# Data-Driven Approach to Identification of Latin Phrases in Russian Web-Crawled Corpora

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# Abstract

Latin phrases are an integral part of the language of educated speakers in many (European) languages. Besides lexical units of Latin origin that have been already adapted to the orthography of the respective host language and calques, phrases retaining the original form and orthography can also be found in many texts. Due to the rather low frequency of the phenomenon, however, any systematic attempt of its analysis was a real challenge before the advent of very large (multi-Gigaword) corpora.

Our paper presents a method of semi-automatic detection of Latin phrases in a Russian web corpus based on applying a Latin tagger and a series of filtrations performed by standard Linux utilities. The preliminary analysis of the resulting candidate list is shown in the concluding part of the paper.

Keywords: Latin Quotations, Code Switching, Corpus-Driven Approach

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Более того, здесь есть своя "старуха ex machina" — Антонида Васильевна, внезапно возвращающаяся с порога смерти, меняющая расклад в семействе Загорянских и заражающая главного героя — учителя Алексея — игорной страстью [1].

### Introduction

Amount of lexical evidence for low-frequency lexical items, such as idioms and other types of fixed expressions, could hardly be considered sufficient not only in the pre-corpus times, but also during early decades of corpus linguistics. Linguistic analysis of and lexicographic treatment of such phenomena had to be based on a rather small number of examples found in collections of citations slips, or often hapax occurrences in first-generation corpora. Even with a 100 Megaword corpus at hand, a corpus-based methodology only could be applied, i.e. attesting occurrences of the "suspected" phrases based on their lists found in legacy lexicographic works.

With the advent of the "big data" paradigm to corpus linguistics in the form of multi-Gigaword corpora, as well as with the availability of robust tolls for their linguistic annotation, the situation gradually began to change. Russian also belongs to languages with corpora of this class available, such as enTenTen [2], GICR [3, 4], Araneum Russicum [5], Taiga [6], or Omnia Russica [7]. Having such resources at hand, linguists are not only capable of finding many more

occurrences of the phrases their existence was known in advance but can also try to apply a potentially more efficient – corpus-driven – approach to identifying and analyzing them in the corpus. Our paper presents an experiment in the framework of which we tried to apply such a data-driven approach to semi-automatic identification of Latin text fragments in a multi-Gigaword Russian corpus. Due to its availability in the source format, we decided to use the data of Araneum Russicum Maximum [8], a web-crawled corpus developed in the framework of the Aranea Project [9].

# 1. Latin Phrases in Russian Texts

Within the Russian linguistic tradition, Latin quotations (or other types of Latin text chunks) appearing in Russian texts are usually referred to as крылатые выражения ("winged expressions"), a term originating back in antique times (it can be found in Homer's Odyssey). A similar term is used in some other languages, such as German ("geflügelte Wörter"), or Polish ("skrzydlate słowa"). On the other hand, this term is rarely used in English linguistics (though it can be found in some sources [10]), and all foreign language text fragments are usually described as quotations. From the contrastive linguist's perspective, this situation may be somewhat confusing, as both terms cannot always be treated as synonyms.

At this stage of our work, we were only interested in expressions written in Latin script appearing in Russian corpora (i.e. not only those falling to "quotation" category), though some other types of Latin-originated expressions can also be found in Russian texts, for example, phrases transliterated to Cyrillics (e.g. де-факто, де-юре).

## 2. Related Work

As far as we were able to find out, the phenomenon of Latinisms appearing in Russian texts is usually studied from the "Latin origin perspective" only, i.e. research papers [11] and lexicographic works [12] concentrate on Latin phrases translated to Russian.

