



## Discovering the Russian Translation Market

*Natalie Shahova*

*Translated from the Russian by Rachel Douglas*

The primary intended audience for this article is American translators from Russian to English. A secondary audience that will benefit from the material I cover is Americans who need to order translations from Russian translators working in that market. In my experience, almost every translator becomes the customer from time to time, so I expect that my two audiences will overlap.

According to a preliminary estimate by Common Sense Advisory, a language services market research company, the international translation market will be worth nearly \$31.5 billion in 2011, with Eastern Europe accounting for \$894 million. If that forecast holds up, growth during the year will have been 7.41%. CSA projects that the market will grow to almost \$39 billion over the next five years, with Eastern Europe's share being \$1.1 billion. Given the rapid expansion of trade and tourism between Russia and the rest of the world, demand for written translations into and from Russian is likely to strengthen, and we may assume that the Russian segment of the market will at least keep pace with the market as a whole.

This growth opens up great prospects for American translators from Russian to English. They will have increasing numbers of opportunities to broaden their client base by adding new Russian customers. The main problem they will face is that Russian customers generally have target rates that are substantially lower than world averages. This pattern is especially pronounced when the end-customers are Russian government agencies, which have a major presence in the Russian translation market. Private-sector companies, especially the Russian offices of foreign firms, are generally more willing and able to pay higher rates. Private individuals, at least in the big cities, frequently are prepared to pay world market rates for translation services, especially for small, rush jobs such as translating someone's personal documents for a visa application, or correspondence to initiate business or personal contact with someone in another country.

Other problems arise from the underdevelopment of infrastructure in Russia to support the translation industry.

The latter part of the 20th century saw a system take shape in the West whereby translation agencies provided services for major corporations or one-time customers,

and freelancers worked both for the agencies and for direct customers. Translators were by no means limited to local customers; they delivered jobs to clients in other cities or countries by mail or fax. The international translation market functioned smoothly, thanks to good postal services and a unified banking system. The advent of the Internet, followed by electronic payment systems, eased the way to market consolidation, resulting in the emergence of a few dozen very large multi-language service providers. CSA estimates that these giants meet the translation needs of up to 15% of all customers globally.

New forms of organization and infrastructure support for the translation industry developed a good deal later in Russia and have not yet caught up with international practice.

The shift from the socialist system to a capitalist economy coincided almost exactly with the arrival of the Internet in Russia. A major side effect of Russia's integration into the global economy that has taken place over the past 20 years has been a huge increase in demand for translations. Both the process of integration and the translation boom have been hindered by an underdeveloped entrepreneurial culture on the part of the Russian market players (customers, translators, and translation agency managers), as well as by how slowly Internet access has become available in the country. As a result, people start up translation agencies almost exclusively in major cities, while customers and

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freelancers in smaller towns or rural areas tend to be cut off from the global system, with the exception of a very few who have managed to make Internet contact with Russian or foreign translation agencies.

### The Russian market

Given Russia's less than complete integration into the global system, for the reasons noted above, the Russian market has certain unique features. First of all, Russia has, on the one hand, a high demand for translation into foreign languages – most often English – coupled with, on the other, a resident population that includes only a miniscule number of native speakers of these languages. This situation is a result of Russia's historical isolation from foreigners. Translations into English, German, French, and other languages, more often than not, are assigned to Russian translators. Another factor is that a relatively high percentage of Russian translators were not specially educated to be translators. There are two main reasons for this: first, the demand for translators grew so rapidly in Russia after the Iron Curtain came down, that not enough language specialists were available to meet it; second, this was a period during which pay rates fell sharply in most sectors of the economy, forcing many teachers, physicians, scientists, and engineers to look for alternative income sources. Those with the appropriate linguistic knowledge shifted to part-time or full-time translation work. Their ability to do this smoothly was helped by the fact that already in Soviet times they had earned money on the side by doing translations for publishing houses or other government agencies, thus acquiring translation experience under the guidance of professional editors.

In Western Europe and the United States it is rare for a doctor or lawyer to moonlight as a translator, since the professions for which they were educated provide much higher incomes, but in Russia almost everybody who knows a foreign language tries to get translation work as well. Not everybody succeeds, of course, but a survey we conducted<sup>1</sup> showed that the great army of Russian translators is fairly evenly divided between linguists and people from other professions, chiefly technical fields.

The people who run Russian translation agencies also frequently have a technical background. This is because business administration was not taught in the Soviet Union. When the shift to a market economy took place, there were virtually no skilled managers available to work in a market environment. Without trained professionals on the scene, enterprising enthusiasts, most often people with a science or engineering background, moved in to fill the gap and set up new translation companies. That is why Russian executives in many industries, and those at translation agencies in particular, lack managerial and organizational knowledge and skills. However, they are sometimes more knowledgeable than Western managers, who may lack awareness of the global environment. For example, I have customers in California, twelve time zones away, who persist in sending me inquiries after midnight, Moscow time, demanding a reply by the close of (their) working day. I even had to compile a Quick Guide to Russian Grammar for my dissatisfied U.S. customers after chronic complaints that some English word, like "printer," was being translated "in different ways" in various parts of our translations (*printera* / *printeru* / *printerom*).

<sup>1</sup> See [www.enrus.ru/en/publications/TFRussia\\_eng.pdf](http://www.enrus.ru/en/publications/TFRussia_eng.pdf)

for some of the findings of research conducted by the EnRus translation agency in August 2011.

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Russian translators typically are up to date with various software programs, thanks largely to ubiquitous piracy in that market. Some translators in the West may be loathe to upgrade to new software versions or expand the array of programs they use because of the cost, while Russian translators usually have the very latest versions of all their programs and have little problem with adding new ones to their arsenal. Another advantage many Russian translators have in assimilating IT innovations is their own technical background. People with linguistic training alone may be less inclined than techies to master new equipment and software, and the great majority of translators in the West received their education in languages.

### **Problems that arise in Russian-American working relationships**

My sense is that there is a very great need for the services of native-speaker translators who reside in the country of the target language, but that the people ordering translation services, whether Americans or Russians, have not yet fully grasped this. Customers worldwide have a poor understanding of what translation quality means, why it is important, and how their businesses will be affected if they do not make it a priority. They often assign greater weight to convenience than to quality and therefore prefer to use translators from their own country.

A variety of problems regularly arise when working with people in other countries. I think that the main obstacles have to do with differences in the following areas:

- Language
- Time zones
- Cultural traditions
- Terms of payment

In the case of translators, we can discount the language barrier: even if not all Russian translation agency representatives know English well, foreign translators from Russian will still be able to communicate with them in Russian. The second barrier is sometimes an advantage, because a translator who can work while the customer is sleeping may be very much in demand for rush jobs. The other two impediments deserve more detailed discussion.

### ***Different cultural traditions***

The Russian approach to business relations is generally cooler and more formal than in the United States. Russian business letters do not normally contain certain standard polite expressions (such as “Thank you for your kind request,” or “Should you require further explanations, please do not hesitate to contact us”), leading some Americans to think that their correspondents are rude, when in reality the Russian letter-writers are merely attempting to adhere to official style.

In addition, Russia has two stereotypes that seem very foreign to Americans:

- **Customer intransigence:** People at companies that hire translation services frequently believe they are in a position of superiority vis-à-vis the translator and that, as the bosses in the relationship, they have the right to dictate all the terms of collaboration. In such cases an American translator may encounter Russian customers who are absolutely unwilling to change any of the terms in their standard contract to meet the translator’s wishes.
- **Translator intransigence:** Many Russian translators consider it humiliating to accede to customer demands. Instead of trying to determine client requirements at the outset (and customers are not always well enough trained or experienced to formulate such requirements themselves), translators simply do things the way they think is right and then go on to argue with the customer when asked to redo something.

I think that each of these stereotypes represents a continuation of certain Soviet-era habits. While many employers maintain traditional Soviet attitudes in attempting to enforce hierarchical relations between superiors and subordinates, many translators persist in the typical Soviet attitude of contempt for the service sector. This latter type of behavior will not directly affect American translators in the Russian market, but it may be useful for them to be aware of the kinds of trouble potential customers have to deal with from some of their Russian translators. Being forced to sell their services, deal with customers, and try to satisfy the customer’s wishes is a negative emotional experience for many Russian translators, especially the most highly skilled people from the middle-aged and older generations. This is the root of the following typical attitude among them: my job is to translate the text well according to my lights, and making adjustments to suit the customer is beneath my dignity.

Here are some typical examples of how a translator might ignore the customer’s actual needs and requirements from my experience with Russian translators.

- In translating a power of attorney from Russian to a foreign language, the translator uses an officially accepted transliteration system to render names, rather than attempting to find out how these names have been Romanized in existing personal documents. The result is an invalid power of attorney.
- In translating a bill of lading from a foreign language into Russian, the translator leaves all the addresses in Latin letters, ignoring the fact that doing so makes it essentially impossible to get the translation legally authenticated. (For a document to be notarized in Russia, the entire text must be written in the Cyrillic alphabet.)
- In translating the description of a medication in a publication for Russian-speaking residents of California, the translator replaces the U.S. name of the drug with the name listed for it by the Russian

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Federation Ministry of Health, creating significant difficulties for the person who needs to purchase this medication in the United States.

The persistence of these habits needs to be kept in mind when making business arrangements with people in Russia.

### **Different approaches to translation fees**

In the United States translation rates are generally stated in cents per word of target or source text. In Russia the cost of a written translation is normally expressed in terms of rubles per standard page (1800 characters including spaces) of target text or, less frequently, source text.

Every translator needs to spend an hour learning how to do the conversion. Even if all your work agreements state the fees in dollars, doing such a calculation will enable you to discard unacceptable prices at a glance: if you receive a job offer to translate something at 200 rubles (around \$7.00) per page, you can readily see that this is far below the range of rates you offer.

On the basis of several of your fairly large completed jobs, determine the price in dollars of one page of your translations. Here's how:

1. Take the price of the job: say, \$500.00.
2. Using MS Word (or another program with character-counting functions), determine how many characters, including spaces, there were in your translation: say, 30,000.
3. Calculate the number of standard pages in your translation:  $30,000/1800 = 16.7$ .
4. Determine the cost in dollars of one such page:  $\$500.00/16.7 \sim \$30.00$ .

Perform this calculation on several typical jobs; then take an average of the resulting figures. This will give you a general equivalence between the "American" and "Russian" rates for your work; the rates in particular cases will depend on the language pair, the direction of the translation, the type of text, and your translation habits. In the example, an "American" rate of 12 cents per target word corresponds to a "Russian" rate of \$30.00 per target (standard) page.

If you specify in your agreement with the customer how the ruble-dollar exchange rate will be calculated in your settlements (as of the date your invoice is submitted, as of the date the invoice is paid, or as of the date the translation is submitted), then you'll be able to discuss rates in terms your customer is used to. You will state your rates in rubles, but the customer will pay you in dollars. Of course, stating your charges in rubles and specifying terms of payment that allow for a possible change in the actual dollar amount you receive – because of fluctuations in the exchange rate – involves a degree of risk. You may decide that the risk is worth it, in order to get work from an agency that has no

experience with stating translation rates in dollar terms.

### **Different approaches to fees for editing**

In Russia editing fees are usually stated per page (volume of text), while in the United States it is not uncommon for editors to charge by the hour, especially when they are editing a translation by a non-native speaker of the target language.

This may become a serious conflict. Convincing Russian customers to pay for translations by the word rather than by the page is easy, compared with the tremendous difficulty of convincing them to pay by the hour for editing. The usual objections from a Russian customer are: How am I supposed to know how much time the translator (editor) really spent? What if he goes and bills me for a million hours? The usual objection from a Russian translator is: How am I supposed to calculate how much time I really spent? I'm not going to sit there with a stopwatch and click it off when I take a coffee break!

Since demand for English native-speaker editing is currently greater in Russia than demand for native-speaker translations, I would advise American translators who want to attract Russian customers to meet their Russian customers halfway by establishing a per word rate for editing. In order to do this, first you need to estimate your editing speed. Supposing you can edit three pages in the amount of time it would take you to translate one. You will need to set your editing rate at one-third of your translation rate. Here I anticipate the usual objection from an American translator: How am I supposed to know how bad the translation is and how fast I can edit it? Of course there is no set method that will work well in every case. You can set a range of 25-50% of your translation rate, and then determine the rate for a given editing job after looking through the translation to be edited. Occasionally you will misestimate and end up spending more time than you had counted on. If your goal is to attract Russian customers, you might want to think of these losses as marketing costs (even though you won't be able to deduct them as a business expense on your tax return). The more editing you do for a client, the better he will understand – in most cases – the shortcomings of translations into English done by Russian translators, and he may realize that it's often more cost-effective to hire an American translator from the outset than to first pay a Russian translator to do the translation, and then hire an American to edit it. You may be able gradually to bring the customer around to hiring you for translations, rather than editing.

### **Different payment time frames**

While in the United States invoices are generally paid within 30 to 60 days, translators in Russia are accustomed to being paid within one month of completion of a translation, and often immediately after submitting the work. In some rare instances they may be paid in advance, especially by a new customer.

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This difference may present a difficulty for an American who wants to hire a Russian translator. A good practice might be to make payment for your first orders immediately after completion of the job, and then negotiate mutually acceptable terms when you know each other better.

### **Different methods of payment**

Payment by check is customary in the United States, but this method is hardly ever used in Russia. Even in Moscow it takes a huge amount of time and money to cash a check; in smaller cities it is virtually impossible. If your Russian counterpart has a foreign currency bank account, your only problem will be the relatively high cost of bank wire transfers. This expense can be kept down by agreeing to have payment made only when your receivables have reached a certain amount, or to split the bank wire fees. Other options include Western Union International or the Moneybookers and PayPal systems, each of which has its pluses and minuses.

