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**TOLERANCE THROUGH PRISM OF RUSSIAN LANGUAGE  
CONSCIOUSNESS**

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***Abstract***

Tolerance is the most important norm of international law. It is undeniable. Tolerance is a new word included in the Russian language - a lacuna for the language. The concept of tolerance has become widespread in the social and humanitarian fields only at the end of the 20th century. According to the National Corpus of the Russian language, the word *tolerance* entered the Russian lexicon at the beginning of the last century. The dynamics of the frequency of the word is characterized by the steady and positive dynamics. In 2014, the word was the fifth in Yandex trends. However, it is too early to talk about the formation of a new linguocultural value. The mental unit of *tolerance* in the modern Russian language has a dual connotation, like the concept of *patience*. Tendencies to an increase in negative connotations are explainable from the standpoint of the values of Russian culture. Contradictions in the Russian linguoculture, orientation not to politeness, but to sincerity and ambivalence of communication are prerequisites of the reluctance to learn the studied communicative value by *the speakers of the Russian language*.

The concept of tolerance most likely has its own sociocultural specificity in the Russian language picture of the world. It is inorganic for the Russian conceptual sphere, more precisely, it is distinguished by “non-general expression”: based on the cooperation and agreement of cultures, social communities, ethnic groups and religions, the Russian conceptual model of tolerance has withstood the test of time.

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**Keywords:** Tolerance, frequency, ambivalence, values, linguoculture.



## **1. Introduction**

The essence, meaning, boundaries, principles of tolerance are understood in different ways. Today it is one of the most controversial concepts. So, B. Williams entirely denies tolerance as a virtue and value. The traditional liberal paradigm, popular in the Anglo-American rationalist culture, is associated with the names of J. Horton, S. Mendus, P. Nicholson, and others. P. Nicholson justifies the need for tolerance through the irrationality of intolerance and as a boon, value and virtue. P. Nicholson is convinced that tolerance should be understood as respect for the human personality. He emphasizes that differences are recognized and respected not for their own sake, but as having significant value for people entitled to equal respect in society (Nicholson, 1985). J. Stuart Mill in his essay "On Liberty" considers tolerance as an important liberal value (Mill, 1947). The theory of tolerance by R. Forst is "the concept of respect", according to "which tolerant to each other parties respect each other in a more mutual sense: from a moral point of view, they consider themselves and others as citizens of a state in which members of all groups – majorities and minorities should have equal legal and political status" (Forst, 2003). M.B. Khomyakov summarizes the diversity of viewpoints on the phenomenon under discussion: tolerance is one of the most controversial values of modern society. This inconsistency, however, does not reduce its significance, but rather reflects the extreme complexity of the world in which modern man is doomed to live (Khomyakov, 2011).

## **2. Problem Statement**

Tolerance is the most important norm of international law. It is undeniable. However, the term is ambiguous in modern Russian. It is a lacuna for the language. The concept of tolerance, which goes back to the medical term, has become widespread in the social and humanitarian fields only at the end of the 20th century. According to the National Corpus of the Russian language, the word tolerance entered the Russian lexicon at the beginning of the last century. The dynamics of the frequency of the word is characterized by the steady and positive dynamics: the index of frequency has increased by 300 times. In 2014, the word was the fifth in Yandex trends, showing a multi-million audience looking for the meaning of a word.

## **3. Research Questions**

The understanding of the content of the concept "tolerance" by native speakers of Russian is increasingly moving in the negative direction, since negative cognitive signs accumulate in the semantic scope of the concept. Considering the concept tolerance, we find out the reasons for its ambiguous place in the Russian language picture of the world. The research material was composed of definitions and vocabulary articles, materials of the National Corpus of the Russian language, data obtained as a result of experiments of component-definition analysis and associative experiment, and the content of the Runet.

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

So, the purpose of this work is to explore "tolerance" as a verbalized value using different sign objectivizations while analyzing vocabulary definitions, associative field, semantic field, Runet content.

