

**A corpus-driven usage-feature analysis of the
concept 'Fate' in the modern Russian and American
English languages**

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1. Introduction

The role of fate in the lives of human beings has been the subject of debates for many centuries. Boethius, in his tractate "The Consolation of Philosophy", refers to fate as an agent of Divine intelligence, which "sets in motion separately individual things, and assigns to them severally individual position, form, and time." (Boethius 2004:85). Researches agree that concept 'FATE' is not only present in all aspects of American and Russian cultures but is also reflected in the core of individual conscience (Arutyunova 1993:9).

The belief in fate as a superior yet dominating and unpredictable force could be traced in the earliest example of Anglo-Saxon literature. The author of *Beowulf* writes about *wyrd*, the Old English *fate*, "Wyrd often saves an doomed hero as long as his courage is good" (*Beowulf*: lines 572-3), or "Fate will unwind as it must!" (*Beowulf*: line 284). The same fatalistic idea of unpredictable future and uncontrollable life events is common in traditional Russian culture where fate "...predetermines, breaks, sends and plays..." (Kovshova 1994:137). Furthermore, Wierzbicka states that in Russian culture the concept of *sud'ba* 'fate' is "a key concept in all the social strata." (Wierzbicka 1992:103).

This study is restricted to three English and four Russian lexemes. The English lexemes include *fate*, *destiny* and *fortune*. The Russian lexemes are */sud'ba/* 'fate', */dolya/* 'fate, lot', */prednaznachenie/* 'fate, predestination, destiny' and */udel/* 'fate, lot'.

1.1 Historical traditions in Russian and Anglo-Saxon concepts of 'FATE'

Historically, both cultures were obedient subscribers to the Christian doctrine of fate, predestination and inability of an individual to change to course of life events. Describing the position of the above-mentioned phenomena in Anglo-Saxon culture, Wierzbicka cites Weber (1968:98), "the great political and cultural struggles of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were fought... and... the doctrine of predestination was considered its most characteristic dogma" (1992:104). Majority of Russian researches base

their work about the concept of 'FATE' and predestination on Russian folklore, Russian literature of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and various dictionary definitions. The following Russian proverbs reflect the naïve folk philosophy: 'You cannot escape your fate', 'Fate ties up your hands'.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Anglo-Saxon and Russian traditional understanding of 'FATE' began to diverge. Following the old traditions of Russian religion and philosophy, further development of the concept 'FATE' mainly remained within the framework of "fatalism", 'obedience', 'resignation' and 'redemption'"(Zhdanova 2006, 36:2). Wierzbicka reflects upon this point from the perspective of Russian grammar, which "is unusually rich in constructions referring to things that happen to people against their will or irrespective of their will"(1992: 108). On the other hand, Anglo-Saxon philosophy of this period promotes the ideas of empirism, rationalism and individual effort, "from glorification of God to glorification of self..." where as a result "fate, clearly, ...lost its other-worldly orientation"(Wierzbicka 1993:105).

Another important starting point for understanding the fundamental differences of the concept 'FATE' in Russian and Anglo-Saxon cultures has been made by Faryno:

Even though the Russian term *sud'ba* is customarily rendered into English as 'fate', these are two basically different concepts. *Sud'ba* does not contain within itself chance, coincidence, risk, just as 'fate' is not connected with the meaning to 'judge', to 'judge beforehand'. 'FATE', even that which is personified and situated beyond the subject, leaves to the subject its own peculiar 'free will'; it can, for example 'be either provoked or not, or it can be opposed, whereas *sud'ba* does not take this kind of 'will' into consideration: one must subordinate himself to it, accept it with humility – *pokorit'sya*. (1995:108)

Faryno considers this particular aspect of relation between *sud'ba* and 'free will' as "the basic difference in ... Russian attitude and the Western attitude."(1995:108)

1.2 Modern research of the concept FATE

According to Gak (1994:198), fate as a general structure is "a movement of life, changes in the situations of the human being. Those changes could be dependent or independent of someone's free will." Table 1 illustrates four

variations of relation between freedom and will in the realm of 'FATE', presented by Gak as common in many cultures.

