
- 5) *profit* – *прибыль*

Different sources were analyzed which illustrated the meanings, connotations and typical Russian and American contexts where these terms were found. The number of dictionaries (5) which helped to define the meaning, etymology, frequency of usage of these terms in both languages together with examples taken from mass media, Internet, special business magazines provided substantial information for the analysis of the groups of chosen key words in business for their comparison.

It would be instructive to examine in detail how frequent these terms are used in both languages, what connotations they get in different cultures. The learners of the languages should bear in mind that the study of special terms and vocabulary is never isolated from general problems of social and cultural background. In the course of our study we

compared the terms offered in the list of pairs, which are used in English and Russian. The objective of this investigation is to find the differences and similarities which become evident from the carried out analysis.

**The first pair of terms under study is:*****business* – *бизнес***

The entry of *Online Etymology Dictionary* [7] informs the reader that the meaning of the word *business* was transformed from century to century: in old English it is presented as solicitude, in the 14<sup>th</sup> c. – occupation and pursuit and in the 16<sup>th</sup> c. – affair.

Thus we can see that the meaning of this word has undergone different transformations and nowadays when we look through the entry of *Longman Dictionary of English language and culture* [5, P. 167] that is giving us the present day meaning of the word we can see a lot of meanings which this word possesses (about 14 meanings). Some of these meanings coincide with the meanings given in *Russian explanatory dictionary by S.I. Ojhegov and N.U. Shvedova (С.И. Ожегов и Н.Ю. Шведова* [2, P. 47]. Some of these meanings were developed only in English culture and are not represented in Russian culture. The word *business* is rather productive and there exist numerous combinations with this word, such as *business lunch*, *business card*, *businesswoman*, most of which were borrowed into Russian as well but not all of them are used as in English, some of them are translated as, e.g. *business card* – *визитная карточка*, while the word *business lunch* is translated into Russian as *бизнес ланч*.

As for the *Russian etymological dictionary by N.M. Shansky (Н.М. Шанский)* [4, P. 117] the meaning of the word *бизнес* is explained there as the word borrowed in the Soviet epoch from English where business is regarded as activity (дело, занятие).

Let us consider some examples illustrating different meanings of this word and the ways they could be translated in both languages:

1) *The business of America is business.*

Основное занятие Америки – это предпринимательская деятельность.

2) *A teacher's business is to help children learn.*

Основная обязанность преподавателя — помогать детям учиться.

It is also interesting to analyze the word “*business*” and its derivatives from the cultural point of view. For example, the derivative of the word “*business*” “*businessman*” has quite negative connotation according to Russian mentality. Somebody who goes in for business is considered to be “the enemy of the nation”, a thief and just deceitful and cunning person. A businessman for many Russians is not a successful person as it is in America, but is a person who has plenty of money and what is more earns it in a dishonest way. And it is unfair in Russian culture not to share with others, even if it concerns money. No one should forget that Russia is a collectivist country while the USA is an individualistic one. That's why in America it is quite normal if someone is much richer than others, it is one's right and one's decision and no one should interfere in somebody's affairs. In Russia it seems to be impossible to prove to people that to occupy with business is not as bad as others think.

Even in *Russian dictionary of associations by U.N. Karaulov, G.A. Cherkasova, N.V. Ufimtseva, U.A. Sorokin and E.F. Tarasov* (Караулов Ю.Н., Черкасова Г.А., Уфимцева Н.В., Сорокин Ю.А., Тарасов Е.Ф.) [1, P. 56] we find rather negative associations with the word “*business*”: they are «грязный», «крутой», «афера», «преступность», «рэкет», and so on, and so forth. All these words confirm the fact that Russian people (of course those who are not businessmen) have an aversion for business and businessmen.

However, nowadays it is evident that only people brought up during the Soviet period adhere to such an opinion. The young generation who tries to imitate the Americans is eager to be businessmen and no wonder that many children desire to become “*the new Russians*” and not cosmonauts as it was in the Soviet Union. It is how time changes us and our desires.

**The second pair is:**

***competition* – конкуренция**

It is necessary to mention that this word in English and Russian languages has different roots.

