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## CONCEPT OF TRY IN ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN LINGUISTIC CULTURES

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### *Abstract*

The paper deals with the study of the framework concept of TRY in English and Russian linguocultures. The definition of concept is given and its research methodology is described. The use of the field approach to the examination of the English and Russian concepts of TRY allows distinguishing the nuclear and peripheral components of the corresponding lexico-semantic fields of Try in the English and Russian languages. The method of component analysis is used for the explication of their semantic structure. Conceptual analysis allows distinguishing the concepts in their dual function, also general scientific methods of comparison and generalization are used. The degree of “intensity”, sensory concreteness, clarity, or, in other words, the prototypical character of the feature for native speakers determines whether the lexical unit belongs to the core or periphery of the lexico-semantic field. Conducted lexicographical and contextual analysis has revealed the areas of matching and disagreement of the Russian and English concepts. The coinciding components include “making an effort to do something”, “an unsuccessful effort” and “sporting events, tournaments”. The English concept demonstrates more elaborate inner structure as compared with the Russian one. Some components of the English concept connected with the idea of success/successfulness and assault/war correspond to the lacunas in the Russian concept. This nonidentity is explained by the national specifics of the concepts under investigation resulting from the features of national history, culture and traditions.

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**Keywords:** Concept, try, lexico-semantic field, integral seme, peripheral components.



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## **1. Introduction**

Cognitive linguistics being one of the leading trends of modern linguistics is focused on the study of concepts and believes that each language represents a certain system of concepts enabling native speakers to perceive, classify and interpret the flow of the information from the outside world (Kravchenko 2005; Kubryakova, 2004). The analysis of the scientific works published for the last five years has revealed a large number of works devoted to concepts.

Some researchers deal with the following concepts: WAR (Golubenko, 2017), TIME (Kashleva & Sorokina, 2016), DESIRE (Huchinaeva, 2016), while others undertake a comparative analysis of concepts based on various grounds including the comparison of dialectical antonymous pairs: FEAR and FEARLESSNESS (Chezybaeva, 2011), FRIEND and ENEMY (Kirilova, 2013), the comparative analysis of synonymous pairs: ENVY and JEALOUSY (Bulygina & Tripol'skaya, 2015). In addition, numerous research works are devoted to the cross-cultural comparison of the same concept on the material of two or more languages, for example: FATE in Russian and Arabic (Ibragim, 2015). The article is based on the scientific works in the field of cognitive linguistics (Kravchenko 2005) and studies on the theory of concepts (Frege, 1997; Kubryakova, 2004; Lakoff & Johnson, 2003; Zhinkin, 2002).

## **2. Problem Statement**

Contribution to the study of concepts elaborate analysis of the inner structure of the pair of synonymous concepts in different languages in order to reveal their linguocultural identity, their overlapping and unique areas demonstrating similar and different cultural and historical experience.

## **3. Research Questions**

Making review of the approaches and different understanding of the concept (Frege, 1997; Ibragim, 2015; Kubryakova, 2004; Lakoff & Johnson, 2003), the working definition of the concept is given where the concept is defined as a unit of mental resource of people's consciousness and information structure that reflects person's knowledge and experience, conceptual system and brain language, the whole picture of the world reflected in human psyche features. The study of the concept in terms of a lexico-semantic field enables a deeper insight in the complicated inner structure of the concepts under investigation and allows revealing meaningful differences in the concept of TRY layers in the Russian and English linguocultures and getting a clue to understanding the reasons of differences in the national mentality.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the article is to provide a comparative analysis of the concept of TRY on the material of the Russian and English languages from the point of view of cultural linguistics; treating the concept as a cluster of culture in the mental world of a man (Stepanov, 2004) describes the features of national mentality, which have been formed for centuries and reflect the history of people.

## 5. Research Methods

The following research methods are used to solve the problems set in the article: the method of field analysis, the method of component analysis of language units representing the concept, conceptual analysis, general scientific methods of comparison and generalization.

## 6. Findings

The Russian and the English concepts of TRY are the concepts that belong to the human inner world. The structure of the concepts is presented in the form of the field with a core-peripheral organization. Belonging to the core or the periphery is determined by the degree of “intensity”, sensory concreteness or, in other words, the prototypical character of the feature for native speakers. More abstract features that arise based on specific, objective features form the periphery of the concept. The periphery of the concept includes a variety of culturally-conditioned, associative, evaluative elements.

According to Ushakov’s (2018) dictionary, a try is an action directed toward the implementation or achievement of something and associated with some risk, uncertainty in success. Along with the interpretation above, Dmitriev’s (2018) explanatory dictionary provides an indication that in some sports, a try is a performance of an athlete, which can be repeated a certain number of times to improve the result. On the other hand, the English language dictionaries of the synonyms Collins English Thesaurus and Merriam-Webster Thesaurus treat a try as 1) making an effort to do or accomplish something and 2) the act or action of setting on with force or violence (Collins English Thesaurus, 2018; Merriam-Webster Thesaurus, 2018).