Table 1. Variations of relations between freedom and will (Gak 1994:199)

Freedom	Source of will	
	Man himself	Supernatural
Freedom of choice	1. "Man is a maker of his fate"	2. "Everything comes from God"
No freedom of choice	3. "Hope for good luck"	4. "Fate cannot be changed"

1.2.1. Lingo-cultural aspect of the concept 'FATE' in English, Russian and French languages by Abaeva

Abaeva has been studying the concept of 'FATE' in English, Russian and French linguistic culture in the respective poetry of the Romantic period. Abaeva used the following oppositions proposed by Gak (1992:201-2-3): *fate/free will*, *constant/changing*, *happy/unhappy fate*, *just/unjust fate*, *changeable/unchangeable*, *active/passive ways of changing fate* and their realization in selected context (2006:254). Focusing on the first opposition *fate/free will*, Abaeva (2006:254) acknowledges the importance of this polarity, which has been noted by many linguists. Moreover, she argues that Wierzbicka's point of view that the word *fate* cannot be used to describe the events completely dependent on free will does not apply in Russian language providing the example by Shmelev (1994 6:228), "Protasov's precise kick decided the fate of the match, the fate of the match has been decided by one goal".

The results of interpretation of the opposition *changeable/unchangeable fate* demonstrate shifting towards the changeability of fate (Abaeva 2006:256). Gak is convinced, unlike Faryno that based on folk wisdom, resistance and humility are the two sides of relationships with 'fate' in Russian culture (1992:202). Thus, according to Abaeva (2006:256), there is a strong similarity between the Anglo-Saxon and Russian linguistic cultures: both agree that fate could be changed, corrected. In regards to the opposition *just/unjust* Abaeva finds another similarity between the two cultures, as in both fate is perceived as mostly unjust (2006:256).

1.2.2 Motivational models and diachronic aspect in studying Russian semantic perception of the world (semantic field of 'fate, happiness, luck') by Urbanovich

Diachronic analysis of the concept 'FATE' revealed the addition of new models in the modern language in comparison with the ancient Russian: the addition of a model 'fate is a game' and the use of words connected with games (2005:194-5). The occurrence of the new model Urbanovich attributes to the constant connection of 'fate' and 'game' in Russian literature of the 19th century, for example by Pushkin in *Dame of spades* and *Masquerade*, or by Lermontov in *The hero of our times*; furthermore, Urbanovich states that the conceptual metaphor 'fate is a game' has become the most common in Russian modern publicism and advertising (2005:195).

Further detailed analysis of the semantic field shows that the two contradicting components of the modern concept 'FATE', such as predetermination on one side and free will on the other side, are the results of layering of various understandings of 'fate' related to various historical periods. (Urbanovich 2005:203)

1.2.3. Characteristics of universal concept of 'FATE' in Russian and English languages by Zhdanova

Zhdanova studied the use of the word *fate* in various text of Russian and English literary discourse: the motifs of 'judgment', of a 'part' vs. 'whole' and personification of '*fate*' are considered to be the common for both cultures (2006:53). The presence of the following gestalt structures are also thought of as common for Russian and English literary discourse: fate is an active, live, emotional being that has power over humans; fate as the object of action, playing the passive role; moreover, the metaphors of 'judgment', 'doom', 'verdict' are also common (2006:53). The difference in understanding of 'FATE' lies in prevalence of the motifs of burden, humbleness and redemption in Russian culture vs. empiricism, rationalism and individualism in Anglo-Saxon culture (Zhdanova 2006:53-4).

1.2.4 Concepts across cultures – a corpus driven and contrastive study of 'FATE' in Polish, Russian and Ukrainian by Glynn and Krawczak (2011)

The analysis of Spoken subsection of the Russian National Corpus and on-line diaries suggest that in Russian 'FATE' is looked at as a higher power that determines people's lives and is mostly conceptualized negatively.