### **Breaking into the Russian market**

The Russian market offers tremendous opportunities for American translators because of growing demand for Russian-English translations, and the fact that customers throughout the vast expanse of Russia beyond Moscow and St. Petersburg are only just now gaining Internet access and learning how to work with translators based in the West. The biggest problem is the generally low rates in Russia's domestic translation market. But I am convinced that as they begin to be integrated into the global market, Russian customers will understand that they need to hire native speakers of the target language and will be reconciled to paying world prices for translation services. This process is unfolding gradually. We see it in the fact that more and more customers feel the need to hire a native speaker to edit a translation done by a Russian. Customers who have already realized that they should do this are beginning to search for foreign translators. The savviest ones visit sites like ProZ.com at their own initiative. Hiring the right translator by this avenue, however, requires a good command of English and knowledge of what to look for in their candidates. For this reason many Russian customers won't risk launching their own search for translators. Instead, they go through Russian agencies that are already experienced in contracting with foreigners for translation services. Such agencies offer another important advantage in the eyes of inexperienced customers: they accept payment in rubles, thus sparing the end customer the difficulties involved in transferring money to a foreign currency account and converting rubles to a foreign currency.

This relationship means that one way to break into the Russian market is the standard one of sending out your resume to Russian translation agencies. Be prepared, however, for such mailings to yield even fewer openings

than usual: most Russian agencies do not work with foreign translators and have no use for them, if only because they are too expensive.

I believe that another approach is more promising, and that is participating in forums and mailing lists for translators who work with Russian. Among these are:

\* Ruslantra, my favorite

(<http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/ruslantra/>)

\* Two forums associated with the ABBYY Lingvo dictionary (<http://lingvoda.ru/forum/actualtopics.aspx?bid=2> and <http://forum.lingvo.ru/actualforum.aspx>)

\* *Gorod perevodchikov*, or Translators' City ([www.trworkshop.net/forum](http://www.trworkshop.net/forum))

\* The Russian forum at ProZ.com ([www.proz.com/forum/categories/country\\_specific\\_forums-country.html](http://www.proz.com/forum/categories/country_specific_forums-country.html))

Not all of the discussions in these forums will be engrossing or immediately easy to understand for people who don't live in a Russian-speaking milieu, but as you gradually find your way in this online environment, you may be able to kill two birds with one stone: improving your ability to understand contemporary Russian, and building a reputation among potential customers. As most translators know very well, colleagues – fellow translators like the ones who take part in these forums – can become sources of work, either by recommending you to one of their clients, or by sharing jobs with you.

These forums provide countless opportunities to show off your abilities. Our survey confirmed that many Russian translators often translate into a foreign language, most frequently English, and for 23% of them translations into a non-native language (English, once again) make up over half of their work. These translators often have questions for which you are the one with the right answer.

I hope my advice will prove useful to translators who would like to make headway in the Russian market.

Natalie Shahova ([translation@enrus.ru](mailto:translation@enrus.ru)) is a translation agency manager with a background in mathematics and 20 years' experience in translation. She is a member of the Union of Translators of Russia. Her translation of *Eats, Shoots & Leaves* by Lynne Truss was included on the shortlist of the Unicorn and Lion award for the best Russian translation of British literature, cosponsored by the British Council. See the Spring 2008 issue of *SlavFile* for Natalie's description of this translation project.

### **Listen Up, Strugatsky-Heads and Other Sci-Fi Buffs!**

The launch of Snail on the Slope, "a collaborative blog on Russian, Soviet, and Eastern European sci-fi," was recently announced on the SEELANGS list. The blog is run by Muireann Maguire and Sibelan Forrester (so you know it's a serious undertaking), and is soliciting submissions in the form of short pieces such as book or film reviews, translation news, and conference presentations.

<http://russiansf.wordpress.com/>



# Notes from an Administrative Underground\*

Lucy Gunderson, SLD Administrator

Happy New Year! I hope everyone enjoyed the holiday season. It seems like our 2011 conference took place ages ago, but it was wonderful to see so many old and new SLD members in Boston. I think we had a very successful conference with

many highlights, including the Greiss lecture by Valentina Kolesnichenko, music by Dan Veksler, and, of course, our annual banquet at the Vlora restaurant.

Looking ahead, 2012 brings with it some changes and lots of new ideas.

## Leadership Council

You will see some differences in our division structure this year due to changes adopted by the ATA Board in July 2011 ([http://www.atanet.org/divisions/governing\\_policy\\_2011.pdf](http://www.atanet.org/divisions/governing_policy_2011.pdf)). Divisions are now required to have a Leadership Council made up of volunteers who will manage the division's activities. These volunteers are invited to join the council by the Administrator and serve for a period of one year. According to the new policy, the "most important purpose [of the Leadership Council] is to ensure the continuity of Division activities." With this in mind, John Riedl, our assistant administrator, and I tackled the task of forming a Leadership Council. It was difficult fitting in everyone we wanted to include, but over the next two years we hope to rotate in everyone willing to contribute. For the coming year we have come up with a mix of long-time division members, some newer members, and also some members who work in languages other than Russian. I am pleased to introduce our Council members to you in alphabetical order.

**Nora Seligman Favorov** has been active within the Slavic Languages Division ever since she attended her first conference in 1998. In early 2000 she agreed to replace an assistant administrator who had to step down and then, when the administrator stepped down as well, she found herself the sole SLD officer. She continued to serve as either administrator or assistant administrator until 2005, but even afterwards retained responsibility for the Greiss lecture and the website. Also, in the mid-aughts, she became associate editor of the *SlavFile* and a Russian into English certification grader. She is thrilled to see fresh young leadership taking over the SLD and looks forward to a revitalized website. Otherwise, Nora spends most of her time translating Russian history or practicing karate in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Contact: [norafavorov@gmail.com](mailto:norafavorov@gmail.com)

**Jen Guernsey** is a Russian>English translator specializing in medicine, pharmaceuticals, and the life sciences. Though she has continuously done freelance translation

work since shortly after graduating from the University of Michigan with a degree in Russian language and literature, her other careers have included escorting groups of American tourists around the then-USSR and processing Soviet refugee applications for the U.S. Department of State. Her most recent former career involved serving as a research analyst for a former Soviet biological weapons developer and helping him to start up a research laboratory, work which dovetailed nicely with her interest in medicine and, particularly, infectious diseases. Her current translation work is almost entirely connected with the pharmaceutical industry. Jen has been a member of the ATA for most of her 24-year translation career. She is a past assistant administrator for the SLD and serves as a contributor to and copy editor of *SlavFile*. Contact: [jenguernsey@gmail.com](mailto:jenguernsey@gmail.com)

**Lucy Gunderson** is Administrator of the Slavic Languages Division and an ATA-certified Russian>English translator. She specializes in international relations, human rights, legal documents, and journalism. She has a BA in Russian Studies, an MA in Russian Literature, and a Certificate in Translation Studies. She is currently the Russian tutor in the Introduction to Translation class at the University of Chicago. Contact: [russophile@earthlink.net](mailto:russophile@earthlink.net)

**Todd Jackson** is an ATA-certified Russian>English translator who runs Mosely Translations, a small Chicago-based freelance business specializing in Russian>English translations. He has studied the Russian language and culture for over thirteen years and lived in Moscow for nearly ten years. His interests include history, travel, music and sports. Todd will be focusing on creating a restricted SLD LinkedIn group. Contact: [todd@moselytranslations.com](mailto:todd@moselytranslations.com)

**Katarzyna Jankowski** is an ATA-certified English>Polish translator. She has a master's degree in English philology from Silesian University in Katowice, Poland, and a master's in public administration from Roosevelt University in Chicago. She is also a certified paralegal. First hired as an in-house translator in 1993, she has been a freelance translator and court interpreter since 2003. Kate will be working on outreach to West Slavic translators and interpreters. Contact: [kate.jan@att.net](mailto:kate.jan@att.net)

**Irina Jesionowski** is a certified Russian court interpreter and a contract interpreter with the U.S. Department of State. She has worked as a language professional in the U.S. since 2002. Irina is an alumna of the Cambridge (U.K.) Conference Interpreting Course and of the translation/interpretation programs at the University of Chicago and at the University of Massachusetts. Since 2008, she has served as a Senior Curriculum Designer and Content Developer at *Interpreter Education Online*. Irina is originally from Volgograd, Russia. She and her husband Ed live in Royal Oak, MI. Irina will work with local volunteers Bob

\*With compliments to F.M. Dostoevsky and thanks to John Riedl for suggesting this title.

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## ADMINISTRATIVE UNDERGROUND

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Taylor and Natalia Gormley to arrange the SLD banquet in San Diego and she will also be organizing activities to welcome newcomers to ATA. Contact: [irinajes@live.com](mailto:irinajes@live.com)

**Janja Pavetic-Dickey** is a former UN ICTY staff translator and interpreter, currently specializing in legal and medical translation. With her husband, Stephen M. Dickey, she is the co-editor of the Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian column in *SlavFile*. Janja will be working on outreach to South Slavic translators and interpreters. Contact: [jpgdickey@sunflower.com](mailto:jpgdickey@sunflower.com)

**Elana Pick** is a native Russian speaker, born and raised in the former Soviet Union. She has two master's degrees: in teaching English and in journalism. She also holds the degree of Candidate in Pedagogical Studies from the USSR Academy of Pedagogical Sciences. An ATA-certified EN>RU translator, Certified Medical Interpreter, and court-approved interpreter, she believes the SLD is an excellent vehicle for raising professional standards in the Slavic T&I community and is honored to be invited to serve with her colleagues on our new council. Elana is our immediate past assistant administrator. Contact: [pick.ep@gmail.com](mailto:pick.ep@gmail.com)

**John Riedl** is a freelance translator specializing in medical and technical translation from Russian into English. He began translating fulltime after receiving a Certificate in Translation Studies from the University of Chicago in 2006. Before becoming a translator, he worked in various capacities for corporations such as Alcoa, Kimberly-Clark, and General Electric. He has a BS in Electrical Engineering and an MS in Manufacturing Systems Engineering from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and an MS in Math Education from Brooklyn College. Contact: [jriedl@translatingcultures.com](mailto:jriedl@translatingcultures.com).

**Boris M. Silversteyn** is the current secretary of ATA. He is a past chair of ATA's Divisions and Dictionary Review Committees. He is a Russian and Ukrainian translator and interpreter specializing in science and technology, finance, business, law, and environment. He is an ATA-certified English<>Russian translator and is a grader for ATA's English>Russian and English>Ukrainian certification exams. Contact: [bsilversteyn@comcast.net](mailto:bsilversteyn@comcast.net)

**Lydia Razran Stone**, a Russian to English translator, is a founding member of the SLD and since 1995 has been the editor of *SlavFile*. Within ATA she is currently a member of the Divisions Committee and has served as a member of the Dictionary and Certification Committees. In addition she regularly emcees the annual Literary Division poetry reading. She sees her role on the Leadership Council as providing institutional memory and coordinating with *SlavFile*, the Divisions Committee and the Literary Division. She would also like to continue with her present role as gadfly and advocate for the maximum possible Divisions autonomy within ATA. Contact: [lydiastone@verizon.net](mailto:lydiastone@verizon.net).

**Eugenia Tumanova** will be in charge of the SLD website. She is a full-time freelance translator (Russian & French>English) in New York City. She has held in-house translator and quality assurance positions in large and small agencies but most enjoys translating on legal and medical topics for international organizations and non-profits. A foreign language junkie since age 5, she is now working on her Spanish. In addition to attending to her webmistress duties in her spare time, she likes exploring the local music scene and hiking in the Hudson Highlands. Contact: [eugenia-sld@tumanova.org](mailto:eugenia-sld@tumanova.org)

As you can see, we have an incredibly talented and interesting group of people and I would like to thank them all for agreeing to serve the division in this capacity.

### Activities for the Year

Our major plans for the year include updating the SLD website, creating a LinkedIn group restricted to SLD members, and reaching out to translators and interpreters in all Slavic languages. Eugenia Tumanova has come forward to help with the website. Our hope is to draw more people to the site by making it easier to upload and update content. We plan on incorporating a blog, adding feeds from other Slavic-related websites and blogs of interest, and setting up a bulletin board for the latest news and upcoming events. Todd Jackson will soon start work on creating our LinkedIn group. We hope that this group will become, along with the website, a place where SLD members can share information and discuss ideas and concerns. We would also like to create subgroups for West Slavic and South Slavic T&I professionals.

### 2012 Conference

It is never too early to start planning! We have already extended an invitation to a distinguished speaker, but, as always, the invitation is contingent upon approval from the Board. Also, Irina Jesionowski has started looking into suitable restaurants for our banquet. Finally, anyone who is interested in making a conference presentation should take a look at the 2012 proposal form on the ATA website ([www.atanet.org/conferencesandseminars/proposal.php#how](http://www.atanet.org/conferencesandseminars/proposal.php#how)). The deadline for submitting a proposal is March 12, 2012.

Even though we now have a Leadership Council, we encourage and need participation from everyone. Please do not hesitate to write to me ([russophile@earthlink.net](mailto:russophile@earthlink.net)), John, or anyone on the Council with questions, comments, suggestions, or criticisms about the website, the conference, or anything else that's on your mind! We look forward to working with you over the next two years.

The American Translators Association is now  
accepting presentation proposals  
for the ATA 53rd Annual Conference  
in San Diego, California  
October 24-27, 2012.