*Online Etymology Dictionary* [7] informs the reader about the origin of the word *competition* and the entry explains that the verb *to compete* has the meaning “to strive in common”. The word *competition* appeared in the 17<sup>th</sup> c., it comes from late Latin and it meant “agreement”, “rivalry”.

As far as Russian etymology is concerned, the word *конкуренция* was borrowed from French in the epoch of Peter I. This word has connection with French verb *concurrere* which means «сталкиваться, сшибаться, сражаться».

*Longman dictionary of English language and culture* presents three meanings of the word *competition* [5, P. 259], they are: 1) a test of strength, skill, ability, etc; 2) the act of competing; the struggle between several people or groups to win something or gain an advantage; 3) the (other) competitors, while in Russian dictionary we can see only one meaning which corresponds to the second meaning in English dictionary.

However, it is worth mentioning that the word *competition* can be translated into Russian as two different words: they are *конкуренция* and *соревнование*.

It seems to be quite important to mention that in Russian the meaning of the word *конкуренция* implies more aggressive attitude to the activities connected with the survival on the market in the world of business and the meaning of the word *соревнование* is more neutral, has positive features when “competition” doesn't lead to any loss of profit because the winner gets mainly respect and becomes famous (as it was in the Soviet time). The meaning of the word *соревнование* implies that it could be used in sports and some professional areas for getting qualification acknowledgements. To win this kind of competition means to get public appreciation and respect. So it is an interesting fact that there are two equivalents in Russian language for one word in English.

**The third pair is:**

***salary/wages* – зарплата**

There are two equivalents in English language for one Russian word *зарплата*, they are *salary* and *wages*. The difference is that *salary* is paid for the office-workers and *wages* for the manual work.

*Online Etymology Dictionary* [7] explains that the word *salary* comes from Latin word “*salarium*” which was associated with “salt-money, soldier's allowance for the purchase of salt”.

As for the Russian word «*зарплата*» it consists of two different words which are «*заработная плата*». To make this expression easier for pronunciation and expressing desirable delights Russian people decided to merge two words (*заработная плата*) into one (*зарплата*). So, it became easier to utter such raptures as, for example, «Наконец-то я получил зарплату!» and not «Наконец-то я получил заработную плату!». We see that the second variant is not as expressive as the first one. It lost the sense and emotions which people are eager to convey.

Let us analyze some cultural aspects. It seems that for an English speaker the meaning of the Russian expression «*Сегодня зарплата!* » with one would not have the same meaning. It is clear for any Russian person how these two words excite and make people happy. Without any doubt it is impossible to face such reaction in America, because they do not have any problems with salaries and wages in contrast to us, and the money is paid directly into their bank accounts. Nowadays in Russia it is tendency to get money from ATM and many people have already got accustomed to the fact that the money is paid directly into their bank accounts.

As *Russian dictionary of associations* [1, P. 213] informs us, the word «*зарплата*» has the following associations: «*маленькая*», «*низкая*» and even «*мизерная*». It shows that the Russians are not satisfied with their salaries at all. Of course it is stupid to declare that all the Americans in contrast to the Russians are contented with the money they are paid. But the fact is that we have to watch much more mass demonstrations and strikes devoted to the increase of wages in the regions of our country than in the regions of that which is overseas.

One more interesting thing is that the question “How much do you earn?” is considered to be rude in America. People do not like to inform others about their private life, which is inseparably linked with their money. However, if they give information about salary, they mean that this money is paid per year, but not per month, as it is in Russia. E.g. *The Economist* [6, P. 99], [100] regularly publishes

information concerning vacancies which mention the offered salary:

- 1) *UCD Faculty of Agriculture...Salary: € 30086 — € 71814 per year*
- 2) *Regional Coordinator: Asia and Eastern Europe. Salary: £ 4000 — £45000*

**The fourth pair is:**

**boss — начальник**

*Online Etymology Dictionary* [7] informs us that the word *boss* is of Dutch origin, it means *master*.

In Russian the word *начальник* is derived from the verb *начать*, i.e. in Russian it is a person who begins something, starts doing something new, while in English the word *boss* is more relative to a person who employs people.

It is interesting that in America you can easily become a boss. The difference between a worker and a boss is economic, in the money they get, but not in social life. Workers struggle for perks, for better salaries, medical insurance etc. In Russia status plays an important role. Being at the top level means much for Russians, they sense their superiority and it gives them self-reliance and assurance of success.