2. Research

2.1. Importance

Over the past two decades there has been a steady growth in the interest for comparative cultural and linguistic analysis. Political changes in Russia and growing availability of various on-line resources made it possible to conduct a corpus-based research not only using the available texts from classic literature and official periodicals but also the latest samples of independent personal communication sites, available in the same format in different countries, such as Live Journal. The concept of 'FATE' has been the subject of steady interest for the researches of Russian culture and language. The available research of conceptual structures from the last two decades conducted by specialists in Russian linguistics has been based on folklore, poetry and literature using the general scientific methods of "observation, analysis, synthesis, analogy, comparison" as well as "contextual, interpretive and other methods" (Abaeva 2006). Diachronic analysis of the motivational semantic models of lexemes with the meaning of 'FATE' has been conducted by Urbanovich (2005: 203). Concept analysis of national specifics of the universal concept 'FATE' in Russian and English languages has been performed by Zhdanova (2006:52-4). Cognitive and corpus methods developed by Gries (2006), Divjak (2006), and Glynn (2009, 2010) have been applied in a corpus driven and contrastive study of 'FATE' in Polish, Russian and Ukrainian by Glynn and Krawczak (2011).

2.2 Research goal

The main goal of the study is to continue the operationalization and objectification of formerly highly subjective semantic research of the concept 'FATE', to compare and quantitatively analyze the collected corpus data

regarding the semantic field of the concept 'FATE' in Russian and American English languages, to extend the number of studied lexemes, and to provide data for further research.

2.3 Research method

Glynn and Krawczak (2011) posed a question whether conceptual structure could be described empirically in their corpus-driven usage-based contrastive study of 'FATE' in Polish, Russian and Ukrainian languages. Glynn and Krawczak (2011) argue that the traditional approaches to Cognitive Models, developed by Lakoff (1987), Wierzbicka (1997) and Bartmiński (2006), may be good for nuances of the modern language. However, they do not give information about the social variations involved (19th century vs. 20th century), regional variations (US vs. UK) or cultural nuances (Protestant culture vs. Catholic culture). Moreover, the accuracy of Idealized Cognitive Model cannot be falsified.

This corpus-driven research of 2012 LiveJournal on-line diaries entries in Russian and English languages is intended to continue the above mentioned study, using slightly different usage-feature analysis of six semantic factors while extending the number of lexemes used in Glynn-Krawczak (2011) from *sud'ba* and *zhrebij* to four lexemes *sud'ba*, *dolya*, *prednaznachenie* and *udel* in Russian language (the lexeme *zhrebij* was excluded due to insignificant number of examples), as well as bringing three English lexemes *fate*, *destiny* and *fortune* into the equation.

Seven hundred written language samples were analyzed: one hundred samples for each of four lexemes in Russian language *sud'ba*, *dolya*, *prednaznachenie* and *udel*, as well as one hundred samples for each one of English lexemes *fate*, *destiny* and *fortune*. The samples containing quotations from classic poetry and literature were excluded. The following multifactorial exploratory statistical techniques were applied to the results: Multiple Correspondence, Hierarchical Cluster, and Logistic Regression Analysis.

The data collection and analysis present a difficult and time consuming task to a researcher, as each and every written sample must be interpreted, tested and operationalized using seventeen different factors. Another challenge lies in the nature of on-line diaries, because more often than not, the researcher is dealing with fragmented thoughts, which are often not punctuated and not necessarily followed or preceded by material that could help the interpretation. Yet, the main difficulty is in operationalizing the seman-

tic analysis of massive data from different languages, where the intimate knowledge of those cultures and language proficiency of a researcher plays the key role.

2.4 The following usage factors were analyzed:

1. Determinism

Non-deterministic

("I will save my daughter from this horrible fate.")

Deterministic

("Fate will let the bus run off the road.")

Deterministic Divine

("Fate is God's thing.")

2. Agentivity

Non-agentive

("No one has the right to decide upon the fate of another person")

Agentive

("Fate decided otherwise...")