The lexico-semantic field Try in the Russian language is formed based on the presence of the following integral elements in the semantic structure of the lexical units: 1) an action directed toward the implementation (achievement) of something); 2) risk, lack of confidence in success). The presence of the integral elements 1) making an effort to do or accomplish something; 2) the act of setting upon with force or violence in the semantic structure of lexical units was the ground for the inclusion in the lexico-semantic field Try in the English language.

Certain differences can be noted in the integral semes constituting the lexico-semantic field Try in the English and Russian languages. Russian lexical units that form the lexico-semantic field under consideration feature the seme “неуверенность” (= “uncertainty”) which is absent in the English lexical units that make up the lexico-semantic field Try. On the contrary, the English lexical units contain the seme “accomplish – achieve or complete successfully” (English Oxford Living Dictionary, 2018). While the Russian lexical units that form the corresponding lexico-semantic field contain the seme «спортивные состязания» (=“sporting events, tournaments”), the English lexical units have the seme “act of setting upon with force or violence” (to attack someone, commit violent acts), and the seme “war”.

The integral semes for the lexico-semantic fields under consideration in the Russian and English languages can be represented in the form of the following table (Table 01).

**Table 01.** Lexico-semantic field Try

Russian language	English language
An action directed towards the implementation or achievement of something; <b>Making an effort to do something</b>	
<b>An unsuccessful effort</b>	
<b>Sporting events, tournaments</b>	
<b>Uncertainty</b>	<b>To accomplish something (to succeed)</b>
-	Act of setting upon with force or violence
-	Attack, assault, war
-	Judicial investigation

The detailed analysis of the data of Russian and English dictionaries allowed identifying the lexical units expressing *try* and to form the lexico-semantic fields Try in the Russian and English languages. The following lexical units were included in the Russian lexico-semantic field of Try: испытание (=test), эксперимент (=experiment), шанс (=chance), рывок (=jerk), заход (=approach), потуги (=efforts), поползновения (=feeble effort), прикидка (=try-out), азарт (=thrill of competition), бегство (=escape), бросок (=throw, dash, shot), дебют (=debut, opening), действие (=action), исследование (=research), надрыв (=overstrain), намерение (=intention), напряжение (=exertion, strain), опробывание (=sampling), опрос (=questionnaire), работа (=work), радение (=taking care of smth), рассмотрение (=legal proceeding), рвение (=eagerness), старание (=efforts), труд (=labor), упражнение (=exercise), усердие (=zeal), усилие (=effort), цель (=target). All identified lexical units refer to nouns and most of them are abstract nouns that are not used in constructions with an active agent.

The verbs used with the noun попытка (=try) in Russian are very indicative. These are: оказаться (=to occur), провалиться (=to fail), удался, (=to succeed), закончиться (=to finish), увенчаться (=to be crowned with), окончиться (=to end up), потерпеть (= to collapse, to be unsuccessful), сорваться (=to fail), привести (=to result in (smth bad)), завершиться (=to end off), остаться (=still to have), получиться (=to succeed), сделать (=to complete), смочь (=to be able to), грозить (=to threaten), оставить(ся) (=to be left), вызываться (=to volunteer), предприниматься (=to be undertaken), заставить (=to make smb do smth), делать(ся) (=to proceed), произойти (=to take place), etc. (Slovar' asociacij, 2018).

More than a half of the presented Russian verbs are reflexive verbs used in the constructions where an active agent is not applicable.

The adjectives frequently used with the Russian noun *попытка* (=try) in the Russian language include the following lexical units: безнадежная (=hopeless), отчаянная (=desperate), нелепая (=absurd), первая (=first), последняя (=last), неудачная (=unsuccessful), предпринятая (=undertaken), тщетная (=moonshoot (attempt), жалкая (=pathetic (try), безуспешная (=ineffective), слабая (=feeble), новая (=new), бесплодная (=fruitless), робкая (=shy), очередная (=the next), неуклюжая (=awkward), etc (Slovar' asociacij, 2018). Among the revealed adjectives 52 % of the words have the seme "uncertain, unsuccessful", 34 % of the lexical units have a neutral meaning indicating the order of attempts (the first, the next), and only 14 % of the adjectives contain the seme "successful".

The structure of the lexico-semantic field Try in the English language includes the following lexical units: attempt (v, n), try (v, n), seek (v), essay (n), aim (v), endeavor (v, (v)), effort (n), struggle (v,

n), bid (n), crack (v, n), fling (n), go (n), offer (n), pass (n), shot (n), stab (n), trial (n), whack (n), whirl (n), attack (v, n), experiment (v, n), shot (v, n), stab (v, n), trial (n), workout (n). All presented words are either verbs or verbal nouns, which are used in the constructions with an active agent.