The deadline for submitting a proposal is  
March 12, 2012.

# SLD MEETING MINUTES

## Boston, Massachusetts

October 28, 2011

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. Item 10 on the agenda was changed from "Announcement of election results" to "Election of officers," and the agenda was then accepted. The minutes of the 2010 division meeting were approved.

5. **General comments from the administrator – Becky Blackley**

Becky expressed concerns regarding recent changes to the bylaws of the ATA divisions. Specifically, she was concerned that the process had not allowed for adequate and timely input from the divisions themselves. Boris Silversteyn, a member of both the ATA Board and the Slavic Languages Division, volunteered to provide the Board's perspective. Tom Fennell suggested that the issue be addressed later in the meeting using a moderated format, to which Becky and Boris agreed.

6. **Report from the *SlavFile* Editor – Lydia Razran Stone**

Lydia Razran Stone, *SlavFile* editor, reported that four issues had been published this year, and that those issues were a bit longer than average. Lydia praised Galina Raff for her outstanding work on the layout and for deftly managing everyone else's scheduling delays.

Lydia stated that this year she was proudest of the South Slavic issue, which was edited by Janja Pavetić-Dickey. Lydia would love to have a similar West Slavic issue in the coming year.

Lydia expressed appreciation to the *SlavFile*'s contributors and highlighted the conference newcomer's article by Todd Jackson and John Riedl's article, "Big Boxes for Translators," as examples of *SlavFile*'s high-caliber articles.

Lydia reported that Susan Welsh, who writes a film column, is looking for film ideas, particularly newer films and preferably with subtitles. In addition, Martha Kosir, who will regularly coordinate the column "Poetry in Translation," is soliciting contributions of poetry in translation from various Slavic languages. Her next column will be on translations from Polish.

Finally, Lydia noted that she is seeking one or more younger SLD members to intern on the *SlavFile* and eventually become an editor.

7. **Website update – Nora Favorov**

Nora reiterated her plea of previous years for a volunteer to take responsibility for the website. Nora herself does

not have adequate time for the task, and thus the website is somewhat neglected. The volunteer should at a minimum generate content, but ideally would also post the content. [Update: Eugenia Tumanova has volunteered to take over these tasks.]

8. **SLD Activities for 2012**

### **Russian Agency Names Project**

John Riedl, who originated this project, along with Becky Blackley and Nora Favorov, explained that the purpose of the project is to generate standardized translations of Russian agency names. John indicated that the three of them have come up with a list of the names they would like to standardize, as well as examples of current usage, and they have a spreadsheet with various translations and descriptions of the agencies. Next, they will be soliciting help and input. Nora indicated that they are still exploring mechanisms for soliciting and receiving input, for example, using SurveyMonkey. They expect to have an article about this project in the winter issue of *SlavFile* (see page 9).

Tom Fennell suggested doing a similar project to develop guidelines for company names, and perhaps getting an ATA subsection created in Multitran for these and other contributions from the SLD.

### **Banquets**

Local volunteer SLD banquet coordinators were solicited for the upcoming three annual conferences, and were obtained/reaffirmed as follows:

- San Diego 2012 – Bob Taylor and Natalia Gormley
- San Antonio 2013 – Fred Grasso
- Chicago 2014 – Todd Jackson

### **ATA Conference Presentations and Speakers**

Suggestions were solicited for future conference presentations and Greiss lecturers. Susan Welsh requested information on how to find work from Russian companies as direct clients. (See article on page 1.) Several suggestions were made for next year's Greiss lecturer, including Irina Levantin, Sophia Lubensky (whom Lucy Gunderson volunteered to contact), and Andrei Pominov, owner/creator of Multitran.

9. **Additional business/open discussion**  
**ATA Division Bylaw Changes**

An open discussion of the recent division bylaw changes was moderated by Tom Fennell.

Boris Silversteyn, ATA Board member, stated that ATA's bylaws specify that the Board is responsible for establishing divisions and can make changes to division bylaws without soliciting division input. The current changes were initi-

*Continued on page 11*



# The Terminology Consensus Project Takes on Russian Government Agencies

John Riedl, Nora Seligman Favorov, and Becky Blackley

If you haven't heard of the Russian-English Terminology Consensus Project, you're not alone. The project had a debut of sorts at the 2011 ATA conference, where we introduced it at the annual meeting of the Slavic Languages Division. For years, Nora had been trying to generate excitement over the notion that the division could act as a forum for discussing and perhaps even agreeing on optimal translations for smallish Russian>English terminology sets. Over time this idea was greeted with anything from blank stares to rapidly evaporating enthusiasm. Finally Becky and John stepped forward to help put it into action.

## Is this another glossary project?

No. We are trying to harness the intellectual resources of the SLD (that is, its members) to change translation practice. The ideal outcome of this project would be a list of translations that most SLD members accept and use consistently, that translation companies use to make documents consistent, and that our colleagues abroad consider the standard for rendering these names into English. In short, when people go to Multitran for the English translation of the name of a Russian government agency (and perhaps other terms in the future), we want them to look for the SLD recommended translation first. (This category does not yet exist within Multitran, but we hope to establish it.)

Language and consensus are both very complex phenomena, so we all agreed that we had to start with a relatively modest goal and a finite set of terms on which we would try to reach consensus. The set we have decided to start with is the names of the government agencies of the Russian Federation.

The idea is not just for the three of us to agree on how best to translate the terms. We (with the possible assistance of one or two additional volunteers in the future) see our task ahead as follows:

1. To sort through the options and determine which agencies already have well established English names of which we all approve;
2. To identify those agencies whose names are difficult to translate and propose translations for them;
3. To devise a way to get feedback from a fairly large number of our colleagues;
4. To sort through that feedback and reach our own consensus on what, ultimately, is the best choice of translation;
5. To publicize this list through Multitran, the SLD website, and the *SlavFile*.

Inevitably we will learn a lot in this process and, we hope, come up with a fairly authoritative glossary of English-language names for Russian government agencies. If it all goes relatively smoothly, our method can then be

replicated, by us or by others, to tackle difficult terminology sets or the analogous set for U.S. government agency names in Russian.

## How will we decide which translations are optimal?

For now, we have a rough set of criteria to consider in each case:

1. Meaningfulness (including avoidance of ambiguity/double meaning)
2. Linguistic closeness to original/recognizability
3. Conventions of English
4. Dominant general Internet and journalistic usage (Wikipedia, Google, *NY Times*, *Washington Post*)
5. Dominant academic/government/diplomatic usage (Google books, UN, State Dept., etc.)
6. Stated agency preference (website)
7. Our own subjective preferences
8. Brevity

## Challenges

One of the greatest linguistic challenges appears to be the number of cases in which Criteria 2 and 8 come into conflict. Take, for example, one of the agencies that supply the Russian military. The mile-long Russian name, **Федеральное агентство по поставкам вооружения, военной, специальной техники и материальных средств**, is translated on the agency's own English-language website as the Federal Agency for the Procurement of Armaments, Military and Special Equipment, and Logistical Resources. First of all, no agency of the U.S. government comes anywhere close in terms of length (the longest we could find in the seemingly exhaustive list available at [usa.gov](http://usa.gov) was the Federal Interagency Committee for the Management of Noxious and Exotic Weeds, a committee rather than an agency). In English, government agencies are simply not given such long names. Furthermore, since presumably few target audiences would be familiar with this Russian agency, acronyms are of little use, including the sort commonly used in Russia (but not in the United States) that uses syllables rather than letters. According to that system, this agency would be Rosoboronpostavka, an abbreviation found not only in the Russian press, but on many English-language sites dedicated to the study of the Russian military. Even if length were not an obstacle, how could we come up with a translation that is both meaningful and faithful? If we put the agency's own English rendering of their name under the microscope we see several problems:

1. The use of the preposition "for" as a translation for «по». This is a problem (at least we see it as such) in

*Continued on page 10*

the translations of many agency names. If you look at a list of U.S. government entities, you will see very few prepositions. True, we have the Federal Bureau of Investigation, but for the most part agencies express their functions through a string of denominal adjectives to modify the sort of body they are: the Federal Communications Commission; the Farm Service Agency; the Defense Contract Management Agency, etc. Both for purposes of brevity and elegance, it would be desirable to get rid of the “for,” but if we decide to try to translate every word in this agency name, will it really be possible to have such a long string of modifiers? The Federal Armaments, Military and Special Equipment, and Logistical Resources Procurement Agency?

2. If we do indeed decide it’s necessary to respect the spirit of elaboration with which this agency was named, then we must ask ourselves just how one would describe the equivalent range of authorities in English. A host of uncertainties and impulses come to mind:
  - Why does “armaments” (the agency’s own choice for translating вооружение, as seen on their website) sound dated and somehow more sinister than “weapons”? Indeed, thanks to the Google Labs’ [Ngram Viewer](#), we can see that the word is a bit out of fashion, its peak usage having been in the 1940s (the rise in usage for “weapons” has complemented the decline in “armaments”).
  - What exactly is meant by «военной, специальной техники» (military and special equipment)? Multitran offers the translation of “defense technology” (it also offers “enginery”!), but we’re not so wet behind the ears as to fall for that one. Google “defense technology” and you’ll get a lot of information about cutting edge, high-tech weapons and systems. Plug «военная техника» into Yandex, and you’ll run into a bunch of trucks and other vehicles of the air, sea, and land. Presumably the Russian Defense Ministry has official definitions of these terms, and we should certainly read them before finalizing our translation. But whether or not we should strive to be more descriptive than “military and special equipment” is the sort of philosophical question we will undoubtedly be debating over the course of this project.
  - The same goes for «материальные средства». What exactly are they? Should we trust the agency’s “logistical resources”? And how do these resources differ from “special equipment”?
  - And in the end, should our translation – in keeping with Western conventions and in sympathy with the poor newspaper reporter mentioning this agency in passing in an article with a different focus – be a name that is briefer and more concise?

Another example of a “problem child” – our affectionate

term for agency names that are tricky to translate – is the **Аппарат Правительства Российской Федерации**, which, if we decide to use the calque “apparatus,” would be translated as the Apparatus of the Government of the Russian Federation. Deciding whether or not to simply use “apparatus” is not straightforward. In favor of this choice are the following: (a) the fact that it would be crystal clear what agency of government is being referred to; (b) the fact that this word can be used in English to denote more or less the same thing as it does in Russian (Merriam Webster’s definition 3a offers us “the machinery of government”); and (c) the fact that there is no analogous institution within the United States government. Working against it are (a) the translator’s deeply ingrained fear of false friends and (b) the term’s baggage, much of it carried over from the Soviet era, when the term “party apparatus” was a common way of referring to the Communist Party machine that largely ran the USSR.

Then there are issues of consistency. It is highly desirable to shorten the longer agency names to the extent possible without sacrificing meaningful information. Do we really lose anything by translating **Федеральная служба по надзору в сфере защиты прав потребителей и благополучия человека** as the “Federal Consumer Protection and Human Welfare Service” rather than the “Federal Service for Oversight in the Area of the Protection of Consumer Rights and the Wellbeing of Man”? But consider this: there are six government “services” that use the (by English standards) extremely wordy formulation «Федеральная служба по надзору в сфере...». In most cases they monitor the implementation of policy and regulations devised by a particular ministry. So, for example, in the case of the **Федеральная служба по надзору в сфере образования и науки** (the Federal Service for Oversight in the Area of Education and Science, or, more succinctly, the Federal Education and Science Oversight Service), there is a «вышестоящая структура», a governmental body higher up the organizational chart, namely, the Ministry of Education and Science. While it might be perfectly clear that a Federal Consumer Protection and Welfare Service’s main job is monitoring, it will not necessarily be clear to the uninformed reader that the Federal Education and Science Service’s job is overseeing implementation of Ministry policy. The point here is that we will have to decide whether or not it is important to always translate “Федеральная служба по надзору в сфере” the same way, even if different cases require greater degrees of elucidation.

### **That’s nice. So, how does this concern me?**

Standardization will ultimately make our jobs as translators and editors easier as well as enhance the status of the SLD brand (and our certifications) in the worldwide marketplace.

*Continued on page 11*

For example, currently, if you search the name of a Russian Government Agency in Multitran, you will likely get a list of plausible translations and a few “stinkers.” Although these alternatives give us freedom to find just the right translation for a given situation, the absence of standard translations causes extra coordinating and editing work at every point in the translation chain, especially for multi-translator projects. When this coordination and editing fails, end clients are forced to decide whether similar names in a translation actually refer to different agencies or are just variant translations. We have to ask ourselves why they would pay a premium to have their translations done by native speakers (or even live persons) if they still have to sort through inconsistencies.

The stinkers reflect poorly on us as well. Whenever a “rogue” translator translates “Министерство внутренних дел” as “Ministry of the Interior,” the end client is left wondering whether Google translate would have been a better and less expensive option. Standardization is something computers do very well.

Like it or not, when choosing between translation options, end clients can only evaluate final products. They cannot evaluate us as individual translators, and the mistakes of a single member of a translation team reflect poorly on everyone involved. Standardization is one way that SLD members can ensure that the final product seen by end clients is the highest quality possible. We cannot rely on editors provided by translation companies to “edit in quality” (in this case by editing in consistency).

### **How can I help?**

We are currently setting up the project and will be asking members for input soon. Some time next spring we will be ready to propose a set of names and will want a pool of translators to participate in an online survey (via survey-monkey). Please contact us if you would like to be included, or if you have what you consider a reliable list of agency names. Also, if you have any questions or comments, we’d be glad to hear them.