3. Patient type

Specified human

("Na moyu dolyu ostayutsya tol-ko iskusstvo, tvorchestvo, pomogayuschee mne zhit.")

("My lot is art and creativity that help me live")

Non-Specified human

("Fortune favors the bold")

Non-human

("You wouldn't even know me apart from this whole world that shares my fate")

Event

(“*Periody, samoj sud’boj predznachennye dlya vybora partnera*”,
“Periods designated by fate for choosing a partner”)

Abstract thing

(“*A ya to dumal vsyu dorogu i budet Lenin s Trotskim ekhat’ i rassuzhdat’ o sud’be mira*”,
“I thought all the way that Lenin and Trotsky will be riding and discussing the fate of the world “)

Fate as a patient

(“I think I have a choice, some control over my destiny”)

4. Axiology

Negative

(“*Kogda sud’ba lomaet cheloveka verolomno, bezzhalostno i vdrebezgi, my zadaemsya voprosom: ”Za chto? Ch’ya zdes’ vina?”*”
“When fate breaks a human being treacherously, mercilessly, smashes him to pieces – we begin asking, “Why? Whose fault is this?”)

Neutral

(“*... u kazhdogo sud’by raznye, khot’ i pokhozhy v nekotorem*”,
‘... everybody’s fates are different, even though they are somewhat similar’)

Positive

(“*... i teper’ uzhe sud’ba zastavlyaet ee samu zadumat’sya o sub’ektivnom schast’e*”,
‘... and now fate already makes her think about her own subjective happiness’)

5. Justification

Unjust

(“*No tut stalo yasno, cho ya v situatsii, kogda moya zhizn i sud’ba zavisit of drugikh, sovershenno ne znavshix menya lyudej, kotorym absolutno vse ravno, chto so mnoj proiskhodit*”,

“But it became clear that I am in a situation, when my life and fate depend on other people who absolutely do not know me and don't care what happens with me”)

Just

(“We have been on top too long... Now we have met our destiny...”)

Unknown

(“This is an interesting twist of fate”)

6. Metaphor type

For the purpose of operationalization in metaphor analysis, all seven lexemes in conceptual metaphors were assigned to a single class of 'Fate'. There was no initial hypothetical list of metaphors, thus all conceptual metaphors listed below are based on actual results found in the examples.

Conceptual

'Fate is God'

'Fate is a being'

'Fate is a thing'

'Fate is a journey'

'Fate is a container'

'Fate is a book'

'Fate is a game'

'Fate is a building'

Literal

Non-conceptual metaphors

3. Data analysis

3.1 Multiple Correspondence Analysis

This exploratory technique allows to convert the frequencies of contingency tables to distances and to visually present the results on a two-dimensional plane (Glynn 2009:99-100).

3.1.1. Correspondence Analysis of Lexemes, Determination, Agentivity, Patient type and Axiology

Combination of all seven lexemes together with Determination, Agentivity, Patient type, and Axiology (Figure 1) yielded the following:

- There are four distinctive groups clustered in all four quarters of the graph;
- Three English lexemes *fate*, *destiny* and *fortune* are grouped in the left-upper quadrant united by strong *Positive* and slightly weaker *Neutral* relation to Event (Axiology), as well as strong tendency to relate to 'FATE' as a patient itself. All three lexemes are almost equally distant from Non-Deterministic and Deterministic positions, with Non-Deterministic interpretation of 'FATE' being more prominent and Deterministic Divine being the less significant and more remote connection. In terms of Agentivity, English lexemes *fate*, *destiny* and *fortune* are drawn closer to Non-Agentivity, which would reflect the general tendency in Anglo-Saxon culture to consider an individual being in control of his/her fate, though Agentive relation shows to be significant, but more remote.
- The right-upper quadrant is solely occupied by the Russian lexeme *sud'ba* with its strong tendency to be Deterministic, Deterministic Divine and Agentive. The Event, Non-human and Abstract Patient types are grouped closer to 'sud'ba' than Human Specific and Non-specific, even though the number of the latter is more significant than the Non-Human counterparts.
- The left-lower quadrant is taken by the Russian lexeme *prednaznachenie* with its predominate Non-Deterministic and Non-Agentive interpretation of 'FATE'. As could be noted, 'prednaznachenie' is related rather closely to a Specific Human Patient type and is slightly closer to Positive than Negative in Axiology, which would support the tendency of this lexeme to describe the destiny of a specific individual mostly in positive terms in Russian culture.