	Latin expression	Fiction	Non-fiction
	etc	95	1165
	nota bene	14	11
Group I	persona non grata	2	4
	post factum	5	42
	pro et contra	2	28
	Subtotal	118	1250
	De gustibus non est disputandum	5	0
	Fiat lux!	1	2
Group II	Memento mori	32	33
	Per aspera ad astra	3	7
	Urbi et orbi	2	33
	Subtotal	43	75
	Alea jacta est	12	5
	In vino veritas	10	4
Group III	O tempora, o mores!	2	4
	Panem et circenses	3	2
	Veni, vidi, vici	5	5
	Subtotal	32	20
	Total	193	1345

**Table 1**. Latin phrases in the Russian National Corpus [16]

Among notable exceptions, we can find works of Grudeva [13] (also with Pavlova [14]) who studied appearance of a collection of 15 Latin expressions in the Russian National Corpus

13

(RNC) [15]. She divided them into three lexical groups (clichés, proverbial expressions, quotations), compared their frequencies in fiction and non-fiction texts [16] – see Table 1 – and also provided a breakdown by the time of origin of the respective texts (not shown here).

These results are not easy to fully reproduce today, as the size of the RNC has slightly increased meanwhile. But even today's frequencies are not significantly higher, with over 85% of all occurrences represented by the same single expression (*etc*). It is therefore obvious that RNC can hardly be regarded as a sufficient resource for studying of Latinisms in Russian texts.

# **3.** Needles in a Haystack

Russian corpora naturally contain some amount of non-Cyrillic tokens, consisting mostly of letters of the Latin alphabet. They may represent not only words coming from various languages (predominantly English, German and French, even transliterated Russian), but also all sorts of proper names (e.g. Google, Yandex, iPhone), acronyms and abbreviations (HDMI, BMW, inc.), Roman numerals (XXI, viii), physical units (Kbps), variables in equations, URLs and e-mail addresses, etc. Within the context of our work, we are mostly interested only in all-Latin tokens [17] that are potential candidates for Latinisms. Table 2 shows the situation in three Araneum Russicum III web corpora of different sizes. The figures were extracted directly by querying the respective corpora via the web interface of the NoSketch Engine [18] corpus manager [19].

	Minus	(125M)	Maius (	1.25G)	Maximum	(19.8G)
Tokens (with)	hits	i.p.m.	hits	i.p.m.	hits	i.p.m.
at least one Latin char	1,256K	10,049	12,751K	10,201	201,603K	10,193
all-Latin	997K	7,972	10,127K	8,102	160,297K	8,104
at least two chars long	936K	7,490	9,528K	7,623	150,651K	7,617
lowercase-only	168K	1,343	1,770K	1,416	28,012K	1,416

Table 2. Latin characters in the Russian Aranea corpora

It can be seen from the table that (1) the relative frequencies (i.p.m.) change only insignificantly with the change corpus size, and (2) even if we only considered the all-lowercase candidate strings from the smallest corpus, their manual analysis would hardly be feasible.

#### 3.1. A "Brute Force" Approach

Fortunately, we do not have to look for potential Latinisms manually and can use a powerful tool – the Latin tagger. Surprisingly enough, Latin does not belong to low-resourced languages [20] – several treebanks are available that enabled the creation of language models for (to our knowledge) at least two taggers with a FLOSS license. TreeTagger [21] comes with two different language models that were trained on various corpora [22], while UDPipe [23] works with a model [24] trained on one of the Latin treebanks developed within the Universal Dependencies [25] Project. More suitable for our work is TreeTagger, due to one of its key features – it provides for explicit indication of the out-of-vocabulary (OOV) lexical items. All word forms not found during the morphological lexicon lookup are flagged as "
unknown>", which will be the tagging result of the bulk of the data in a Russian corpus.

To make the processing as simple as possible, we decided not to care about the efficiency by attempting to optimize the processing time, and used mostly the standard Linux utilities (such as grep, sort, uniq, etc.)

#### 3.2. The Method

The overall idea of our quest for Latin phrases can be summarized as follows:

- 1. Take the tokenized Russian corpus, delete annotation (if any).
- 2. Run a Latin tagger on it.

3. Delete tokens tagged as <unknown> (leaving empty lines).

- 4. Delete numbers and punctuation.
- 5. Delete annotation (tags and lemmas).
- 6. Merge multiple empty lines.