Nora, John, and Becky can be reached at the following addresses respectively: [norafavorov@gmail.com](mailto:norafavorov@gmail.com); [jriedl@wi.rr.com](mailto:jriedl@wi.rr.com); and [beckyblackley@gmail.com](mailto:beckyblackley@gmail.com).

**For those who might have missed it, we recommend Boris Silversteyn’s review of the *New English-Russian Dictionary of Electronics* published in the January 2012 issue of *The ATA Chronicle*.**

ated primarily to achieve greater consistency among the divisions. Among the significant changes were: 1) establishing that all divisions would have an administrator, an assistant administrator, and a leadership council, with the latter being created because some divisions also had other positions such as secretary and treasurer; and 2) limiting elected officials to two consecutive terms. Boris also noted that he had insisted that contested elections continue to be permitted, although the default procedure now involves a single candidate for each office elected by acclamation.

Lydia Razran Stone stated that she had been a member of the division committee, but had experienced an e-mail issue and thus had not received Boris’ emails on the proposed changes (and therefore also had not sent them on to Becky). She was concerned that having uncontested elections as a default created the appearance of non-democracy and wanted to make sure that potential second candidates had access to information about how they could put their names forward. At the request of Irina Knizhnik, Boris Silversteyn defined election by acclamation. Becky Blackley restated her original concerns, namely that while the content of the proposed bylaws [Governing Policy for Divisions] did not seem objectionable, she objected to the lack of division input earlier in the process.

### **Translation Forum Russia 2011**

Maksym Kozub described Translation Forum Russia 2011, a translators’ conference held in September in St. Petersburg. Several additional members of the SLD – Becky Blackley, John Riedl, and Galina Raff – had attended the Forum, and the translators from the RF in attendance were pleased to have been joined by representatives of the ATA. John Riedl said there will be an article in *SlavFile* about the conference.

### **10. Election of officers**

Lucy Gunderson ran uncontested for Administrator; John Riedl ran uncontested for Assistant Administrator. Both were elected by acclamation.

### **11. Introduction of newcomers**

As a continuation of additional business/open discussion, first-time attendees and newcomers to the SLD were invited to introduce themselves.

The meeting was adjourned.

## Maria Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska

Translation and introduction by Marie J. Hall

Maria Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska was born Maria Kosak in 1891 in Krakow. A privileged daughter of a famous family of artists, Maria was educated privately and brought up in a home that one writer described as a “great, slightly disintegrating ark.” She was exposed to a circle of intellectuals, which gave her a solid background in art and philosophy but left her imagination free and uninhibited.

Maria died in 1945 in Manchester, England. In an introduction to her work, Krzysztof Cwikliński writes: “She, so elegant, so attached to beauty, the creation of which was the reason for her existence, left the world in a hospital room smelling of carbolic acid, with smoking chimneys hiding the sun outside her window and cotton mill machinery drowning out the song of birds.”

Her poetry was first published in 1922 and made her the first woman poet to win complete acceptance in the Skamander group of Polish poets, a group with a following and influence similar to that of the Bloomsbury circle of Virginia Woolf. “Startling originality,” a book-jacket phrase applied to Emily Dickinson, would apply just as well to this poet. Her work, which seems effortless and playful at times,

Maria Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska  
self-portrait with an elf on her hand



is most serious in its juxtaposition of ideas. Her perceptive observation of nature and her use of color produce a forceful visual impact.

In the translations below I have followed the example of Vladimir Nabokov in his translation of Pushkin’s poetry (Aleksandr Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin*, Princeton Univ. Press, 1975). I make no attempt to copy meter or rhyme. I believe that the ideas Maria Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska expresses so well are strong enough to stand on a precise, smooth English version that follows the layout of her poetry.

The translator, Marie J. Hall, is a life member of ATA. She can be reached at [mjhall1126@comcast.net](mailto:mjhall1126@comcast.net) <mjhall1126@comcast.net>

Original English translations of poems in any Slavic language are welcome. Send them to Martha Kosir at [KOSIR001@gannon.edu](mailto:KOSIR001@gannon.edu)

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### SEN

Iść przez sen ku tobie,  
w twe słodkie ręce obie...  
przez pola długie ogromnie,  
sadzone w rzędy doniczek...  
samyh niebieskich konwalii  
i szafirowych goryczek...  
...przejsć przez jezioro nieduże,  
zrobione z drewnianej balii...  
i trochę nieprzytomnie  
iść dalej przez bór ciemny, w którym kwitną róże,  
lecz w którym się nie pali ani jedna świeca...  
gdzie straszy stary niedźwiedź dziecinny z za pieca,  
dziś przerobiony na kota...  
i widzieć w oddali już twoją psią budę  
z kryształu, blachy i złota...  
przedrzeć się z trudem poprzez dziwną grudę...  
jeszcze ten rów przebyć...  
– potknąć się i już nie być.

### SLEEP

To pass through sleep to you,  
into your sweet embrace...  
over enormous fields,  
with rows of urns...  
of most heavenly lily of the valley  
and sapphire gentians...  
...to go across a small lake  
made of a wooden tub ...  
and half consciously to go on  
through a dark forest blooming with roses,  
in which not even one candle burns...  
where an old teddy bear lurks behind a stove,  
transformed just now into a cat ...  
and see in the distance your doghouse  
made of crystal, tin and gold...  
to tear with great difficulty through  
that strange wilderness...  
then to cross a ditch...  
– trip – and be no more.

---

### ZMIERZCH NA MORZU

Wybrzeże coraz bledsze  
w liliowej półżalobie  
i żaglowiec oparty na wietrze,  
jak ja na myśli o tobie.

### TWILIGHT AT SEA

The shore grows ever more pale  
in half-mourning mauve  
and the sailboat leans on the wind,  
as I lean on thoughts of you.

Continued on page 13

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STAROŚĆ

Leszczyna się stroi w fioletową moreę,  
a lipa w atlas zielony najgładszy...  
Ja się już nie przebiorę,  
na mnie nikt nie popatrzy.

Bywają dziwacy,  
którzy z pokrzyw i mleczków składają bukiety,  
lecz gdzież są tacy,  
którzy by całowali włosy starej kobiety?

Jestem sama,  
Babcia mi na imię –  
czuję się jako czarna plama  
na tęczowym świata kilimie.

OLD AGE

The hazelnut wears violet moiré,  
the linden, in smoothest green satin ...  
but I will not dress up any more,  
no one will look at me.

There are strange people  
who make bouquets of nettles and milkwort,  
but where are those  
who would kiss the hair of an old woman?

I am alone,  
“Granny” they call me –  
I feel like a black stain  
on the rainbow tapestry of the world...

---

ŻAGŁÓWKA

Piękne są ruchy barki żaglowej,  
z potęgą  
oddanej falom. Idzie, oparta na szkwale,  
jak młoda zakonnica w płóciennym habicie,  
która całą postacią, rozkwitną i tęgą,  
opiera się na Bogu szumiącym w błękicie –  
z dnia przepływając w dzień,  
jak z fali w fale...

THE SAILBOAT

Beautiful are the movements of a sailboat,  
strong,  
yet yielding to the waves.  
Leaning on the squall,  
like a young nun in a linen habit,  
her whole body, full-blown and strong,  
leans on God, thundering in the blue –  
it sails from day to day,  
from wave to wave...

---

WYBRZEŻE

Medusy rozrzucone niedbale,  
muszle, które piasek grzebie,  
i ryba opuszczona przez fale  
jak serce moje przez ciebie.

THE SHORE

Jellyfish carelessly strewn,  
mussels buried in sand,  
a fish abandoned by the waves  
like my heart abandoned by you.

---

LA PRÉCIEUSE

Widzę cię w futro wtuloną,  
wahającą się nad małą kałużą,  
z chińskim pieskiem pod pachą, z parasolem i z różą...  
I jakżeż ty zrobisz krok w nieskończoność?

LA PRÉCIEUSE

I see you snuggled in your fur,  
hesitating over a small puddle,  
with a Pekinese on your arm,  
with a small parasol and a rose...  
How ever are you going to take the step into eternity?

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## FANTASTIC OPPORTUNITY FOR LITERARY TRANSLATORS

### APPLICATION DEADLINE FEBRUARY 15

**Banff International Literary Translation Centre (BILTC)**

**Program dates: June 4, 2012 - June 23, 2012**

**Application deadline: February 15, 2012**

Inspired by the network of international literary translation centres in Europe, the Banff International Literary Translation Centre (BILTC) is the only one of its kind in North America. The primary focus of the residency program is to afford working and professional literary translators a period of uninterrupted work on a current project, within an international community of their colleagues. The program is open to literary translators from Canada, Mexico, and the United States translating from any language. This program is designed for literary translators who have published at least one

book-length literary translation or the equivalent thereof. If you are looking for a focused time to work on a current literary project, and an opportunity to connect with other literary translators from around the world, this residency is for you.

**Translators accepted into the program will receive an award to cover the full program fee**, including meals and single room accommodation at The Banff Centre for the duration of the program. For further details and application instructions see [www.banffcentre.ca/programs/program.aspx?id=1217&p=fees](http://www.banffcentre.ca/programs/program.aspx?id=1217&p=fees)



## WORDBUZZ: Let's Talk Politics

Yuliya Baldwin

The **2012 Russian presidential elections** are to be held on March 4, 2012. In 2011 the democratic world was shocked by the unsophisticated (if candid) response of Medvedev to the question: «Кто будет президентом России в 2012 году?» (Who is going to be the president in 2012?). He blurted out the following gem, sure to be quoted for years to come: «Мы с Владимиром Владимировичем сядем, договоримся и вместе решим, кто будет президентом в 2012 году.» (Vladimir Vladimirovich and I will sit down, talk about it, and together decide who will be the president in 2012). The agonizing suspense was terminated in October 2011 when Vladimir Putin formally announced that he was running for president while Medvedev coyly declined to run. The moment Putin's decision to reclaim his old Kremlin office was made public, Russia's 2012 presidential elections were effectively over (or so it seemed at the time). Yet, major newspapers and government TV channels have been duly molding political "Potemkin villages" (**потёмкинские деревни**) – hollow façades of stale words and ideological clichés – to keep up appearances (and to drive the people crazy). The election season is full of political idioms, most of which are created by the media, political junkies, and politicians, and a few have been inherited from Soviet times. Take a gander at the list of oft-used terminology and political clichés (политические клише) related to elections and electoral campaigns in Russia:

**абсентеизм** (*уклонение избирателей от участия в голосовании на выборах*) (rate or phenomenon of) abstention from voting  
**агитация** campaigning  
**баланс политических сил** balance of political power  
**баллотироваться** run for office  
**баллотироваться в президенты** run for president/presidency  
**«вашингтонский обком»** (*воображаемый партийный орган в столице США, сходный с обкомами КПСС в СССР, проводящий идеологическую американскую политику в других странах*) Washington Obkom (*an imaginary party committee in Washington, DC, similar to CPSU regional committees that promote pro-American policy outside the USA*)  
**вброс бюллетеней в избирательные урны** ballot box stuffing  
**вербовка сторонников по телефону** telephone canvassing  
**воздержание от выборов** abstention

**вождизм** leaderism (*a policy directed at the affirmation /confirmation of one person in the role of an indisputable or infallible leader*)

**вотум доверия** motion/vote of confidence

**вотум недоверия** motion/vote of no confidence

**вписывать фамилию кандидата в бюллетень** to write-in a candidate

**всеобщее избирательное право** universal suffrage

**выборные технологии** campaign techniques

**выборы** election(s)

**выдвижение кандидата** nomination of candidate; nominate

**генеральная линия партии** general line of the party

**голосование** voting

**голосование за партию/кандидатов одной партии** straight-ticket voting, straight-party voting

**голосование кошельком** dollar voting, voting with your wallet (pocketbook)

**голосование ногами** (*может означать как фактическое перемещение населения из неблагоприятной территории в более благоприятную, так и фигуральное перемещение, как например отказ от членства в какой-либо организации или политической партии*) voting with your feet (used in English only in the second sense)

**голосование по почте** voting by mail, absentee voting

**голосовать** cast a ballot

**Государственная автоматизированная система Российской Федерации «Выборы»** (ГАС «Выборы») State Automated (Voting) System of the Russian Federation "Vybery" (GAS Vybery)

**гражданское соучастие/участие** public participation

**дебаты; дебатировать** debates, to debate

**день выборов** election day

**досрочное голосование** early voting

**жеребьёвка** coin toss, random drawing

**законодательная власть** legislative branch

**закрытый партийный список** closed party list

**избиратель** voter, electorate

**избирательная кабина** polling booth

**избирательная комиссия** election commission

**избирательная система** voting system

**избирательное право** suffrage

**«избирательные» чернила** election ink, electoral stain (*a semi-permanent ink that is applied to the forefinger in order to prevent double voting*)

**избирательный бюллетень** ballot

**избирательный голос, вотум, голосование** vote (a single vote)

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**WORDBUZZ** *Continued from page 14*