- The right-lower quadrant is housing the two remaining Russian lexemes *udel* and *dolya*, with *udel* being closer to *prednaznachenie* in being Non-Agentive and Non-Deterministic and *dolya* being closer to *sud'ba* with its drift towards Determinism and Agentivity. Both lexeme overlap in their relation to be attributed to Human Patient types and having negative connotation when used in language.

Figure 1. Correspondence Analysis of Lexemes, Determination, Agentivity, Patient type, and Axiology



3.1.2. Correspondence Analysis of Lexemes, Agentivity and Metaphor types

In Figure 2 there are also four distinctive groupings in the results:

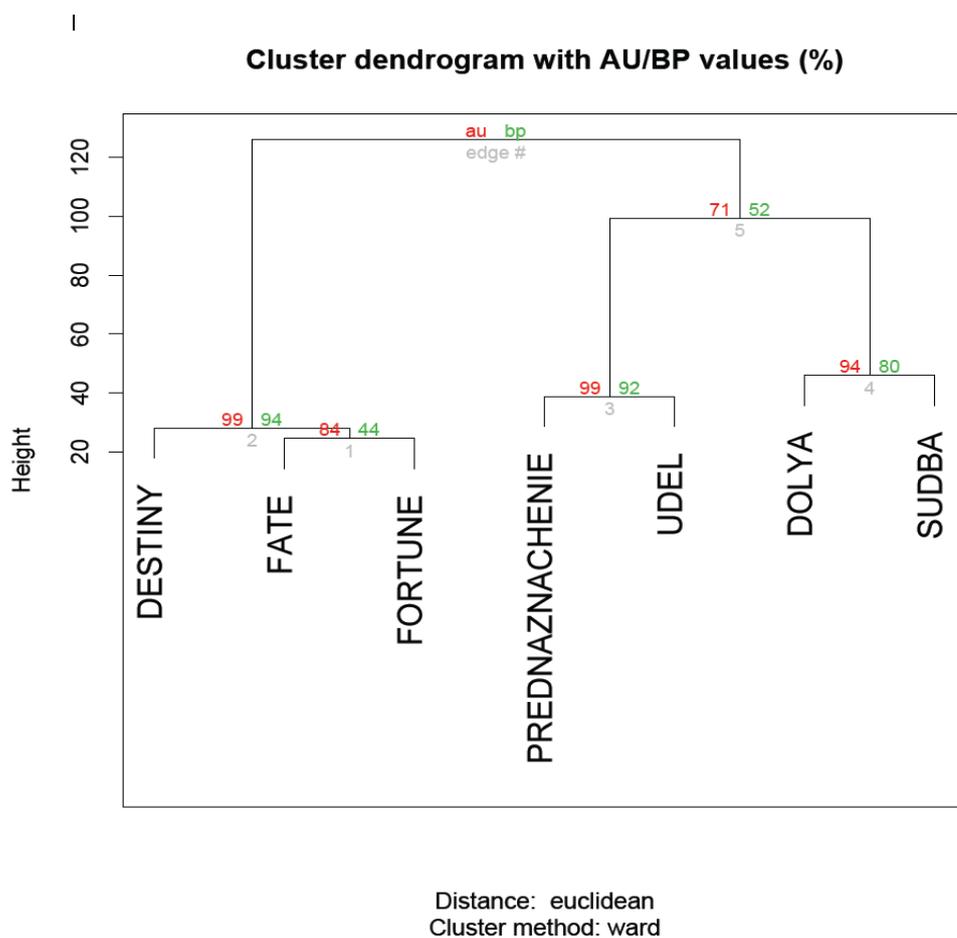
- The left-upper quadrant is dominated by the two English lexemes 'destiny' and 'fortune'; while 'fortune' has a stronger tendency to be Non-Agentive than 'destiny', they both overlap in their metaphoric comparison with a "book" that needs to be read. 'Destiny' has 'Fate as a journey' metaphor in its proximity, which is very consistent with its general meaning of destination in life.
- The right-upper quadrant is taken by the two central lexemes of the concept 'FATE' – English *fate* and Russian *sud'ba*: with *sud'ba* being slightly more prone to Agentivity than Non-Agentivity and *fate* displaying equal distance to both polarities, they are surrounded by six of nine detected conceptual metaphors such as 'Fate is a being', which confirms the tendency in Russian and Anglo-Saxon culture to animate their fates, to think of fate as divine and something that could be constructed, filled and read.
- The left-lower quadrant is inhabited by the two Russian lexemes *udel* and *prednaznachenie*, where they find themselves in the realm of literal metaphors or no metaphors at all, and the only conceptual metaphor in vicinity is 'Fate is a thing'. Both lexemes keep gravitating toward being Non-Agentive.
- The right-lower quadrant is solely devoted to the Russian *dolya* that is consistently closer to Agentivity and pulls two conceptual metaphors in its field such as 'Fate is a thing' and 'Fate is a game' which indicates the inanimate tendency in the use of this lexeme as well as something to gamble with in Russian culture.

