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Do the English and Russian emotion terms *pity* and *zhalost'* mean the same thing? What dimensions of meaning must be considered in investigating the relations between the two concepts? How might a comparative analysis of these terms help us better understand both the role of *zhalost'* as an organizing conceptual principle in Tolstoy's thought and fiction as well as the conventional use of the word *pity* to represent this principle in English translations of his texts? I will attempt to answer these questions through a case study of the translation equivalents *pity* and *zhalost'*. In calling them translation equivalents, I am merely relying on evidence from bilingual dictionaries which, almost without exception and without qualification, give one term as the primary target-language equivalent or definition of the other (although other terms are often listed as secondary equivalents). I will demonstrate why a translation-equivalent mode of thinking about these emotion terms is wrong and how a better understanding of the similarities and differences between the meanings of the terms illuminates readings of Tolstoy in both the original Russian and English versions.