## 5. Research Methods

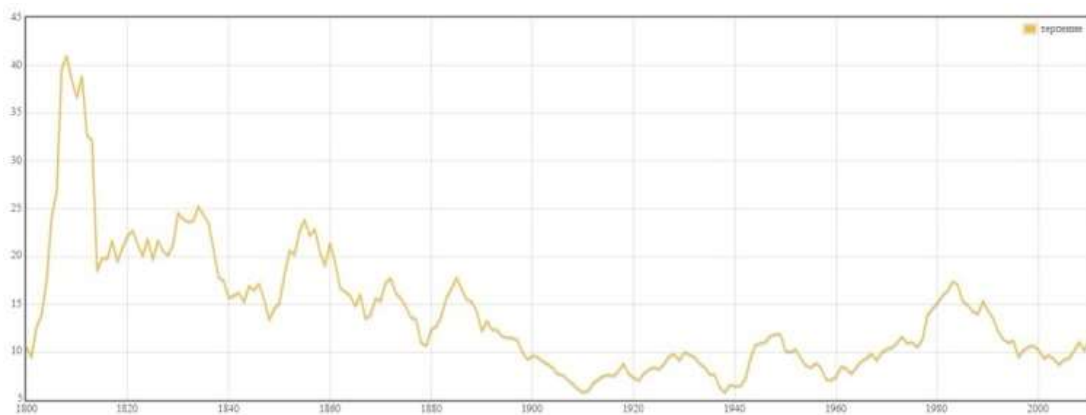
The object of this study is the Russian language consciousness, access to the study of which was obtained in the course of a series of psycholinguistic and linguistic experiments and the use of a set of experimental methods to identify the content of the image of language consciousness. Based on the specifics of the subject matter, the main methodological basis was the so-called triangulation method – the integrative eclectic approach to the analysis of phenomena. The essence of the triangulation method consists in a multidimensional and multiaspectual analysis of a phenomenon in which the possibility to take into account the diversity of the manifestations of a phenomenon emerges, which guarantees an objective nature of the research. Mathematical processing of the obtained results and their visual representation in graphic form, meaningful interpretation of the results are also used. Complementary research methods: the method of component-definition analysis, psycho-semantic experiment, free associative experiment.

## 6. Findings

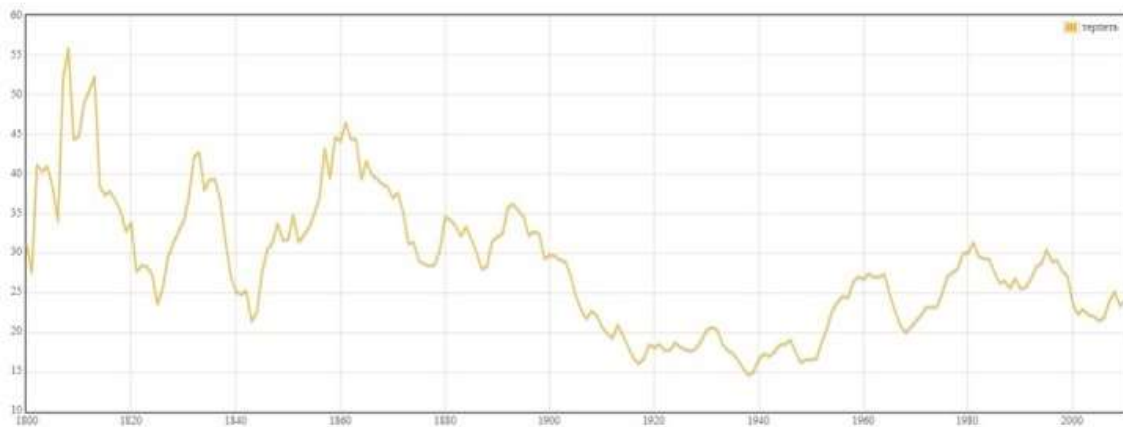
The first usage examples in the Corpus are dated back to 1932: *Some kind of depression on the one hand ... Absolute tolerance of the masses ...* (P. Krasnov, "Feat"). The lexical item was used as a medical term, as evidenced by medical textbooks and reference books of the past and present century. The end of XX – the beginning of the XXI centuries were marked by a steep increase in the use of the word: from 0 in 1970, 0.02 in 1983 to 0.96 in 2000 and 3.05 in 2009. Along with such words as *perestroika*, *pluralism*, it entered the language and occupied its niche. It might seem that the growth of word usage by 300 times speaks about the victorious conquest of the communicative market. However, studies based on the National Corpus of the Russian language showed that the use of the word increased significantly only in publicistic and political speech, while the use in conversational speech is close to zero. 855 journalistic and only 18 colloquial documents are found in the corpus. Moreover, when analysing the texts declared in the subcategory of oral speech turned out to be colloquial journalism documents. The situation that the word so needed in the modern multicultural world but not reclaimed by language is an occasion for reflection. The cultural development of the concept of *tolerance* in the Russian language is minimal. At the same time, comparable concepts such as synonyms, associates, etc. have been developed. Thus, *respect*, *patience*, *condescension*, *gentleness*, *tact*, *agreement*, *generosity* are developed in detail in the Russian concept sphere. *Respect* and *patience* exceed the use of the lexeme *tolerance* by 10-30 times, respectively. The dynamics is reflected in the Figures below.