3.2. Hierarchical Cluster Analysis

This type of analysis is similar to Correspondence Analysis; however, the frequencies, converted earlier to distances, are used for identification of clusters and visualized as a dendrogram (Glynn 2009:109). Lexemes were analyzed using the following set of variables: Lexeme-Determinism-Agentivity.

In the dendrogram below, the lexemes are clustered on the basis of their Agentivity, Determinism and Justification. The English lexemes are grouped together and show their tendency to be Agentive. There is an interesting separation among the four Russian lexemes in a cluster marked 5, as most often the semantic field of the concept 'FATE' is being divided on the polarity 'part vs. whole' where the lexemes *sud'ba* and *prednaznachenie* represent the whole, while *dolya* and *udel* represent the part. On the dendrogram it could be observed that those Russian lexemes are grouped differently: *dolya* and *sud'ba* are grouped together by their Agentivity with a high probability of 94%, and *prednaznachenie* is grouped with *udel* by their Non-Agentive tendencies with 99%, which confirms the results presented earlier in Figure 1. *Sud'ba* displays the weakest connection in the sub-cluster, because it is a hypernym. This is confirmed in Figure 1, where semantic fields of Russian and American English 'FATE', as well as their central lexemes *sud'ba* and *fate*, show their fundamental differences and overlapping points.

Figure 3. Hierarchical cluster analysis of Lexeme-Determinism-Agentivity variables



3.3 Logistic Regression Analysis of semantic features

This method is used for examination of the relation between one or several predictor variables and a response variable, where the response variable can demonstrate only two possible outcomes (Speelman 2012:181-2). Using the two languages, English and Russian, as a response variable, and Metaphor kinds – Determination – Justification as predictor variables, the analysis of this model has been done to determine whether the differences between the languages could be predicted.

Table 4. Logistic Regression model with Languages as a binary variable and Metaphor kinds-Determination-Justification as predictor variables

	Coef	S.E.	Wald Z	Pr(> Z)
Intercept	-0.7168	0.4827	-1.48	0.1376
Metaphor=Fate is a Being.	0.6586	0.4497	1.46	0.1430
Metaphor=Fate is a Journey.	1.1080	0.4938	2.24	0.0248
Metaphor=Fate is a book.	0.3754	1.3592	0.28	0.7824
Metaphor=Fate is a container.	0.9723	0.6871	1.42	0.1571
Metaphor=Fate is a game.	2.7261	0.6061	4.50	<0.0001
Metaphor=Fate is a thing.	0.7616	0.4709	1.62	0.1058
Metaphor=Literal	1.7993	0.4371	4.12	<0.0001
Determination=DeterministicDivine	1.3126	0.3555	3.69	0.0002
Determination=Non-Deterministic	0.5161	0.1786	2.89	0.0039
Justification=Unjust	0.3851	0.3363	1.14	0.2522
Justification=Unknown	-0.8770	0.2807	-3.12	0.0018

The results demonstrate the significance of 'Fate is a game', Literal metaphors and Deterministic perception of fate in Russian language.