**избирательный округ** precinct, election district, constituency district  
**избирательный участок** polling place  
**избирательный ящик/урна, урна для голосования** ballot box, polling box  
**индемнитет** (*привилегия депутатов, заключающаяся в их ответственности за высказывания и действия, связанные с выполнением депутатских функций*) (immunity of legislators from prosecution) indemnity  
**интернет-голосование** Internet voting, online voting  
**испорченный бюллетень** spoiled (invalid) ballot  
**источники финансирования** campaign financing  
**«карусель»** (*это новый термин в русском языке: фальсификация на выборах, при которой специально нанятых людей возят на автобусах от участка к участку для неоднократного голосования*) (bussing voters from polling station to polling station for repeat voting) carousel/merry-go-round voting  
**консенсус** consensus  
**корпоратократия** (*власть корпораций*) corporatocracy  
**коррупцированная власть** governmental corruption  
**коррупционер** corrupt official  
**левые** leftists  
**легитимность политической власти** legitimacy of political power  
**мажоритарная избирательная система** plurality voting system  
**меритократия** (*управление обществом элитой одарённых*) meritocracy  
**«мёртвые души»** ghost voters (*votes associated with the names of dead or fictitious individuals*)  
**местное самоуправление** local (self)government  
**наблюдатель** observer  
**нарушения на выборах** election fraud  
**обязательное голосование** compulsory voting  
**однопартиец** fellow party member  
**опрос общественного мнения** opinion polling  
**открепительный талон** absentee ballot  
**открытый партийный список** open party list  
**парламентские выборы** parliamentary elections  
**партийная идентификация** (*близость избирателя к той или иной партии*) party identification  
**партийные списки** party lists  
**партийные функционеры** party officers  
**партийный съезд** party convention, party congress  
**партия власти** party of power  
**пассионарии в политике** (*сверхактивные политические деятели, которые действуют нетрадиционно, ставя перед собой цели беспрецедентного характера и формирующие новую идеологию и новые ценности*) political super activists

**питерские** Peterskiye (*Putin's term for those who live in St. Petersburg*)  
**«План Путина»** (*идеологическое клише, которая обозначает политическую и экономическую программу Владимира Путина*) Putin's plan  
**подкуп избирателей** vote buying  
**подсчёт голосов** canvassing  
**показные выборы** rubber-stamp (show, sham) election  
**политическая маргинальность** political marginalization  
**политическая платформа** political platform  
**политическая проститутка** political prostitute  
**политическая элита** political elite  
**политический консультант** political consultant  
**политический лидер** political leader  
**политический плюрализм** political pluralism  
**политический труп** (political) dead meat  
**политическое клише** political cliché  
**политическое мышление** political thought, political thinking  
**политическое отчуждение** political alienation  
**политическое прогнозирование** political forecasting  
**политическое цунами** political tsunami  
**политолог** political scientist  
**правые** rightists  
**правящая партия** ruling party  
**правящая политическая элита** ruling political elite  
**праймериз, первичные выборы** primary election, primaries  
**предвыборная [избирательная] кампания** election campaign  
**предвыборная речь** campaign speech  
**предвыборное мероприятие** campaign event  
**предвыборные дебаты** election debates  
**предполагаемый кандидат** presumptive candidate  
**продажная пресса** corrupt media  
**пропорциональная избирательная система** proportional representation  
**протестный голос** blank [protest] vote  
**против всех** (*данный пункт исключен из бюллетеней в России*) none of the above (NOTA)  
**процентный барьер** (*на выборах*) election threshold  
**псефология** (*наука о выборах*) psephology (*study of elections*)  
**разделение властей** separation of powers  
**регистрация избирателей** voter registration  
**референдум** referendum  
**собрание сторонников политической партии, кокус** caucus  
**список избирателей** poll list, electoral register, electoral roll

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**тайное голосование** secret ballot  
**тандем** (о Путине и Медведеве) tandem  
**тёмная лошадка** dark horse  
**фальсификация итогов выборов**  
 falsification of election results  
**фракция** faction  
**харизма** charisma  
**«хромая утка»** (президент, который, доработав оставшуюся часть своего срока, уйдет с должности) lame duck

**целевые индикаторы** target indicators  
**Центральная избирательная комиссия Российской Федерации (Центризбирком)**  
 Central election commission of the Russian Federation  
**эксит-полл, опрос на выходе с участков** exit poll  
**электорат** electorate, voters  
**электронное голосование** electronic voting, e-voting  
**элитология** study of elites  
**явка избирателей** voter turnout

Главные российские политические партии Major Political Parties of Russia		
Партия/Party	Члены/Members	Девиз/Slogan
<b>Единая Россия</b> United Russia ( <i>Yedinaya Rossia</i> )	<b>единороссы, медведи</b> <i>yedonorossy, bears</i>	<b>Единство, духовность, патриотизм (2010)</b> Unity, spirituality, patriotism
<b>КПРФ (Коммунистическая партия России)</b> Communist Party of Russia	<b>коммунисты</b> <i>Communists</i>	<b>Россия! Труд! Народовластие! Социализм!</b> Russia! Labor! Democracy! Socialism!
<b>ЛДПР (Либерально-демократическая партия России)</b> Liberal Democratic Party of Russia	<b>жириновцы</b> <i>zhirinovtsy</i>	<b>Россия – и для русских тоже!</b> Russia is also for Russians!
<b>Патриоты России</b> Patriots of Russia		<b>Патриотизм выше политики!</b> Patriotism above politics!
<b>Правое дело</b> Right Cause ( <i>Pravoye delo</i> )	<b>праводелы</b> <i>right-causists</i>	<b>Если вы против всех – голосуйте за «Правое Дело»!</b> If you are against all – vote for the “Right Cause”!
<b>Справедливая Россия</b> Just Russia ( <i>Spravedlivaya Rossia</i> )	<b>справроссы, эсэры</b> <i>spravrosy, Esers</i>	
<b>Яблоко (Российская объединённая демократическая партия)</b> “Yabloko” Russian United Democratic Party	<b>яблочники</b> <i>yablochniki</i>	<b>Свобода и справедливость!</b> Freedom and justice!

In the absence of genuine politics, the main job of the Kremlin’s spin-doctors is to imitate political activity in order to stop the crowd from ignoring elections altogether. Parties are engineered for all tastes: nationalist, liberal, Communist (see chart above) with my personal favorite – a populist movement calling itself “**наХ-наХ: Голосуй против всех!**” Send them all to Hell. Vote against them all.

In a country of 140 million people with vast demographic, economic and regional problems, elections ought to be a serious affair. Yet, once again, the outcome is almost predetermined, as Russian voters know well; in reality, there are no actual choices in «**выборы**» 2012, but one «**выбор**». Most likely, Vladimir Putin will return to the Kremlin «**на белом коне**» (as the victor) and usurp presidential power for another 12 years! For many Russians the only way to cope with this political farce, uncontrollable corruption and brazen bureaucracy in power is to seek comfort in humor and jokes like this one:

У кандидата спрашивают:  
 - Почему вы решили баллотироваться?  
 - Да вы посмотрите, что творится! Власть погрязла в роскоши, коррупции, безделье!  
 - А, так вы хотите со всем этим бороться?  
 - Ну что вы! Я хочу во всем этом участвовать!  
 (The candidate is asked:  
 Why have you decided to run for office?  
 Just look around, what’s going on! The government steeped in luxury, corruption, idleness!  
 Oh, you want to deal with all this?  
 Oh, no! I want to participate in all of it!)

Editor’s note: This article was written in early November, and does not reflect the more recent developments relating to the Russian electoral process.  
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# SLAVFILE LITE: NOT BY WORD COUNT ALONE

Lydia Razran Stone

First, some old business. I am happy to report that I received four (possibly an unprecedented number) letters in response to my fall column. First my old friend Michael Conner wrote in response to my “War and Peace in the comics” theme and suggested Googling “Peanuts War and Peace,” which evidently yields 350K hits, including a reference to a story line in which Snoopy the beagle is attacking the classic at a rate of one word a day.

The next response pertained to my riddle: *In what way are translators and interpreters, on one hand, and turtles and tortoises, on the other, alike?* Answer as printed in the fall *SlavFile*: *English is the only one of many (I am not qualified to say all) European languages that distinguishes between the members of these pairs with separate nouns.* Well, astonishingly polyglot reader Tom West politely pointed out that my answer was wrong, or at least overly broad. Both French and Spanish do have a word for interpreter – *interprète*, and *intérprete*, respectively. Although I speak and read these languages, after a fashion, I had never heard either word that I recall. Well, whose fault is that? My column furthermore speculated on whether the same could be said of the distinction between fingers and toes. Tom also told me of the French word for toes, *orteils*, which I likewise found unfamiliar. Germanic languages also distinguish between translators and interpreters and fingers and toes, but I am pleased to say (I have to be right at least some of the time) German has only the one noun for both turtle and tortoise. I would have eliminated English’s Germanic cousins in my original riddle if I had thought about it. Well, no more riddles, I guess – at least none not checked out with the experts.

One of my favorite correspondents, Kim Braithwaite, writes to tell me that the Amharic word for beans, *fasolya*, comes from the Greek, although quite likely, as I hypothesized, through Italian. He reminds me of the immigrant pronunciation of the dish *pasta fazool*, for some reason considered humorous. Kim, Christina Sever and Henry Christoffers answered my request for the name of a Russian etymological dictionary by telling me about the dictionary by Max Vasmer, published originally in German but eventually translated into Russian and published in the USSR in 1964-1973. To my delight, I found this dictionary online in Russian on the Tower of Babel website (<http://starling.rinet.ru/main.html>). Thank you Kim, Christina and Henry.

The mention of this dictionary reminded me of something. When I was attending graduate school in Slavic Literature at the University of Chicago, we were taught by an erudite, fascinating, and benevolent (but somewhat absent-minded) Polish linguist called Zbigniew Goląb. Although one could get a great deal of use and interest from his lectures, one had to be aware that he apparently generated English by applying a long series of rules to proto-European. He frequently did not distinguish between Latin

and English, and even more often between various, to him virtually identical, Germanic languages. Once I appeared in his office to take an Old Church Slavonic oral exam, for which I had studied assiduously, preparing to discuss the OCS version of a Bible passage in all its etymological and syntactic complexity. After a bit of this, I asked Professor Goląb an evidently abstruse, etymological question. Delighted, he rushed over to look the point up in a book and quoted the answer to me in German. He then proceeded to discuss the issue with me in that language, looking mildly surprised when I tried to tell him that I did not speak the language. After about a half hour of this he gave me an A, evidently impressed by the erudite remarks that had been made during my exam period (none of which were made by me, needless to say). It would have been the easiest A I ever got, if only I had not studied. After hearing from Kim, Christina and Henry, I am convinced that the book that played the key role in this incident was the one by Vasmer—not yet translated out of German. I do not know why this tied up loose end should please me so much, but it does.



Kim Braithwaite, not only a language and dictionary expert, but a poet, has sent us this translators’ anthem.

## Translator’s Delight or Sing a Song of Syntax (tune: “Sing a Song of Sixpence”)

Sing a song of syntax  
That’s tangled and arcane.  
It’s in a foreign language--  
A challenge to the brain.

It’s by an academic--  
Pompous and prolix.  
The client wants it done today  
And in his hands by six.

See how the fearless translator,  
Skillful and serene,  
Renders all that gibberish  
Legible and clean.

He sighs with satisfaction  
At the close of day.  
Now all he has to do is wait  
A month or two for pay!

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## On localizing poems:

For years I have heard the concept of localization mentioned in the context of technical translation, but I never really considered that it was relevant to my own

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## SLAVFILE LITE

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literary translations. I discovered I was wrong when I confronted the task of translating the classic Russian children's poem "Вот какой рассеянный" ("Oh, What an Absent-Minded Fellow") by the brilliant and prolific Samuel Marshak. The problem was that this poem has a rhymed refrain that translates literally as, *Oh, what an absent-minded fellow/From Basin (or maybe Swimming Pool) Street*. Well, I found that I simply could not translate this into anything suitable. To compound the difficulty, the poem goes on to cite and rhyme the names of a number of railroad stations between Leningrad and Moscow, which do not rhyme with anything in English and would be unintelligible to U.S. child readers. Finally I decided that if I was to translate this poem at all, I would have to localize it – quite literally. After I had moved my hero from Leningrad to Hackensack NJ (a name I considered hilarious as a child), and his destination from Moscow to Boston, my mission, unlike his, was readily accomplished. I am not including the Russian version of this poem here (it is easily available on the web), but here is the localized English.



Absentminded Hector Thwack,  
From the town of Hackensack,  
Got up shortly after dawn.  
Grabbed a shirt and put it on,  
What? No neckhole for his head?  
Whoops, he'd grabbed his pants instead!

Absentminded Hector Thwack,  
From the town of Hackensack,  
Snatched a coat to go outdoors  
His daughter said, "That's mine, not yours.  
Those leggings too belong to me.  
That's why they won't pull on, you see!"

Absentminded Hector Thwack,  
From the town of Hackensack,  
On his head, oh no, what's that?  
A frying pan and not a hat!  
He put the socks his wife had knit  
Upon his hands – they almost fit.

Absentminded Hector Thwack,  
From the town of Hackensack,  
Caught the trolley to the station,  
Climbed on board and paid the fare,  
Then began an explanation  
Making sure that he got there.

"Honored Mister Ticket Taker,  
Would you do me a big favor?  
Honored Tister Micket Maker,  
Could you woo me a fig bavor?"

"I must catch a train for Boston,  
From the station on the square,  
Kindly hasten to the station.  
Top the strolley when we're there."

The ticket taker gaped and stared –  
The trolley stopped at station square.

Absentminded Hector Thwack,  
From the town of Hackensack,  
Tried to buy a ticket from  
Someone selling snacks and gum;

He then ran to the ticket booth.  
To get a Coke and Baby Ruth.

Absentminded Hector Thwack,  
From the town of Hackensack,  
Ran to his platform, went too far  
Up to a stopped, uncoupled car  
Hauled in bags and sacks and cases,  
Stowed them in outlandish places,  
Took a seat, took off his shoes,  
Yawned and fell into a snooze.

At dawn he woke and looked outside.  
"What station have we reached?" he cried.  
From the platform they called back  
"The station here is Hackensack."