7. Change newlines after consecutive non-empty lines to spaces (i.e. putting multi-word expressions at the same line).

8. Produce a frequency list.

Some of these steps applied to a Russian sentence [26] (producing the "de facto" expression) are shown in Table 3.

Word	Tag	Lemma	Word	Tag	Lemma	Word
Но	N:voc	<unknown></unknown>				
если	N:voc	<unknown></unknown>				
мы	NPR	<unknown></unknown>				
будем	N:voc	<unknown></unknown>				
говорить	NPR	<unknown></unknown>				
0	N:voc	<unknown></unknown>				
положении	NPR	<unknown></unknown>				
de	PREP	de	de	PREP	de	de
facto	N:abl	factum	facto	N:abl	factum	facto
,	PUN	,	,	PUN	,	
то	N:voc	<unknown></unknown>				
есть	N:voc	<unknown></unknown>				
,	PUN	,	,	PUN	,	
грубо	N:voc	<unknown></unknown>				
говоря	N:voc	<unknown></unknown>				
,	PUN	,	,	PUN	,	
два	N:voc	<unknown></unknown>				
варианта	NPR	<unknown></unknown>				
	SENT			SENT	•	

**Table 3.** Processing steps 2, 3 and 4 + 5

It is obvious, that most sentences (or even entire documents) will *not contain any* all-Latin tokens. However, the deduplication of empty lines (by means of the Linux *uniq* utility) makes the problem of ignoring the non-Latin (mostly Cyrillic) tokens really simple.

#### 3.3. The Processing

The speed of processing naturally depends not only on the amount of data but also on the computing power available – a multi-core machine with plenty of main memory is definitely a great advantage here so that the most compute-intensive operation – tagging – could be run in several parallel processes. The whole procedure is shown in Table 4.

Operation	Tools used	Elapsed time
Deleting the original annotation	<i>cut</i> utility	2:54:34
Splitting source vertical to 10 parts	custom splitter	1:01:20
Tagging (10 parallel processes)	TreeTagger	9:07:21
Merging the tagged data	<i>cat</i> utility	2:48:56
Removing <unknown> and punctuation tokens,</unknown>	egrep, uniq and cut utilities	8:15:14
merging empty lines, deleting lemma a tag		
Producing the frequency distribution	sort and uniq utilities	0:00:02
Total time elapsed		24:07:27

Table 4. Processing times

Taking into account the huge amount of data to be processed (size of the source file was 644.8 GiB, yielding 258.2 GiB after removing the original annotation), the overall processing time is not that surprising. The most striking information is that, though it took slightly more than one day to compute the "rough" candidate list, the resulting distribution could finally be processed just in two seconds.

# 4. Preliminary Results

Out of the 19,778,053,615 tokens of Araneum Russicum III Maximum, the procedure described above produced a list of 240,607 different candidate expressions consisting of two or more words, with 82,817 (34.4%) of them having a non-hapax frequency. It is obvious that even such a list is too large for a manual analysis.

Freq	Expression	Freq	Expression		Freq	Expression
21853	Read more	2748	de Paris		1408	terra incognita
15881	in vitro	2692	Homo Sapiens		1406	Et Cetera
8558	Homo sapiens	2560	status quo		1344	et de
7671	in vivo	2439	Super Mario		1318	do it
7550	Made in	2352	Lotus Notes		1282	alter ego
6758	Canon EOS	2250	alma mater		1276	Creative Suite
5439	read more	2096	Face ID		1267	Athlon II
4825	Read More	2082	Candida albicans		1252	per os
4782	homo sapiens	1959	Liqui Moly		1251	Note II
4423	Credit Suisse	1928	Homo erectus		1244	Focus ST
4264	made in	1802	Junior Suite		1204	Opera Mobile
4187	Chrome OS	1773	are here		1204	It is
3819	in situ	1627	Da Vinci		1173	Jerusalem Post
3436	Institute for	1604	EOS for		1141	Natus Vincere
3203	PS Vita	1506	LIQUI MOLY		1141	Alma Mater
2951	ID NO	1454	Marco Polo		1122	Homo habilis
2890	Deus Ex	1444	Opus Dei		1095	Lotus Domino
2885	TRACE MODE	1439	it is		1093	SATA III
2824	de facto	1434	in der		1092	Do It
2756	ad hoc	1409	Video Editor	] [	1065	Runa Capital