The adjectives often used with the noun *try* in the English language include: first, serious, (un)successful, last, desperate, little, vain, deliberate, further, futile, desperate, systematic, final, conscious, recent, feeble, initial, bold, similar, ambitious, slightest, honest, previous, fruitless, earlier, brave (Corpus of Contemporary American English, 2018). Among the identified adjectives which are combined with the noun *try*, 36% have a neutral meaning (first, initial, previous), indicating the order of attempts; 26% have a negative meaning (unsuccessful, weak), other 38% of the lexemes mean “successful, efficient”.

The core of the lexico-semantic field Try in the Russian language is formed with the lexical units *попытка, испытание* (=try (attempt), test) as the carriers of an integral neutral seme “an action directed towards the implementation or achievement of something”.

This is confirmed by the definitions of these lexemes.

Russian noun *попытка* (=try, attempt) is defined as an action directed toward the achievement or implementation of something, it is associated with risk, uncertainty in success (Ushakov, 2018).

*Испытание* (=test) is defined as a test, examination of some qualities suitable for something (Ushakov, 2018).

The core of the lexico-semantic field Try in the English language is constituted by the lexemes *try* and *attempt* as the carriers of the neutral seme “making an effort to do something”.

The latter is confirmed by the definitional analysis of the lexemes under investigation.

*Try* (v) – to make an effort or attempt (to do something); to attempt and do (something) as a possible way of gaining a desired result (Summers, 1998);

*Try* (n) – an attempt to do something (Summers, 1998); an attempt or effort (Collins English Thesaurus, 2018).

*Attempt* (v) – to make an effort (to do something) or to achieve (something) to achieve (something) (Collins English Thesaurus, 2018).

*Attempt* (n) – endeavor, result of attempting, esp. unsuccessfully; an endeavour to achieve something; effort (Collins English Thesaurus, 2018).

The definitions show that the words *try* and *attempt* are used to express a go directed at the implementation of an action that requires the application of some effort, as well as at the achievement of a certain result. In this case, the use of the lexical unit *try* often indicates the lack of success.

The analysis of the contextual use of the discussed lexical units confirms the mentioned above.

1. Without waiting for his approval, the towheaded girl ran from the room and disappeared up the stairs. Ewan folded his hands together and turned toward Laura. “I’m not sure what to do. Should I board a train for Pittsburgh and *try to bring her home*?” Ainslee gave her brother an enthusiastic nod. “Yes. *Adaira simply must come home or we’ll lose the tile works*. I can’t go to Weston on my own” (Corpus of Contemporary American English, 2018).

In the presented fragment one of the characters wants to try to take the girl home (*try to bring her home*) so that she does not bring trouble to the owners of the house (*Adaira simply must come home or we'll lose the tile works*).

2. At eighteen, in a port town, *while attempting to steal an ease of canned ham* from a cargo ship, *he was caught* by a pair of crew members (Brown, 2004, p. 57).

In this statement, the author describes a person attempting to commit a crime, stealing a box of canned ham (*while trying to steal an ease of canned ham*), but the attempt ends with negative consequences for him (*he was caught*).

In the periphery of the discussed Russian lexico-semantic field Try we have included the lexical units, whose semantic structure contains the seme “труд” (=labour): действие (=action), работа (=work), труд (=labour); the semes indicating the degree of the applied physical (mental) effort: потуги(=efforts), бросок(=throw, dash, shot), напряжение (=exertion, strain), рвение(=eagerness), усердие(=zeal); the seme indicating the characteristics of the emotional state: азарт(=thrill of competition); the seme “исследовательская деятельность” (research activity): исследование (=research), эксперимент (=experiment).

The definitions of the chosen lexical units provided by the explanatory dictionaries prove the correctness of the performed selection.

*Эксперимент* (=experiment) is defined as an attempt to do, undertake something new, not tried before (Abramov, 1999).

*Действие* (=action) is defined as actions, behavior (Abramov, 1999).

*Работа* (=work) – an occupation, labour, activity (Ushakov, 2018).

*Труд* (=labour) – an effort to achieve something (Abramov, 1999).

*Усилие* (=effort) – a physical, mental activity aimed at achieving the desired goal (Abramov, 1999).

*Потуги* (=efforts) – mostly unsuccessful efforts, attempts to do something) (Abramov, 1999).

*Бросок* (=throw, dash, shot) – a sharp acceleration, a sharp push in various kinds of sports (Abramov, 1999).

*Напряжение* (=exertion, strain) – a state of lifting, increased efforts in the implementation of something, concentration of all forces, attention to something (Abramov, 1999).

*Рвение* (=eagerness) – a striving, diligence (Abramov, 1999).