So he went to sleep once more,  
Slept three hours, maybe four,  
Looked outside and saw a station,  
Called in search of information.

"What station have we reached this time?  
Mystic Seaport? Groton? Lyme?"  
From the platform they called back,  
"The station here is Hackensack."

So he went to sleep once more,  
Slept three hours maybe four,  
Looked outside and saw a station,  
Called in search of information.

"What is this station we are in?  
Boston? Braintree? Saugus? Lynn?"  
From the platform they called back,  
"The station here is Hackensack."

Hector Thwack said broken hearted,  
"Alas, I've come back where I started!  
Two days' travel; but I'm back!  
This train's come back to Hackensack."

Absentminded Hector Thwack,  
From the town of Hackensack!

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### SLAVFILE SEEKING YOUNG BLOOD (WHO ARE WE TO IGNORE THE VAMPIRE FAD?)

We are looking for an editorial intern (or two) for our publication.

This is a volunteer position that would bring you visibility in the Slavic translator community as well as the opportunity to hone your editorial skills, all while taking satisfaction in improving a newsletter read by many of your colleagues.

We will be open to your suggestions on how to better produce and promote the publication. You would immediately become a member of *SlavFile's* Editorial Board (think of that on your resume!).

Contact: [lydiastone@verizon.net](mailto:lydiastone@verizon.net)

When I finished the above I thought I would never need to localize again, but this summer, while looking for additional Okudzhava songs for the ATA presentation Vladimir

Kovner and I were going to make, I came upon the following poem, which appealed to me greatly.

<p>Не пробуй этот мед: в нем ложка дегтя. Чего не заработал — не проси. Не плюй в колодец. Не кичись. До локтя всего вершок — попробуй укуси.</p>	<p>Do not taste this honey, it contains a spoonful of tar. Do not ask for what has not been earned. Don't spit in the well. Don't boast. Your elbow's Just inches away – but just try to bite it.</p>
<p>Час утренний — делам, любви — вечерний, раздумьям — осень, бодрости — зима... Весь мир устроен из ограничений, чтобы от счастья не сойти с ума.</p>	<p>The morning hour's for work, the evening's for love; Contemplation's for autumn and boldness for winter. The world is built on limitations, So that we do not lose our mind from happiness.</p>

I realized that the first six lines of the poem contained a list of traditional Russian “don'ts” that, with the exception of don't spit in the well, would not evoke an immediate response from English readers. No matter – English has plenty of “don't's” of its own. Indeed, there was no need to limit myself to 8 lines if there were more I wanted to list. So, my original rendition contained 17 stanzas, whereupon Vladimir, consulted by email, told me I was being self-indulgent (and I was), so I shortened my “translation” to the following six. Self-indulgent or not, if anyone wants to see the current 22 stanza version (I answer to obsessive as well), simply contact me.

Do not enter; do not pass;  
Graven idols worship not;  
Covet not your neighbor's ass;  
Nor his wife, though she be hot.

Do not loiter; do not touch;  
Do not cheat on income taxes;  
Do not hope for over much;  
Don't have sex sans prophylaxis.

Don't bite off what can't be chewed;  
Of the dead do not speak ill;  
Leave gift horses' mouths unviewed;  
Do not cry when milk is spilled.

Don't believe all that you read;  
Judge the book and not the cover;  
Do not bite the hands that feed;  
If you're wed, don't take a lover.

Do not rush to count your chicks;  
Don't put horses after carts;  
What's not broken, do not fix;  
When in public, stifle farts.

Do not lust – you risk perdition;  
Do not take God's name in vain.  
Life is full of prohibition,  
Lest from joy we go insane.

Tired of my translated poetry? Submit your own. See Martha Kosir's column on page 12. Happy New Year, everyone!

**HAPPY 2012 TO ALL! NEW YEAR'S VERSE FROM SLD MEMBERS**

From Vladimir Kovner:

**Кто две, а кто пять тысяч лет,  
Желают всем одно и то же:  
Good Health! Good Cheer! Good Luck! – Похоже,  
Что лучше пожеланий нет!**

Kim Braithwaite, translator of Russian and Georgian, and frequent contributor of verse to SlavFile pages, sent us two verses, one he says he sends only to his more rowdy wishees.

**A WINTER'S WISH**

**(music available on request)**

May the Season treat you right -  
May Good Fortune give you a Hug -  
May you be Happy, Healthy and Snug -  
And your Prospects bright!  
—and may all your new year's resolutions be frivolous!!—

January 1, 2012

Does your New Years feel ROTTEN and BLEAR?  
Then resolve to shun Cheese Dip next year!  
'Cos the WHISKEY was fine -  
And so was the WINE -  
And it couldn't have been the \*hic!\* BEER !

# IDIOM SAVANTS: Russian Idioms from the World

## of Sports and Games

Vladimir Kovner and Lydia Stone

Some years ago in response to a suggestion at an SLD meeting we decided to compile an English-Russian dictionary of American sports idioms used in daily life, with the particular purpose of helping Russian interpreters who encounter such idioms during their assignments. We found more than 1000 of them. When we looked for analogous Russian idioms, we expected fewer of them, but not so many fewer – scarcely more than a 100 in total. There are numerous possible and plausible reasons for this discrepancy. Vladimir sees the primary reason as the differing roles played by sports in U.S. and Soviet/Russian society. Lydia assigns more weight to the individualistic and competitive nature of American society, qualities that lend themselves to sports or game idioms. At any rate, here is a sample of some of the Russian sports-based idioms we found. The list below contains some of the more interesting ones without near analogues in the States, while the table provides English analogues – mostly sports-derived, but also including a couple from the chicken farm (of all places)--of some other Russian sports idioms. For the purposes of idiom selection we have designated hunting, fishing, chess, and cards as sports. For the record, our dictionary has not yet been published. When it is, SlavFile-readers will be among the first to know!

### 1. Дать десять (пару/сто...) очков вперёд:

превосходить кого-либо в чём-либо/в каком-то деле/спорте/ремесле и т.д. Она может дать сто очков вперёд любому специалисту-мужчине. Literally: to spot someone 100 points (and still win). To be able to beat someone with one hand tied behind one's back. With one hand tied behind her back, she could surpass any man specializing in the same field.

### 2. Из спортивного интереса:

просто так/для удовольствия/для интереса. Время от времени он знакомился с девушками на улице из чисто спортивного интереса. Literally: just for sport. Just for the fun (or hell) of it, perhaps also in Russian, if not English, just to see if one can. From time to time he picked up girls on the street, just for the hell of it. A literal translation of the Russian idiom, just (purely, only) out of sporting interest, though not as common as the above equivalent in US English, has the same meaning.

### 3. Чужие лавры спать не дают:

завидовать чужим успехам. Хватит уже говорить о нём! Вам что, чужие лавры спать не дают? Literally: other people's (someone else's) laurels prevent him from sleeping. To suffer from (a bad case of) envy; to be green with envy. That's enough about him. What's the matter with you? Could you be suffering from a bad case of envy? NOTE: this is one of the most appealing of the Russian idioms with no English equivalent. It is an allusion to the

internationally used phrase--in English: to rest on one's laurels; in Russian: почивать на лаврах (to sleep on one's laurels).



4. **Откинуть (отбросить) коньки (жаргон):** умереть. (Из Интернета) Медицина в нашем провинциальном городке была на уровне каменного века. Не мудрено, что он отбросил коньки сразу после операции. Literally: To toss aside (or up) one's skates. To die; kick the bucket; to cash in one's chips; to turn up one's toes. In our provincial town, medicine was at a Stone Age level. No wonder, he died right after the operation. NOTE: while this appears to be a sports idiom akin to the English hang up one's gloves (to retire, as if from a boxing career), research seems to indicate that it is a punning reference to an older idiom with identical meaning, откинуть (отбросить) копыта, literally: to fall hooves up, i.e., die. Support for this idea comes from the use of another variant, откинуть (отбросить) колеса (literally: to fall wheels up), applied to cars that have been totaled.
5. **С места в карьер:** сразу. С места в карьер он заявил, что в такой обстановке работать невозможно. Literally: right into a gallop. Right off the bat, perhaps also in some contexts hit the ground running. Right off the bat, he announced that he could not work under such conditions. Note: interesting case of two sports (horse racing and baseball) generating analogous metaphors.
6. **Ни пуха, ни пера:** пожелание удачи. Каждый раз, когда мы идём сдавать экзамен, мы говорим друг другу: "Ни пуха, ни пера!" Literally: May you shoot neither fur nor feather. Good luck; break a leg. Every time we go to take an examination, we tell each other to "break a leg." The English equivalent of this Russian idiom, which is drawn from hunting, comes from the theater.
7. **На ловца и зверь бежит** (посл.): говорится, когда человеку попадает навстречу (встречается) как раз тот, кто нужен в данный момент (или то, что нужно); иногда эта поговорка используется иронически. Очень хорошо, что Вы пришли. Как говорится, на ловца и зверь бежит. Именно с Вами мне нужно посоветоваться по одному вопросу. Literally: The prey seeks the hunter. Just who or what I needed/wanted to see (possibly used ironically); speaking of the devil and the devil appears. What a great coincidence that you came over. You are just the person who we needed to consult about something.

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- 8. Охотничьи рассказы:** рассказы с сильными преувеличениями. Я думаю, что все его грандиозные истории – ничего больше, чем типичные охотничьи рассказы. Literally: Hunter's tales. Fish stories. I think that all his impressive tales are nothing more than typical fish stories.
- 9. На охоту ехать – собак кормить** (посл.): всё надо готовить во время – не в последнюю минуту. "Она никогда не одевалась вовремя. Но перед самым выездом она, полуголая, мчалась в соседнюю комнату и вихрем пролетала назад. Мария Алексеевна пожимала плечами и уходила к себе недовольная. – На охоту ехать – собак кормить". (Ю.Тынянов. Пуштин.) Literally: If you intend to go hunting, (don't forget to) feed the dogs. Be sure to prepare for (some enterprise) ahead of time, don't put things off until the last minute. *Don't put off fixing the roof until it starts to rain. She never got dressed on time. Right before she had to go, she would dash into the next room half-naked and dash out like a whirlwind. Mariya Alekseyevna would shrug her shoulder and go to her own room in a bad temper. "She never thinks of fixing the roof until it starts to rain."*
- 10. Редко, да метко:** делать что-то редко, но хорошо или как раз то, что надо. *На самом важном экзамене мой сын, довольно средний студент, получил отличную оценку. Вот уж действительно: "Редко, да метко!"*. Literally: (to shoot) rarely, but accurately. Used especially to mean: She doesn't say much but when she does it is always to the point, worth listening to. Possibly also: He really comes through when it is important/when he puts his mind to it/when the chips are down. *My son, quite an average student, got the highest grade on the most important exam. "He doesn't do well often, but when he puts his mind to it, he surprises everyone."*
- 11. Стреляный воробей:** опытный человек, которого так легко не обманешь/на мякине не проведёшь. "Деньги – вперёд,- сказал он: я – стреляный воробей, и никаким обещаниям не верю". Literally: a sparrow who has been shot at before (many times). Someone too experienced to be readily fooled. *A wise old bird; an old hand; someone who has been around, around the block a few times, someone not born yesterday. "The money up front," he said. "I have been around and put no trust in promises."*
- 12. Без труда не вытацишь и рыбку из пруда:** без усилий ничего не добьёшься. *Когда я стал жаловаться, как трудно учить второй язык, отец сказал мне: "Без труда не вытацишь и рыбку из пруда"*. Literally: Without labor, you cannot even haul a fish out of a pond. Nothing worthwhile can be gained without effort. *No pain no gain. When I would start to complain about how hard it was to learn another language, my father would say, "No pain, no gain."*
- 13. На безрыбье и рак рыба** (посл.): лучше хоть что-нибудь, чем ничего. Любая программа лучше, чем ничего. Как говорят: "На безрыбье и рак – рыба". Literally: when there are no fish, a crayfish can be considered a fish. All are fish that come to the net. Any program is better than none. As they say, "all are fish that come to the net." NOTE: The key to understanding this proverb is to remember that in previous centuries shellfish, including lobster, were often considered inferior eating. In the early years of the U.S. and Canada, lobster was fed only to slaves, servants and prisoners and even used as fertilizer.
- 14. Рыбак рыбака видит издалека:** люди, одинаковые по происхождению/по духу/по интересам/единомышленники тянутся друг к другу. Эта поговорка часто употребляется в отрицательном смысле. *Куда бы не поехал мой брат, он мгновенно знакомится с какими-то подозрительными личностями. Рыбак рыбака видит издалека. Birds of a feather flock together; like calls to like; it takes one to know one* (almost always negative). *Wherever my brother went, he immediately met up with suspicious characters just like him. Birds of a feather flock together.*
- 15. Дать пенделя** (пендель – это жаргон для одиннадцатиметрового штрафного удара; penalty kick): дать кому-то под зад. *Дать пенделя или, как иногда говорят, ударить кого-то по "нятой точке"* – любимое занятие мальчишек, а иногда и клоунов. Literally: deliver a penalty kick to someone. Give somebody a (physical) kick in the pants. *Giving each other a kick in the pants is a favorite trick of little boys and sometimes clowns as well.*
- 16. Игра в одни ворота:** полное преимущество одной группы над другой или действие на пользу одной группы против другой. *Статья в журнале для женщин: "Игра в одни ворота, или безответная любовь"*. Literally: Game with only one goal. One-sided affair/contest/play/rout. Title of article in a women's magazine: *One-sided play or unrequited love.*
- 17. Отфутболить:** отвязаться. *Круглого дурака очень трудно отфутболить. Сколько по нему не ударяешь, он возвращается назад, будто ничего не случилось.* Literally: "football-away." Get rid of. *It is very difficult to get rid of a complete idiot. No matter how often you kick him around, he keeps coming back as if nothing had happened.*
- 18. Всё хоккей!** – Всё в порядке (вариация фразы "Всё ОК!"). *Наш сын пришёл из школы с подбитым глазом и на мой немой вопрос бойко сказал: "Всё хоккей!"* Literally: everything is "hockey." (Play on similarity of sound between Russian pronunciation of hockey and OK.) Everything is fine! *Our son came home from school with a black eye and when I looked at him questioningly, bravely said, "Everything is fine."*
- 19. Знал бы прикуп, жил бы в Сочи:** невозможно предугадать заранее, как поступить, чтобы выиграть в жизни; знал бы все секреты, выиграл бы всё на свете / был бы всегда в выигрыше. (Из газеты) *Знал бы прикуп, жил бы в Сочи. Дальновидные москвичи скупают сочинские земли. Через*

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**IDIOM SAVANTS** *Continued from page 21*

несколько лет цены на них взлетят. Literal meaning; If I knew in advance what card was in the kitty (прикуп), I would (go) live in Sochi. If I knew everything in advance, I would always win. The meaning of this idiom depends to an unusual extent on cultural context. Прикуп refers to face down cards that

can be bid for by the players sight unseen to exchange for cards in their hands. The resort of Sochi was evidently the scene of much card playing for money, and thus would have been a lucrative place for someone with extrasensory knowledge of hidden cards to move.

