

However Way You Look at Things Here ...

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Однако: however, but, all the same, apparently, wow

Однако seems like a pretty straightforward word. And it is — most of the time.

In many cases, it can be translated as "however." Like "however," *однако* is used to show some kind of contrast with a previous statement. It's a great qualifier in scientific and scholarly papers that signals: Having just made my case, now I'm going to hedge it or contradict it outright. Мы предполагаем, что эти выводы могут распространяться и на другие группы детей, однако требуются дополнительные исследования. (We believe that these conclusions might be valid for other groups of children, too. However, we need to conduct additional research.)

Sometimes *однако* can be a synonym of *но* (but): Он выжил, однако потерял дар речи (He survived, but he lost the ability to speak).

In other cases, it's a synonym for *тем не менее* (all the same): Дети знают о Снегурочке,

однако они задают вопросы о её родителях, о том, где она живёт (Kids know about the Snow Maiden, but all the same, they ask about her parents and where she lives).

In still other cases, it might be "although": Колокольчик был частью конной упряжки, однако далеко не каждый хозяин мог себе позволить купить дорогое литое изделие (A bell was part of a horse's harness, although far from every owner could afford such an expensive metal work).

But in colloquial Russian, однако gets tricky. It can be used as an interjection to express surprise, often of the unpleasant and unwanted sort. It's as if the notion of contrast between expected reality and actual reality got distilled into just one outburst: Однако!

A good example of this usage can be quoted by almost every Russian who has read or seen screen versions of Ilf and Petrov's "The Twelve Chairs." The impoverished nobleman Ippolit Vorobyaninov picks up the menu in a restaurant: Однако, ☒ — пробормотал он, ☒ — телячьи котлеты два двадцать пять ... ("Will you look at that," he muttered. "Veal cutlets — 2 rubles and 25 kopeks ...").

Однако can also be added on to a piece of information to indicate that it is unexpected or surprising. A newspaper article about the ethnic makeup of Muscovites, which cited that more than 90 percent were Russians, was called: Мы русские, однако (It turns out we're ... Russians). Or a comment on the high salaries of cops began: Хорошо живут, ☒ однако (Life's pretty good — who'd have thought it?).

Sometimes when однако is coupled with a word, it is like a marker signaling: This sums it all up. There is a kind of dry, understated humor to this usage. For example, when the staff is shooting paperclips out of rubber-band slingshots, the boss might say: Пятница, однако (It's Friday, after all.) Or when someone is complaining about the snow flying in their face, his friend might deadpan: Зима, однако (In a word — winter).

And then there's the Siberian однако. Although in Russian jokes Chukchi uses однако a lot, in fact it seems that однако is a feature of the local Russian dialect. As far as I can tell, it usually means "I guess," or "I'd say" or "looks like" — that is, "I'm not committed to this, but it seems to be true." Вы однако едете? (So does it look like you're going?) Однако дождь будет (Looks like rain). Где муж? (Where's your husband?) Однако дома. (Home, I guess.)

Русский язык, однако (That's Russian for you).

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