In *Russian dictionary of associations* [1, P. 359] we find that the word «начальник» has such associations as «дурак», «злой», «глупый», «плохой» and «грубый». So, it is evident that Russian people have no special liking for their directors and it can be caused by the fact that in Russia bosses often don't respect their subordinates thereby to confirm their appointment as the "main person", i.e. the director. Taking into account this statement one can say that Russian bosses are doomed to be alone. In America it often happens that a director and his subordinate become good friends.

Another fact that is worth paying attention to concerns the role of women as bosses. In America it is considered to be tactless to discuss whether a woman can be a successful boss or it was not stipulated by the nature. We find contrary situation in Russia. As it was written in Russian magazine «Огонек» [3, P. 22], such a question gives rise to a lot of talk among the Russians. The piece of information of great importance is that the British Consulting Company *Grant Thornton* elicited the fact that 89% of women are bosses in Russian companies. Moreover, our country is in the lead in the world according to this index.

Nevertheless, almost all Russian males are sure that women were not created to become directors and each female should know her role which is to all appearances a mother and a housewife.

For the Russians it is quite normal to think that men and women are not equal while in America it is generally known that all people are equal and there is no division into males and females especially when it comes to work or money. Thus it is difficult for American people to understand why it is unnatural from Russian point of view for woman to be a head. The only explanation of it can be that fact that women are more emotional than men and for that reason they can ruin any system.

**The fifth pair is:**

**profit — прибыль**

*Online Etymology Dictionary* [7] informs the reader that in the 14<sup>th</sup> c. the word *profit* had the meaning of *advantage*, *benefit*, *gain*.

It is evident that the word *прибыль*, though there is no entry in *the Russian etymological dictionary by N.M. Shansky*

for it, was derived from the verb *прибыть*, and thus it is of Russian origin and was not borrowed from other languages.

Modern Russian and English dictionaries have similar definitions for these words in both languages, though they do not have similar origin. It seems that they are parallel in use due to the same ideas expressed in these terms in both cultures as they are economic terms. These terms have absolutely identical meaning as they are used in book-keeping and denote the same things.

However, from our point of view there are some differences between these two terms if cultural aspects are to be taken into account. First of all, we mean negative attitudes of other people. Again it is very important to emphasize that our country hasn't still recovered from the Soviet period. That's why many people judge the society from socialistic point of view. Normally they bear in mind that everything should be shared with everybody. For this reason Russian people have negative attitude to others' profits which rouse envy in them. The other fact of great importance is that many Russians are sure that nearly all profits have not been honestly earned. Hence it appears that most Russians who often suffer from lack of money have no special sympathy for successful, especially in business, people.

In the USA if someone gets profit it means that he/she merits it for his/her hard work. No one dares to blame one for his/her achievements. In America it is considered to be discourteous and bad-mannered to interfere in others' private lives while in Russia it affords pleasure. Many Russian people want to know about the problems of others in order to feel that not only they suffer so much.

Another thing is that Americans are seriously at odds with themselves about profits. Their attitude can be explained as appreciation of the profit motive and non-admission of profits. It is the paradox that the Americans want people to work for profits but they are not at all sure that they want them to be earned. American people think that it is absurd to hold that profit is a desirable incentive but a poor achievement. Men cannot work on the basis that it is right and necessary for them to pursue a goal that, when they reach it, will prove a sterile thing at best, and at worst a harmful one.

The Russians are in no such dilemma. They want profits and not just "the profit motive".

Our survey may be concluded with some remarks concerning the origin, the use and the derivatives of these five pairs of words in both languages. The comparative analysis illustrated that some words were borrowed in both languages from different sources (e.g. salary – зарплата), some were borrowed from the same source (e.g. business – бизнес) and some derived from their own original words (e.g. прибыль, начальник).

The comparison of the cultural contexts and dictionary entries shows that the terms analyzed in our paper, first of all, helped us to understand how two countries (in our case they are Russia and the USA) can be culturally different. Second, we managed to demonstrate how these terms have developed their own additional meanings typical for their cultural and social development. The conclusion shows that similar ideas could be transformed through the prism of cultural vision of the world of different nations.

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