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Russian	Literal	English Equivalent
<b>GENERAL SPORTS</b>		
1. Выиграть по очкам	Win on points	Win on points
2. На своем поле	On one's own field	Home team/home court advantage
<b>BOXING</b>		
3. Девушка-нокаут, женщина-нокаут	(Of a woman) a knockout	A knockout
4. Удар ниже пояса	Strike below the belt	Strike below the belt
<b>TRACK</b>		
5. Бежать, как на стометровку	Run as if in the 100-yard dash	Sprint
6. Второе дыхание	Second respiration	Second wind
7. Передавать эстафету	Pass the baton	Pass the baton
8. Поднять планку	Raise the bar	Raise the bar
<b>HORSE RACING</b>		
9. Грызть удила	Gnaw the bit	Strain (or less common, chafe) at the bit
10. Держать в узде	Keep on a bridle	Keep a tight rein on
11. Поставить не на ту лошадку	Bet on the incorrect horse	Bet on the wrong horse
12. Тёмная лошадка	Dark horse	Dark horse
<b>HUNTING</b>		
13. Делить шкуру неубитого медведя	Divide up the hide of a bear that you have not yet killed	Count your chickens before they hatch
14. Охота на ведьм	Witch hunt	Witch hunt
15. По горячим следам	On a hot trail	Hot on the trail
16. Убить двух зайцев одним ударом	To kill two rabbits with one blow	To kill two birds with one stone
<b>FISHING</b>		
17. Ловить на удочку	To catch on a fishing rod	To reel someone in
18. Ловить на крючок	To catch on a hook	To hook
19. Пойти/попасться на удочку	To be hooked	To be hooked
<b>SOCCER</b>		
20. Забить гол в свои ворота	To kick into your own goal	Own goal
<b>CHESS</b>		
21. Пешка	Pawn	Pawn
22. Ход конём	Knight's move	Shrewd move
23. (Ваши) козыри биты/карта бита	Your trumps (cards) have been beaten	The game is up
<b>CARDS</b>		
24. Выложить/выставить свои козыри	To play one's trumps	To play one's aces
25. Иметь козырь в запасе	To have a trump in reserve	To have an ace up one's sleeve
26. Карты на стол	Cards on the table	To put one's cards on the table
27. Карта пошла	(Someone's) card won	Someone lucked out
28. Не везёт в картах – повезёт в любви	Unlucky at cards – lucky in love	Unlucky at cards – lucky in love
29. Плохой расклад	Bad deal	In the worse case
30. Поставить всё на одну карту	To bet it all on one card	To put all one's eggs in one basket
31. Туз	Ace	Kingpin

# Search-Fu! Finding Terminology on the Internet

Presented by Alex Lane

Reviewed by Susan Welsh



I have attended a fair number of presentations, online and off, about how to find terminology on the Web, but I still waste an enormous amount of time at it. I can easily spend an hour hunting for a term before I find it – or don’t – and give up, post a Kudoz query on Proz.com, or return to it later. I must have 200 bookmarked online glossaries in Russian and German, but most of them are worthless. Or if they just *might* be useful for a specific term, it is too time-consuming to comb through them. My efforts to use the IntelliWebSearch application, which is supposed to batch glossaries and search all of them for you at once, came to naught; the application seems to be particularly flummoxed by Cyrillic.

Alex’s presentation reminded me that people who know what they are doing in Web searches do not have these miserable experiences, or at least they don’t have them so frequently. I highly recommend viewing his presentation on the ATA’s eConference or conference DVD, if you missed it. He is an engaging and knowledgeable speaker.

Alex paraphrased the famous quote from Heraclitus: “No man ever steps into the same Internet twice.” I can certainly vouch for that. A client once told me that she found me by googling for “German-English translator.” I was incredulous, since my experience was that the only way I could find my own website was by putting in virtually everything I know about myself, including my place of birth and my cats’ names. But out of curiosity, I tried it, and she was right! After all the sponsored ads, dictionary hits, and other false flags, there was one of the ATA’s *primo* German financial translators, Ted Wozniak, and then there was... me. There’s no rational explanation for it; when I tried again a few weeks later to see if I’d been hallucinating, I found myself back around page 999 or so, just as before. Go figure.

In fact, the Internet, and Google itself, are changing so rapidly that there would be absolutely no redundancy in having one such presentation at *every* ATA conference. Even those who are relatively adept would learn something, I’m quite sure, and the benefit for novices is obvi-

ous. A simple example of how things have changed since I last looked: Alex explained that putting a + sign in front of a word no longer makes it mandatory, even though I had been using this “trick” for a couple of years. The way to make it mandatory now is to put it in quotation marks – even a single word.

Perhaps for reasons of rapid change, a few of the methods that Alex presented did not work for me when I tried them a month or so after the conference. For example, under his heading, “Dealing with Dates,” the D8Search.com site ignored the recent date information I fed it and gave only old hits, just as “regular Google” did. Although the dropdown menu for dates does not include anything older than one year, the dates on the hits returned to me were older than that. (Google Ultimate Interface came up with a blank screen; but when I tried again today, it was there.)

The most useful concept I gleaned from Alex was to look, not just for the term itself, but for other words that might accompany the term: part numbers, product descriptions, groups of terms, proximate words, a parallel folder structure in another language, etc. Another great idea is to guess at the translation of the term or part of it (for a phrase or compound word), and put both source and target text in the search field. This has proved more helpful at finding bilingual files than my homegrown tactic of adding the word “English” to my search field. That strategy sometimes works, but usually the “foreign” version of a site is quite different from the site in its original language – sometimes just a name, address, and “About Us” paragraph or two.

Also very helpful was the “proximity search”: to specify that you want word *x* within six words of word *y*, you put in the search field: *x* AROUND (6) *y* (the AROUND must be upper case, as shown).

To test how these and Alex’s other methods might affect my work, I used a short list of words or phrases for which I had posted Kudoz questions. Some of them were *знакотехника* (in industry), *исполнительная машина* (in a tract on systems analysis as applied to business management), *в светы* (in a description of a painting at an exhibition). I confess that my results were not stellar; I did better in German with *Federungsgelenk*, which, in the context of mountain bikes, means “ball joint,” in case you ever need to know (I’ll bet you \$5 that you won’t find it in any bilingual dictionary). Ah well, practice makes perfect.

Susan Welsh is a German and Russian into English translator and originated and writes our *SlavFilms* column. She may be reached at [welsh\\_business@verizon.net](mailto:welsh_business@verizon.net).

## Special Search Syntax

- `site:xxx`
  - restricts search to matching sites
  - can be specific or general
- `filetype:xxx`
  - search for files with specified extension (e.g., PDF, TXT, XLS)
- `cache:xxx`
  - where xxx is a URL
  - finds copies of pages

# Coping with Challenges of Simultaneous Interpretation into Russian in Courtroom Settings

Presented by Irina Jesionowski

Reviewed by Natalia Petrova

When I saw Irina Jesionowski's session, "Coping with Challenges of Simultaneous Interpretation into Russian in Courtroom Settings," listed on the ATA conference program, I immediately marked it as one to attend. It is not often that we are offered seminars in simultaneous interpreting for languages other than Spanish, so I was looking forward to Irina's presentation, and I was not disappointed. In Irina's own words (and I completely agree), training interpreters in a language-neutral format is similar to teaching swimming outside of a body of water. She thoroughly enjoys solving the linguistic puzzles unique to English < > Russian translation and interpretation and tries to share her joy with those who come to her sessions. She has encountered many in her work as a conference interpreter, a certified Russian court interpreter, and an interpreter trainer. She also works as a Curriculum Designer and Content Developer at Interpreter Education Online.



Irina started her presentation by asking for a show of hands of those who actually practiced simultaneous interpreting. Approximately half of the audience, including my teenage daughter, was simply curious about the topic, while the other half was represented by active court and conference interpreters. Irina wanted her presentation to be a hands-on, interactive experience, and she offered recorded examples of legal discourse for audience members to try their hands at simultaneous interpretation. We were asked to record our renditions and then analyze them. Next time she might suggest in the program that participants bring a palm recorder or even a smart phone with recording function to her workshop.

The presenter emphasized a key difference between simultaneous conference and court interpreting. In both, interpreters are called upon to produce a dynamic equivalent of a source language unit of meaning in the target language. However if speakers at a conference correct themselves, stutter, mumble or demonstrate other flaws of public speaking, the interpreter will still give what Irina called a "stylistically elegant rendition," while in court, all characteristic elements of an individual's speech, including paralinguistic ones, have to be preserved by the interpreter. In my own experience with interpretation, this difference creates much less drama in the simultaneous mode than in the consecutive one.

Before the audience interpretation practice session, Irina discussed the formulaic or inflexible character of certain types of legal discourse, such as *Advice of Rights*; legal statutes; scripted procedures (plea agreement, acceptance

of plea, jury instructions; sentencing), etc., that we deal with in court most of the time. The Common Law system has developed specific formulas and concepts that are used over and over again; they are expressed by the same set phrases or "устоявшиеся выражения" throughout the U.S. judicial system. *Guilt proved beyond a reasonable doubt; preponderance of evidence; reasonable cause to believe*, etc., are verbal shells for Common Law ideas that are set in stone and, luckily for us, repeated time and again without change; this formulaic language constitutes 80% of legal discourse. However, for good court interpreters to be able to preserve the original register of Russian statements, it is not enough to have the Russian equivalents of such formulas at our fingertips; we also need to be comfortable with colloquial, casual, and even sub-standard language, such as law enforcement or gang member slang, that our material is likely to contain.

I noticed that my daughter was looking at me in awe as I was whispering my Russian rendition of a Michigan judge's *Advice of Rights*, offered by Irina. Even though the Michigan example was slightly different from what I am accustomed to hearing in the courts of NJ and PA, it was essentially the same – a pre-written document that is always read in that judge's courtroom. It reminded me of my early days as a court interpreter in NJ, when I asked every court clerk I could to make extra copies of such documents for me. These can be a great help if you make your own translation version and internalize it for future use, as Irina suggested. In addition to the *Advice of Rights*, Irina played recordings of a *Defense Opening Statement* and Motion to Leave and asked us to identify what was difficult to interpret in each and why, something she called «разбор полетов».

The presentation noted some of the particular challenges of simultaneous interpreting in this or any setting: lack of equivalent concepts; lack of direct and singular equivalents in the target language; interpreter's lack of knowledge of any such equivalents; the fact that the target-language output can be much longer than the source-language utterance; the fact that the source-language meaning may not be clear until the entire sentence is completed, and so on. Such challenges may be surmounted by strategies pertaining to subject-matter proficiency and/or interpreting skills. Irina's suggested strategies to improve subject-matter proficiency follow:

- Coin your equivalents, come up with exact formulas, e.g., Parole – условно-досрочное освобождение

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- Know your «домашние заготовки» – the most compact equivalents, e.g., Misdemeanor – нетяжкое преступление ( вместо более длинного «преступление средней тяжести»)
- Acquire Russian legalese, study Russian legal resources  
Верховный Суд Российской Федерации  
[www.supcourt.ru/mainpage.php](http://www.supcourt.ru/mainpage.php)  
Суды общей юрисдикции РФ <http://gcourts.ru/>  
Уголовный кодекс Российской Федерации  
[www.consultant.ru/popular/ukrf/](http://www.consultant.ru/popular/ukrf/)  
Уголовно-процессуальный кодекс Российской Федерации  
[www.consultant.ru/popular/upkrf/11\\_1.html](http://www.consultant.ru/popular/upkrf/11_1.html)

During the session the Russian translation of the term “probation” sparked a discussion. The suggested renditions were «условное наказание», «условное осуждение» and «испытательный срок». One of the attendees insisted on «испытательный срок», quoting the glossary that had been adopted in their state court. The presenter preferred (and I agree) the first two renditions. She later provided me with the results of her research on the term, which I have incorporated here, as a fine example of the use of resources to improve interpretation renderings (see column to the right).