**Figure 01.** Dynamics of the lexeme *tolerantnost*' usage; distribution over years (frequency per million word forms)



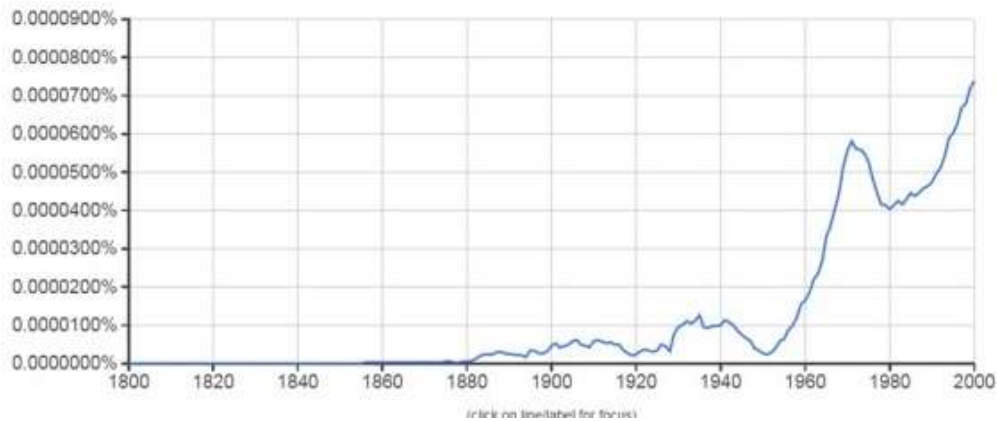
**Figure 02.** Dynamics of the lexeme *tolerance* usage; distribution over years (frequency per million word forms).



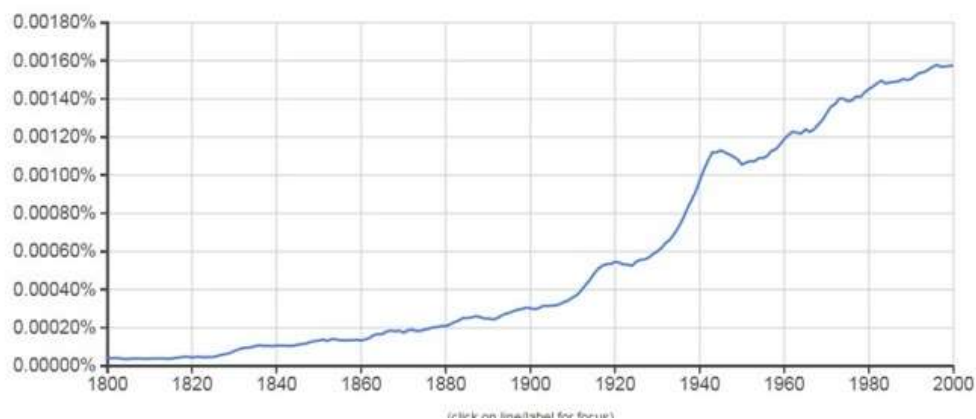
**Figure 03.** Dynamics of the lexeme *terpet*' usage; distribution over years (frequency per million word forms).

The lack of development of the concept *tolerantnost*' is clearly visible when comparing the graphs presented below. The Google Books Ngram Viewer project on digitization of all books published on the planet (8 million digitized books published over the past 500 years), launched by Google search engine, allows you to track the use of the word *tolerance* in British English and Russian: a steady increase in the

frequency of use throughout XIX-XXI centuries in English and a jump in use in the second half of the XX and early XXI centuries in Russian. At the same time in the Russian language, the indices even at the peak usage are 23.5 times lower than those in English.