Table 5. Most frequent candidate expressions

But let us first have a look at the data before attempting any further (semi-)automated processing. Table 5 shows sixty most frequent items of the list.

Some items in the table look surprising, or even amusing. The "*Read more*" expression heading the list was (nonsensically) analyzed as consisting of two Latin nouns, and tagged as *Read/N:abl/rea* and *more/N:abl/morus/mos*, i.e. "*culprit, sinner*" and "*black mulberry tree*" ambiguous with "*behavior, custom, …*"[27], respectively – with both nouns being in ablative case. It is worth noticing that appearance of the expression in our list also indicates potential issues in the boilerplate removal and filtration procedure applied during corpus processing.

In general, however, the beginning of the list looks "processable".

### 4.1. At First Sight

The subsequent analysis is based on the first 400 lines of the candidate list. In the first step expressions in languages other than Latin (mostly English, but also French, German, Spanish and Italian) and also those representing proper names (mobile phones, apps, car and camera brand names, etc.) were manually sorted out.

As the list contained case information of the respective phrases, we were usually able to distinguish between the proprial use of a certain phrase and its use in its original meaning (alma mater vs. *Alma mater / Alma Mater / ALMA MATER*).

Such distinctions (verified by corpus queries) helped us to sort out expressions representing for example names of journals (*Ex Libris*), computer games (*Natus Vincere*), theatres (*Et Cetera*), music bands (*Status Quo*), etc.

In cases where the use of capital letters was not relevant, the respective frequencies could be aggregated. In our list, this was the case *De facto* (353), and *de facto* (2824), but not *De Facto* (601); *et cetera* (762), and *Et cetera* (328), but not *Et Cetera* (1406); *Alma mater* (964), and *alma mater* (2250), – here even *Alma Mater* (1141) was used in its original meaning in some contexts.

The results are presented in tables clustering the Latin expressions into lexical groups, and the respective tables are sorted according to the rank of the first item in the table. For each expression, the absolute and relative frequency (in instances per million) is also shown. The use of lowercase and uppercase letters is preserved.

#### 4.2. Terms, Nomenclature, etc.

The most frequent expressions can be roughly divided into four groups: medicine terms, biological nomenclature, legal terms and expressions from religious discourse. Understandably, the respective expressions need not be used strictly in their terminological meaning in all contexts – a more precise analysis, however, would require much more time than was available for this work.

The resulting lists are shown in Tables 6 to 9 - the ten most frequent items are shown for longer lists.

Rank	Freq	i.p.m.	Expression
2	15881	0.8030	in vitro
4	7671	0.3879	in vivo
48	1252	0.0633	per os
103	664	0.0336	In vitro
152	498	0.0252	ex vivo
159	471	0.0238	spina bifida

Table 6. Medical terms

Table 7.	Biological	nomenclature
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Rank	Freq	i.p.m.	Expression
3	8558	0.4327	Homo sapiens
9	4782	0.2418	homo sapiens
22	2692	0.1361	Homo Sapiens
28	2082	0.1053	Candida albicans
30	1928	0.0975	Homo erectus
56	1122	0.0567	Homo habilis
85	852	0.0431	Aloe Vera
245	337	0.0170	Aedes aegypti
283	304	0.0154	Apis mellifera
326	272	0.0138	Candida Albicans