Table 5 confirms the importance of 'Fate is a game' and literal metaphors in Russian language (all positive numbers in the "Estimate" column are related to Russian language), as well as confirms the importance of fate being Deterministic and Deterministic-Divine for modern Russian language users; however, the Non-Deterministic tendency is there as well. In American English language only one tendency "Justification-Unknown" is shown to be significant (all negative numbers in the "Estimate" column are pertaining to the English language): the tendency not to blame or praise the fate for its acts.

Table 5. Logistic Regression model II with Languages as a binary variable and Metaphor kinds-Determination-Justification as predictor variables

	Estimate	Std. Error	Z value	Pr(> z)
(Intercept)	-0.7168	0.4827	-1.485	0.13758
MetaphorFate is a Being.	0.6586	0.4497	1.465	0.143022
MetaphorFate is a Journey.	1.1080	0.4938	2.244	0.024845 *
MetaphorFate is a book.	0.3754	1.3592	0.276	0.782399
MetaphorFate is a container.	0.9723	0.6871	1.415	0.157050
MetaphorFate is a game.	2.7261	0.6061	4.498	6.86e-06 ***
MetaphorFate is a thing.	0.7616	0.4709	1.617	0.105823
MetaphorLiteral	1.7993	0.4371	4.117	3.84e-05 ***
DeterminationDeterministicDivine	1.3126	0.3555	3.692	0.000222 ***
DeterminationNon-Deterministic	0.5161	0.1786	2.889	0.003866 **
JustificationUnjust	0.3851	0.3363	1.145	0.252225
JustificationUnknown	-0.8770	0.2807	-3.124	0.001781 **

4. Summary

The results of Multiple Correspondence Analysis suggest that regardless of changes in perception of 'FATE' in American and Russian cultures during the last two centuries, the main distinctions such as perception of 'FATE' as Deterministic but Non-Agentive (things may happen but it is up to an individual to take charge) in American culture and Deterministic and Agentive in Russian culture (things happen and one has to accept it as a burden) remain present and are still significant for the modern language users. American-English language users tend to relate to Justification of 'FATE' as neutral and Russian ones as more unjust. In relation to Axiology, English lexemes *fate*, *destiny* and *fortune* tend to gravitate toward positive ways of describing fate, while all Russian lexemes, except the lexeme 'fate' which shows to be in between of those polarities, demonstrate their tendency to be used in the description of the negative sides of fate. Both cultures tend to personify 'FATE'.

Hierarchical Cluster Analysis confirms the fundamental differences between perceptions of 'FATE' Russian and American cultures; however, there is an overlap among the lexemes in both languages: the English *fortune* and Russian *prednaznachenie* and *udel* tend to be less Agentive.

Logistic Regression Analysis of semantic features confirms the stable connection between 'FATE' and conceptual metaphors 'Fate is a game' in Russian language. Literal metaphors are also significant for Russian language users. This is not to say that 'Fate is a game' metaphors are not present in American English language, it only underlines its importance. The results also demonstrate and confirm the tendency in Russian culture to perceive 'FATE' as Deterministic and Deterministic-Divine. In modern American culture, the events caused by fate are most often thought of as happening for unknown reason, without being just or unjust.

The validity of this study is limited by the number of examples used for analysis, difficulties with operationalization of certain examples, as well as by absence of diachronic studies using the same categories for usage-feature analysis.

This research would greatly benefit from diachronic analysis, where the increased number of examples and more complete list of lexemes pertaining to the semantic field of 'FATE' in both languages would be included in research with standardized operationalization procedures.

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