**Figure 04.** Dynamics of *tolerantnost'* lexeme usage in Russian sources



**Figure 05.** Dynamics of *tolerance* lexeme usage in English sources

In the Foreign Dictionary, the word *tolerance* has been included since 1937, in The Great Academic Dictionary of the Russian Language (GAD, 1950-1965) it is recorded with the semantics of respect, condescension to anyone, anything, in the Dictionary of synonyms of the Russian language this term is marked as bookish in the synonymic row with the dominant *respect*. The motivating word *tolerant* was recorded for the first time in the “Explanatory Dictionary of the Russian Language” edited by D. N. Ushakov (1935–1940) with the meaning “respectful”. In the GAD edited by A. P. Evgenieva (1975) this word is marked with the tag “obsolete”. The studied lexeme remains passive in the Russian lexicon almost up to the end of the XX century. The definitive analysis shows that when interpreting as the main synonym, lexicographers choose *respect* (the Big Explanatory Dictionary of Foreign Words by Nadel-Chervinskaya & Chervinsky, 1995); *respect* for different views, morals, habits (Philosophical Encyclopedic Dictionary, 2010), a mood of understanding and *dialogue* with others, *recognition* and *respect* for his right to be different, *respect* for the other who differ in their convictions, values and behavior (Political science. Dictionary), *respectful*, *condescending* attitude to someone, something (GAD II), *respect* in general and especially regarding religious opinions, in short, religious tolerance (SAD).

“The interpretation of the words *tolerance*, *tolerant* through the words *patience*, *patient* suggests their semantic closeness and belonging to one lexico-semantic (and conceptual) field,” notes O. A. Mikhailova (Mikhailova, 2013). At the same time, the lexeme inherits negative ~ positive connotations. Tolerance and patience are cultural values that are significant for native Russian speakers. Proverbs reflect this: *God gives salvation for patience; Patience gives skill; You can overcome anything with patience; Patience has its end; There is patience for every desire; Patience works wonders.*

However, the semantic similarity of the concepts of tolerance and patience is far from being an identity. A. G. Kudryavtsev regards patience with respect to tolerance as a hyperonym with respect to the hyponym (Kudryavtsev, 2012). Russian linguists who study tolerance emphasize its difference from patience. The difference is fundamental. According to V. G. Felde, patience “fosters respect for the “stranger’s”, but unlike tolerance, does not remove the “stranger” as a problem. Tolerance promotes respect for the elements of «strangeness». (Felde, 2015).

Patience is an integral feature of the Russian mentality. In the Russian picture of the world, this is an axiological phenomenon, while tolerance is not. It is beyond moral and other assessments. This is the statement of fact: there is something different, it has the right to coexist, to be near. Tolerance is indifferent. This situation is unlikely to suit the Russians. There is neither a word in the Russian mentality, nor, as it should be, a frame “to be near”, because indifference is a morally condemned category, while sympathy is positive. To be patient, to stand means to understand, accept, forgive. This spiritual series is understandable to every speaker of the Russian language, and understanding of a neighbor without emotions, both positive and negative, is not typical of Russian linguistic culture. The concept of *tolerance* is still in the process of formation, the fact that its rooting in the minds reflects the positive dynamics of the use of the word.

According to I. A. Sternin, the important features of the Russian mentality are "bipolar, black-and-white thinking (If he is not with us, he is against us) and dislike of compromises." “The word *patience* in the Russian language has a bipolar assessment, and the assessment varies depending on the “subject of patience”, on what the tolerance is manifested to. As shown by the psycholinguistic experiment, the analysis of the content of the social network VKontakte tolerance is also bipolar. I. A. Sternin notes that the principle of tolerance "was not in the mindset of Russians, and the concept of tolerance was not formed in the Russian consciousness as a mental unit" (Sternin, 2001). The researcher names the parameters of the communicative behavior of Russians, contributing to and keeping the formation of the communicative category of tolerance. Commitment to communication, freedom to contact, modest self-presentation, courtesy to friends and others contribute to the formation of tolerance a lot. At the same time, the increased willingness to get emotional evaluation impedes the formation of the category of communicative tolerance; so do inability to listen, poorly expressed kind greetings, unwillingness to smile, strong desire for informal communication, reduced courtesy to strangers, a tendency to modify the behavior of the interlocutor and his picture of the world, low desire to reach a compromise, the admissibility of a public discussion of disagreements, lack of orientation on saving the face of the interlocutor, high possibility of interrupting the interlocutor, condemnation of dissidence, etc.

