

# The Russian relational adjective and its translation equivalents in German

## A corpus-based analysis

### Abstract

Every language has its own language-specific phenomena. Concerning translations, these phenomena seem to be translated according to certain patterns in the target language. The phenomenon I am interested in is the Russian relational adjective (RA). The Russian RA, which is always followed by a noun representing the concept to be determined (e.g., *платёжный день*), is a neutral and productive denominal formation. The German equivalent of the RA + N collocation would be the compound (a combination of two words: *Abrechnungstag*) while the German the RA is scientifically and linguistically rather marginal. Still, a problem of the Russian RA is that it has not been clearly defined so far in order to distinguish RAs from other adjective classes when there are mixed. Therefore, my first aim is to present a definition that is at the same time motivated by the properties that are essential and applicable as a means of determining for each expression whether it is a RA.

While the first part of my paper focuses on the structure as well as the history of this word class in both languages, the second part focuses on the usage of the Russian RA, which is, as already mentioned, usually translated as a compound in German. In this study I analyse whether this is indeed the case. In order to provide authentic data for the research, I tested the hypothesis on the basis of the 100 most frequent Russian RAs and their 10 strongest noun collocations which I extracted from the Sketch Engine corpus. Because there is no frequency list of RAs only, I extracted them from the list with adjectives with the help of the previously established definition. Then I translated these 1000 examples into German. My aim was to determine all the possible and usual translations. A discussion of a number of examples will provide an empirical support for the quantitative analysis.

However, the analysis falsified the hypothesis, as it was shown that in most cases Russian RAs do not have to be translated as compounds in German, since other translation possibilities are given to the same extent. At the same time, I showed that these translation possibilities do not occur equally frequently, because, when directly compared, compounds outnumber the semantically equivalent German collocation. Besides, as translations are not always straightforward, the study emphasized the importance of a detailed linguistic and world knowledge as part of an empirical research, and the benefit of using corpora as part of authentic language acquisition.