The suggested strategies to improve simultaneous interpreting skills were as follows:

- Prediction and anticipation (directly related to subject-matter proficiency)
- Decalage increase
- Queuing (making a pause before resuming interpretation)
- Chunking (breaking long passages into shorter segments)
- Compression (count syllables, choose the shortest options)
- Calculated omission (of unnecessary elements)

These and other techniques of simultaneous interpreting are also thoroughly discussed by Erik Camayd-Freixas' in “Cognitive Theory of Simultaneous Interpreting and Training,” a presentation which I unfortunately had to miss because of my concern about the snow storm predicted to hit Boston the final day of the conference. The handout provided by Dr. Camayd-Freixas on the conference CD is a most profound and complete 29-page-long description and analysis of principles and techniques, contrastive syntax prediction, and incremental training methods of simultaneous interpreting.

The final challenge identified by Irina Jesionowski was presentation and delivery. Indeed, interpretation delivery may sometimes suffer from long pauses or false starts, and interpreters may use poor enunciation, or an unpleasant, monotonous tone of voice. The strategies for diminishing such problems were:

- Monitor your output
- Record your renditions
- Practice dramatic reading
- Memorize and recite legal statutes, poetry, famous speeches, and presentations.

Irina recommended systematic practice for 1-2 hours a day to eliminate deficiencies: identify corrective steps and work at one deficiency at a time; set specific practice goals; work with a partner.

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#### Black's Law Dictionary

**probation.** 1. A court-imposed criminal sentence that, subject to stated conditions, releases a convicted person into the community instead of sending the criminal to jail or prison.

#### УК РФ

#### Статья 73. Условное осуждение (выдержки)

1. Если, назначив исправительные работы, ограничение по военной службе, содержание в дисциплинарной воинской части или лишение свободы на срок до восьми лет, суд придет к выводу о возможности исправления осужденного без реального отбывания наказания, он постановляет считать назначенное наказание условным.

2. При назначении условного осуждения суд учитывает характер и степень общественной опасности совершенного преступления, личность виновного, в том числе смягчающие и отягчающие обстоятельства.

3. При назначении условного осуждения суд устанавливает испытательный срок, в течение которого условно осужденный должен своим поведением доказать свое исправление. В случае назначения лишения свободы на срок до одного года или более мягкого вида наказания испытательный срок должен быть не менее шести месяцев и не более трех лет, а в случае назначения лишения свободы на срок свыше одного года - не менее шести месяцев и не более пяти лет. Испытательный срок исчисляется с момента вступления приговора в законную силу. В испытательный срок засчитывается время, прошедшее со дня провозглашения приговора

**Большой юридический словарь (под ред. А.В. Малько). - Проспект, 2009 г.**

#### Условное осуждение

по УК РФ (ст. 73) - одна из форм реализации уголовной ответственности. При условном осуждении назначенное судом наказание в виде исправительных работ, ограничения по военной службе, ограничения свободы, содержания в дисциплинарной воинской части, лишения свободы реально осужденным не отбывается, если: 1) в течение испытательного срока осужденный не совершит нового преступления средней тяжести, тяжкого или особо тяжкого; 2) он не уклонялся от возложенных на него судом обязанностей и не скрывался от контроля. В этих случаях по истечении испытательного срока судимость погашается. Если осужденный совершит в течение испытательного срока поступки, описанные выше, то испытательный срок может быть продлен судом до одного года или суд может отменить условное осуждение и обязать осужденного отбыть назначенное приговором наказание. При совершении условно осужденным в течение испытательного срока умышленного преступления средней тяжести, тяжкого, особо тяжкого, условное осуждение отменяется, суд назначает окончательное наказание по совокупности приговоров. В случае совершения осужденным в течение испытательного срока нового неосторожного или умышленного преступления небольшой тяжести вопрос об отмене или сохранении условного осуждения решается судом. Если до истечения испытательного срока осужденный доказал свое исправление, суд может досрочно по истечении не менее половины испытательного срока отменить условное осуждение и снять с осужденного судимость.

#### ИСПЫТАТЕЛЬНЫЙ СРОК

2) в уголовном праве срок, назначаемый судом при условном осуждении, в ходе которого условно осужденный должен своим поведением доказать свое исправление. При лишении свободы на срок до одного года или более мягкого вида наказания И.с. должен быть не менее шести месяцев и не более трех лет, а при лишении свободы на срок свыше одного года - не менее шести месяцев и не более пяти лет.

# Sing It, Then Throw It Away and Start Over

## Translating Art Songs for Performance: Rachmaninoff's *Six Choral Songs*

Presented by Mark Herman and Ronnie Apter

Reviewed by Allison Ahlgrim



“A song is not just a poem set to music.” A translation of singable song lyrics, then, is not just a mere exercise in translating the meter, feet, rhyme scheme, imagery,

and language of a poem, although it does encompass all of the above. Such a complex challenge can cause the best technical translator to balk, but Mark Herman and Ronnie Apter revealed their streamlined, elegant approach in their presentation, “Translating Art Songs for Performance: Rachmaninoff's *Six Choral Songs*” at the 52<sup>nd</sup> Annual ATA Conference in Boston at the end of October. They gave an engaging, multimedia presentation that treated us to the sounds of Rachmaninoff's music with both the original Russian lyrics and their English translation.

After a brief history of the Russian composer Sergei Rachmaninoff's life, the early censorship of his *Six Choral Songs* in Russia, and the 2008 British commission that led to Herman and Apter's translation, they previewed the unique challenges that translators of singable song lyrics face. Fierce arguments rage over the use of some adjustments, such as changes to the rhyme scheme or musical alterations. But with all the mountainous hurdles, they asked, how do you avoid bad translations, such as the French song “*Maladie d'amour*” (roughly, “lovesick”) becoming “Melody of Love” in a popular English translation? Herman and Apter prove that good translations are well within the realm of possibility, with the right amount of effort.

To begin with, they examined every aspect of the original Russian poems that Rachmaninoff set to his music. Trochees abound in both Vladimir N. Ladyzhensky's “Night” and “Now the waves are drowsing,” by Grand Duke Konstantin K. Romanov. End rhymes alternate between masculine and feminine rhymes, and both poems also have healthy amounts of internal rhymes. “Night” has a thick, consistent abab cdcd efef rhyme scheme – which the translators promptly discarded. Shocking? Not quite: they explained how cultural expectations of rhyme differ enough to justify this liberty. Although not everyone who works with Russian holds this opinion (as your humble French-and-English-speaking reviewer understands it), Herman and Apter believe that the Russian language is rich with rhyme in everyday conversation, while English is a much flatter language. A “normal” amount of rhyme for English speakers, the presenters argue, consists merely of an xaxa

xbxb scheme, which they used for their translation of “Now the waves are drowsing.”

Most translators, interpreters, and indeed, multilingual writers realize this to some degree. Some languages sound more musical to our ears because of their cadence or the frequency of unintended rhyming in ordinary speech. As libretto translators, Herman and Apter simply include this information as a “well-worn tool in their kit,” providing them with more flexibility in a task that is even more difficult than poetry translation.

“Now the waves are drowsing” has another facet that the presenters take into consideration. Rachmaninoff completely changed the way the poem scanned to fit within his musical composition. One line is split between the sopranos and altos (high and low voices, respectively). One poetic line is extended into two musical lines. Lines 7 and 8 become 7a, 7b/8a, 8b, and 8c. The rhyme scheme becomes abab cdcd, with the addition of extra feminine rhymes. What is a translator to do? Is it more faithful to translate the original poem and make similar adjustments, or to translate directly from Rachmaninoff's adjusted source? The answer, according to Herman and Apter: “A song is not just a poem set to music.” The poem itself is not what matters in music. They based their singable translation on Rachmaninoff's musical setting of the poem. Anything else, said Herman, would have been to “murder the music.”

So, too, do technical translators use the most updated version of a refrigerator manual for their source. It's nice to know what came before, whether or not the original version was translated. But you wouldn't use the notes of how to outline the refrigerator manual to translate the manual itself.

For singable translations, rhymes are just one piece of the puzzle. Pure sounds, the basic components of language, also have a huge impact. Herman and Apter described the different questions that they and other libretto translators must keep in mind: what sounds are on the downbeats (usually the stress in a musical line), and are they the same stresses as in the spoken poem? Can vowel sounds be kept consistent between the original and the translation, especially on longer, held notes? Are certain vowel sounds even singable on certain pitches, very high or very low? Music gives birth to a new level of richness of sound, which must be taken into account.

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**Six musical changes usually allowable in a translation if used sparingly**

<b>Splitting notes</b>	becomes	
war		war-fare
<b>Combining notes</b>	becomes	
war-fare		war
<b>Adding notes</b>	becomes	
war-fare		of war-fare
<b>Deleting notes</b>	becomes	
of war-fare		war-fare
<b>Spreading syllables</b>	becomes	
war-fare		war-fare
<b>Inserting syllables</b>	becomes	
war-fare		war-fare

## RACHMANINOFF *Continued from page 26*

With all the concern about sounds, how can a translator even consider syllables? What happens when syllables are altered, stretched or repeated? Then, there are tricks, “allowable in a translation if used sparingly.” (See the box on the previous page.) The list of permitted changes is suspiciously similar to how slightly different verses are handled in church hymnals or popular songs: start with a melody, and alter it slightly to fit the slightly different wording of lyrics.

But, as Herman and Apter caution, a translator should not get bogged down in the minuteness of syllables and sounds at the expense of the bigger picture. In creative translations, and especially sung ones, the exact meaning claims a lower importance than mood. In “Now the waves are drowsing,” for example, the interplay between the triplets in the left hand (lower notes) of the piano and the dupe of the voices evokes rocking waves. The music shouldn’t be changed in any way that would alter that mood.

Many translators know that a text cannot be translated one word at a time; this yields an awkward or even unreadable paragraph in the target language. No matter how technical the writing, the ideas must successfully transfer into the translation.

Within their discussion of the precise decisions they made, sound by word by rhyme by phrase by song, Herman and Apter, a husband and wife team, also touched on their collaborative process. Their teamwork and long experience is evident in that description. They start with a literal translation with countless possibilities for each word or idea, then create a working singable translation. They take this version to the piano, sing through it, throw it out, and start afresh. Apter notes that their kids know when they’re working because they “sit down at the piano for three hours

and scream at each other.” Probably one of the healthier varieties of domestic dispute! Working in a team, they share all the frustrations of translation with each other, outside their own heads. The typical translator, a solitary creature, would do well to follow such an example from time to time. Not to yell out the window at a random passerby, of course, but engage in healthy venting at a weekly coffee date or in online forums.

Throughout their rich presentation, Herman and Apter stressed that the key in their line of work is to retain the idea. Without the mood and meaning of the original work, their writing would become an adaptation instead of a translation. These two skilled writers have honed their craft for years to create a highly skilled team, and their passion for their work is unmistakable. The appreciative audience all found something to take away, as music lovers, poets, and people interested in the sounds and tastes of language beyond the structure of grammar.

In the Q&A session at the end of the presentation, Herman and Apter were asked if they stressed over deadlines as much as other translators. Apter replied with a resounding yes. And not only that, but that they worked in show business. Their project managers are directors or conductors who make requests (or demands), with varying degrees of logic behind them. What of the editor who insisted that their translation of Verdi’s opera *Ernani* keep all mentions of a name on exactly the same notes as the original Italian? That’s show biz. And that’s our biz.

Allison Ahlgrim is a French>English translator and choral soprano. She lives online at [www.ahlgrimtranslations.com](http://www.ahlgrimtranslations.com).

For more information on this presentation, please see the handout and paper on the ATA Conference’s Proceedings and Handouts CD. For even more information, please contact Mark Herman and Ronnie Apter at [hermanapter@cmsinter.net](mailto:hermanapter@cmsinter.net).

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## COURTROOM RUSSIAN *Continued from page 25*

Those who practice simultaneous interpreting — that challenging combination of science, art, and skill — are eager to learn how to master those challenges. If we talk and share our ways of handling them with our peers, we will find what works best for each of us. For this reason, my own presentation at the 51st ATA annual conference addressed “Practical Challenges of Legal and Medical Interpreting,” and Irina Jesionowski’s presentation this year was also targeted at specific practical challenges, but this time of legal interpreting into Russian. To me, practice and sharing is the best and often the only way to learn, and I hope that we will have more speakers giving presentations like Irina’s on this subject.

Natalia Petrova is a Russian court and medical interpreter and translator. She is court certified in PA, NJ and DE and can be reached at [natapetrova@yahoo.com](mailto:natapetrova@yahoo.com). Vadim Khazin’s review of Natalia’s 2010 ATA presentation was published in the spring 2011 *Slavfile*.

## BE OUR GUEST (Editors, that is)

We (Lydia and Nora, SlavFile Editors) were delighted with our Summer 2011 issue with a focus on the South Slavic languages guest edited by Janja Pavetić-Dickey and would like to publish more such guest-edited issues. We invite you to write to us if you would like to try your hand at guest editing a future issue. This would involve writing and/or recruiting approximately 4-6 articles or other features on some particular aspect of Slavic translation/interpretation, a language or group of languages (other than Russian), interpreting (since most of our articles are devoted to translation), a subject area, such as medicine or patents, language technology for those dealing with funny alphabets, Internet resources, etc. Timeline negotiable. All our editing skills would be at your disposal and we would take responsibility for the other half of the issue. Of course individual articles on any of these subjects are welcome at any time. In addition, Lydia would always welcome volunteers to produce guest written SlavFile Lite (humor and culture) and Idiom Savants columns.

Contact Lydia at [lydiastone@verizon.net](mailto:lydiastone@verizon.net) or Nora at [norafavorov@gmail.com](mailto:norafavorov@gmail.com)