Rank	Freq	i.p.m.	Expression
19	2824	0.1428	de facto
23	2560	0.1294	status quo
73	973	0.0492	de jure
74	971	0.0491	pro bono
100	682	0.0345	pro et contra
106	660	0.0334	post factum
161	470	0.0238	casus belli
164	460	0.0233	ex officio
219	360	0.0182	res publica
227	353	0.0178	De facto

 Table 8. Legal/political terms

 Table 9. Biblical/religious expressions

Rank	Freq	i.p.m.	Expression
37	1444	0.0730	Opus Dei
176	437	0.0221	memento mori
272	313	0.0158	Memento mori
289	300	0.0152	ex nihilo
377	239	0.0121	Sola Scriptura
394	234	0.0118	Corpus Christi

#### 4.3. And All the Rest

The bulk of the remaining Latin expressions can be approximately classified as the Grudeva's Group I (from Table 1), though we admit that such categorization of some of the items may be disputable. As we only considered expressions consisting of at least two words, her item ranked 1 (etc) is naturally absent from our list, though its full form (et cetera, Et cetera) is still present there. Two other expressions from Group I (persona non grata and post factum) have been placed into our legal list, while the most frequent occurrences of nota bene (i.e. Nota Bene) have been sorted out as being mostly used as proper names.

Table 10 shows the twenty most frequent expressions from this group.

Rank	Freq	i.p.m.	Expression
13	3819	0.1931	in situ
20	2756	0.1393	ad hoc
26	2250	0.1138	alma mater
41	1408	0.0712	terra incognita
45	1282	0.0648	alter ego
63	1004	0.0508	de novo
66	997	0.0504	tabula rasa
77	964	0.0487	Alma mater
78	961	0.0486	per se
86	835	0.0422	sui generis
92	762	0.0385	et cetera
94	752	0.0380	mutatis mutandis
137	536	0.0271	honoris causa
140	529	0.0267	modus vivendi
143	525	0.0265	modus operandi
171	447	0.0226	perpetuum mobile
203	385	0.0195	prima facie
218	361	0.0183	inter alia
251	328	0.0166	Et cetera
252	327	0.0165	urbi et orbi

Table 10. Unclassified expressions

#### 4.4. This Is the Beginning Only

Our present work was targeted more to getting an idea of what can be expected during a more profound analysis, than to receiving a "definite" classification of Latinisms in Russian texts.

The (semi-)automatically produced list exhibits some issues that could be most likely – at least partially – also tackled by automated procedures, e.g. by trying to get rid of "obviously" non-Latin expressions. But even if we managed to shrink the list size by the estimated 75%, it would still remain a lot of material to study.

# 5. Conclusions and Further Work

From the computational perspective, the presented work can be treated as a "proof of feasibility" of such a data-driven approach identification of foreign-language text fragments in a Russian corpus. We can say that it was successful, and it might be potentially used for searching not only of Latin phrases but of those of other languages as well. In the case of Russian, three other languages might be good candidates for similar research – English, French and German. In such a case, however, it would be reasonable to include one more step into the procedure: identification of all-Latin tokens (allowing also for accented letters to include French and German words). Such an arrangement might also decrease the total processing time, as the semi-product could be reused for several languages.

At the time of writing this paper, we were able to analyze and classify only a very small part of the candidate list produced. We not only want to process more of it but also provide the data to other researchers interested in Russian lexicology and lexicography.

A perspective area of research could also be a more systematic attempt of identification of Latin phrases written in Cyrillic script, such as "терра инкогнита", e.g. by applying the Latin tagger to Russian texts transliterated to Latin script. Though we can see some potential pitfalls here (such as inconsistencies in the transliteration), we believe that it is (at least) worth trying.

The described methodology could be also used to identify foreign-language text fragments in corpora of other languages. Our pilot experiment with an English corpus, however, indicated that it might be not that easy – the English morphological dictionary present in the TreeTagges's English language model [28] seems to include a great amount of Latin lexical items, thus making the simplistic approach of looking for "<unknown>" tokens problematic. We can, however, treat it as a next challenge.

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