The researcher’s conclusion is unequivocal: the difficulties of forming tolerant consciousness in Russian society are obvious, “since a large number of Russian communicative norms and traditions do not support this category” (Sternin, & Shilikhina 2001). This is an external manifestation of tolerance in

communication. However, according to E.I. Kasyanova, the phenomenon of tolerance in the modern socio-cultural situation of Russia is “a form of collective identity among single and historically long-existing Russian nation, which, according to the words of the outstanding Russian philosopher I.A. Ilyina, is a “multi-peoples nation.” In Russia, the culture of the annexed nations was not destroyed, but rather assimilated. As a result, a symbiosis was formed, based on tolerance, liberal attitude towards religion and adaptability (Kasyanova, 2008).

In A.V. Pertsev’s view, the primary obstacle to democratization “according to the Western type” is mental inertia, which is manifested in different ways among representatives of each social stratum in post-totalitarian societies. The philosopher believes that society should get rid of fighting spirit and intransigence – not only in ethics and politics, which is on the surface, but also in depth, in fundamental ideological views, in the field of ontology and epistemology (Pertsev, 2005). Our point of view is close to the opinion of K.A. Abulkhanova-Slavskaya. She unbiasedly believes that such Orthodox values as love for the neighbor, compassion, long-suffering, kindness, and charity adopted together with Christianity are a source of tolerance in Russia (Abulkhanova-Slavskaya, 1980). We emphasize that this is a manifestation of deep, essential tolerance, but not a superficial form of communicative practice, oriented on the protection of the decency and norms of verbal behavior. However, the importance of respecting the communicative norms cannot be discounted.

In the study of N. A. Nerovnaya, the content analysis of the concept “tolerance” in the Russian linguistic consciousness of the diachronic aspect showed the following: despite the rethinking of the concept in the popular consciousness, “stable cognitive signs have been discovered, which suggests that the concept has rooted in the consciousness of native speakers”. It is concluded that “an understanding of the content of the “tolerance” concept by Russian speakers is increasingly moving in the negative direction, since negative cognitive signs are accumulating in the semantic scope of the concept”. At the same time, “the concept under consideration remains in the zone of positive value meanings of the Russian consciousness” (Nerovnaya, 2017).

One can state the ambivalence of tolerance perception in minds of modern representatives of the Russian language. 272 *Vkontakte* communities, united by the keyword *tolerance*, are supported by a not very large army of users, which indicates a moderate interest in the phenomenon. The largest community, *Tolerance, Youth movement* has 5380 subscribers, the smallest one – 15 people. Some groups declare their position against tolerance in the very title. Let us cite as an example the names of some groups: *Orthodox Christians against tolerance*, *No CENTERS OF TOLERANCE! No tolerance! Against tolerance! Say NO to perverted tolerance!!! We are against "Tolerance" We are Slavs!!! FOR the policy of ZERO TOLERANCE to evil* and others.

Other focus pages containing posts about tolerance run into thousands. For the study by the method of continuous sampling, the material including quotes, aphorisms, jokes, anecdotes and statuses (more than 500 units) was collected. The content of the Runet, in particular social networks (*Vkontakte*, etc.), found on the request *tolerance* was studied. Statistical analysis showed that materials containing the negative assessment of tolerance account for almost a third of the content. This is a significant figure. Let us take as an example a few caustic phrases: *Tolerance is when one can live for one’s pleasure, but one cannot stick one’s nose in other people’s affairs. Tolerance is when smart people not only have to listen to the opinion*

*of fools, but also reckon with it. Tolerance: in other words, do not care about anyone and take care of yourself. Tolerance is false. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish tolerance from cowardice. Tolerance is a synonym for lies. The most hated word to me is "Tolerance". The most terrible tool of manipulation. It is not a "lazy person" to speak correctly, but "a person with a limited desire to work." And unwittingly you will be fed up with ideas alien to you. After all, if you are tolerant to cancer cells, the result is predictable. Conscience is incompatible with tolerance, for conscience is intolerant of lawlessness. They say that in a big city people are more tolerant than in provinces. No, this is just indifference. Tolerance is a spit upon the opinion of the majority. Two angels at the entrance to heaven. Well, here are sinners again! We will not let them in, their place is in hell! – Why are you so intolerant? Not sinners, but alternatively righteous. Not in hell, but in a paradise with alternative climate. Imposed tolerance.*