*Усердие* (=zeal) – a zeal, striving, extreme diligence in doing something (Abramov, 1999).

*Азарт* (=thrill of competition) – enthusiasm, rush (Abramov, 1999).

*Исследование* (=research) – carrying out a scientific research (Abramov, 1999).

The periphery of the lexico-semantic field Try in the English language is formed by the linguistic signs having the seme “act of setting upon with force”: attack, stab, shot, whack etc; the seme “to move in a forceful manner”: fling, stab, whirl, go; the seme “to devote a serious effort or energy” (to give a lot of energy, to make an effort): strive, undertaking, endeavor etc; the seme “research”: probe, research scrutinize, investigate, try on; the seme “military activity”: shoot, battle, war, combat, clash, fight.

In addition to the meaning “making an effort to do something” these linguistic units have a number of additional differential semes including “to try to find by searching”; “look for”; “intend”; “an earnest attempt”; “to make a great and tenacious effort”; “try very hard”; “a determined attempt”; “an attempt that requires a lot of energy”; “great effort”.

This is confirmed by their definitions from the explanatory dictionaries.

*Seek* (v) – to try to find by searching; look for; to try to obtain or acquire; to direct one's efforts or strive (towards) (Collins English Thesaurus, 2018).

*Aim* (v) – to try or intend (*to do or be something*) (Collins English Thesaurus, 2018).

*Undertake* (v) to attempt to; agree to start (Collins English Thesaurus, 2018).

*Endeavor* (n) – an earnest attempt or effort, an effort to do or attain something (Collins English Thesaurus, 2018).

*Strive* (v) – to make a great and tenacious effort; to make great efforts; try very hard (Collins English Thesaurus, 2018).

*Effort* (n) – a determined attempt; a try, esp. a hard try; attempt; endeavor (Collins English Thesaurus, 2018).

*Struggle* (v) – to make great efforts or attempts; strive; labor (Collins English Thesaurus, 2018).

*Struggle* (n) – great effort or a series of efforts; violent exertion (Collins English Thesaurus, 2018).

The verb “*endeavor*” has stylistic limitations:

*endeavor* (v) – to make an earnest attempt; strive; (*archaic*) to try to achieve 3. to try (to do something) (Collins English Thesaurus, 2018).

In the noun “*essay*” the meaning of “attempting to do the action” is not basic:

*essay* (n) – a short literary composition dealing with a subject analytically or speculatively; an attempt or endeavor; effort (Collins English Thesaurus, 2018).

The performed lexicographic analysis shows that the semantically described lexemes are associated not only with the attempt to act, but also with the intention, struggle, load, determination in the implementation of certain acts. As an example, we will make a contextual analysis of the noun “effort”.

1. But by *great effort* we kept back the rising tears, and listened to the wild tearful melody in silence (Jerome, 2018).

The author describes inhuman attempts, efforts of the will of the characters (*by great effort*) while restraining tears (*kept back the rising tears*), when they listened to the heartbreaking melody (*listened to the wild tearful melody*).

2. He did make *one or two feeble efforts to take up the work again* when the six months had elapsed, but there was always the same coldness – the same want of sympathy on the part of the world to fight against (Jerome, 2018).

In this statement, the man made some attempt (*one or two feeble efforts*) to resume his knowledge (*to take up the work again*).

## 7. Conclusion

Conducted lexicographical and contextual analysis allows identifying the differences in the structure of the studied lexico-semantic fields of Try in the Russian and English languages. National

differences are most pronounced when comparing the Russian and English concepts of TRY. The concept TRY is a framework one (the term by Yu. S. Stepanov (Stepanov, 2004)). It means that it has some basic, actual features that constitute the main content of the concept – in our case this is an “action directed toward the implementation or achievement of something” – and a number of features of the so-called “collective representation”, which are the result of the society development including “an unsuccessful effort” and “sporting events, tournaments”. We believe that both the Russian and English concepts TRY are multi-layered. Speaking about the Russian concept of TRY it should be noted that the component “uncertainty, failure” is one of the crucial ones. The components “labor, intensity of effort, emotional component and scope of application (sport, research activity)” are also referred to significant ones.

The Russian and the English concepts TRY demonstrate only partial overlapping in the field of the main relevant feature as coinciding components include “making an effort to do something”, “an unsuccessful effort”, “sporting events and tournaments”. The second component of the English concept TRY, which also forms its content, “to accomplish something (to succeed)” corresponds to a lacuna in the Russian concept. The component “success” is very implicit in the Russian concept TRY. Other significant components of the English concept TRY are the “act of setting upon with force” and “to move in a forceful manner”. As the analysis shows, the Russian concept TRY does not contain the component “violence” in contrast to the English one, which also contains the component “assault” (war, military actions). Both Russian and English concepts match in the field of such components as “labor” and “research activity”.

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