Now we cite several posts that assess tolerance positively. Our life is like an ocean – it flows and comes into contact, you touch in one place – it echoes at the other end of the world. (F. M. Dostoevsky) Mercy involves not only material help, but spiritual support of the neighbor too. Spiritual support, first of all, is not in condemning the neighbor, but in respecting his human dignity. (L. Tolstoy) If I differ from you, I'm not at all insulting you, but in the opposite endowing you. (Antoine de Saint-Exupery).

It is significant that in the quotations, positively evaluating a tolerant attitude, the word tolerance is not used.

Thus, the posts reflect two opposite trends: some of the materials contain a negative assessment, ridiculing the values of tolerance as alien to Russian culture; some express a sympathetic attitude towards the ideas of tolerance. Be it noted, if the Russians laugh at something, it means that reflection and mastery of the concept take place, since Russians do not laugh at the alien. Irony, joke, witticism have always been significant for native Russian speakers. For example, the concept belief deeply developed by Russian culture is traditionally considered important for native Russian speakers, and in the proverbs it is interpreted in two different ways. This characteristic of Russian culture (inconsistency) was emphasized repeatedly by philosophers, linguists, and others.

## **7. Conclusion**

Thus, tolerance for the Russian language is an ambivalent concept. This is indicated by the results of associative experiments, ours and those conducted by other scientists (Sternin, Shilikhina, Nerovnaya, etc.). Centripetal forces relate *tolerance* to Russian ethics — concepts particularly developed in Russian linguistic culture having a positive connotation of *kindness, justice, patience, sympathy, compassion, complicity, condolence, interlocutor, cordiality, responsiveness, sensitivity, sincerity*, etc. Centrifugal forces direct this concept to the confrontation of friend-*or-foe*, which is considered tense in Russian communication.

These two reciprocal directions are reflected in quotations, aphorisms, statuses, and jokes that Runet is flooded with. Some materials contain a negative assessment, roast of values of tolerance as alien to Russian culture. At the same time, laughter is evidence of the concept mastering, since a Russian does not laugh at the alien. The joke is significant for Russians. The witticism does not mean the denial of the phenomenon, but the reflection. One can compare this fact with the deeply developed Russian culture of the concept of faith, traditionally considered important for native Russian speakers: in the proverbs, the



concept of *faith* is interpreted in two different ways. The contradictory nature of Russian culture was repeatedly emphasized by philosophers, linguists, and others.

The understanding of the content of the concept “tolerance” by native speakers of Russian is increasingly moving in the negative direction, since negative cognitive signs accumulate in the semantic scope of the concept. At the same time, we emphasize that in the modern Russian picture of the world, a positive assessment of tolerance still prevails. So, the concept under consideration remains in the zone of positive value meanings of the Russian consciousness.

Tolerance is only a new word that is included in the Russian language. It is too early to talk about the formation of a new linguocultural value. The mental unit of *tolerance* has a double connotation, like the concept of *patience*. Tendencies to an increase in negative connotations are explainable from the standpoint of the values of Russian culture. Contradictions in the Russian linguistic culture, focus on sincerity rather than courtesy and ambivalence of communication are prerequisites for the unreadiness to master the concept of *tolerance* in communication. The high axiological index, characteristic of Russian culture, prevents the assimilation of the non-judgmental concept that does not fit into its value system. Meanwhile, historical results speak for themselves: a monolith of the Russian people has been created and has existed for centuries being a real monument to tolerance. M. Khomyakov writes: “The pluralism of the modern multicultural world requires a pluralism of tolerance paradigms”. The concept of tolerance most likely has its own sociocultural specificity in the Russian language picture of the world. It is inorganic for the Russian concept sphere, more precisely, it is distinguished by “non-general expression”: based on the cooperation and agreement of cultures, ethnic groups and religions, social communities, the Russian conceptual model of tolerance has withstood the test of time.

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