

New Concepts and Words in Post-Soviet Russia

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ABSTRACT

The research of Anglicisms in European languages is a part of the project supervised by the scholars from the University of Cologne. The adaptation of loan words in the Russian language possesses some social and cultural peculiarities in contrast to other European countries due to the drastic political changes and dynamic introduction of the market economy. The investigation is based on the linguistic and social analysis of Anglicisms, which were imported into Russian in the late 90-s and the beginning of the new millennium. The research focus is concentrated on the study of the most frequent terms circulating on the pages of professional (literary, business, political) and other mass media sources. Three groups of the latest borrowings are discussed: neutral terms, which have proved to be rather stable within 20 years; expressive fashionable neologisms with the restricted sphere of application and evaluative words revealing either Western cultural values or socially marked concepts, typical of post-socialism.

Key words: Russian, Anglicisms, loanwords, professional jargon, borrowings, neologisms

Introduction

Our study of new concepts and words, which had been imported from English into Russian within the last 20–25 years, was prompted by Manfred Görlach from the University of Cologne, Germany. *A Dictionary of European Anglicisms*¹, the result of a research effort across Europe, masterminded and supervised by him, has documented the spread of English in 16 European languages.

The intake of English lexis into Russian has been drastic since 1985 when Gorbachev started his reforms in the Soviet Union. The peak of borrowings was observed in the nineties of the 20th century and the process of importing new linguistic units is still under way. At the same time some fashionable redundant creations that penetrated the language earlier are coming out of use because the

corresponding Russian terms successfully express well-known concepts. Therefore our team from Volgograd State University, Russia, has decided to continue the work on the new edition of the dictionary mentioned above.

What has been left behind the pages of the dictionary and needs further investigation is the study of linguistic change, subtle transformations of loan words' functions and meanings, in particular, social and cultural contexts or factors which motivate semantic transfers. So, the purpose of my presentation here is to define the most typical semantic groups of lexical borrowings from English, which function in the professional press and other mass media sources of the late 90s of the 20th century and the beginning of the new millennium and show pragmatolinguistic (social and cultural) adaptation of new entries in Russian.

One of the social factors influencing the process of lexical borrowing in many countries is the attempt to monitor the input of foreignisms into national languages. As far as Russia is concerned, the issue of purist objection to some new unmotivated, fashionable entries of foreign origin is urgent enough in contrast to rather liberal attitudes in the previous years. The discussion about the abundance of Anglicisms in Russian was initiated by journalists, philologists and intellectuals, and even the questions of the language ecology were raised in the nineties^{2,3}. The publications put focus on the possibility of language evolution in the worst sense of the word. We can hear the question of the experts in Russian: »Could the Russian language transfer into a dead language or the language servicing mass-culture – with poor grammar, poor international vocabulary, broken phraseology?«⁴. Some critically minded authors even recommend our government to impose control on the language of mass-media and compile special lists of prohibited

words⁵. In my opinion, all these debates are nothing but idle talk, as the situation with the Russian language is not so critical nowadays. Nevertheless, the educators should concentrate their attention on the language of the youngsters and linguists are to research the language dynamics in order to present their information to the public opinion.

Having analyzed the semantic groups of English entries into the Russian vocabulary at the end of the 20th century and at the beginning of the new age, we classified them into three groups:

- 1) Neutral terms of different professional spheres ranging from new technology, business, science to pop-music, sport, etc., which express new objects and concepts;
- 2) Fashionable neologisms, that function in the Russian language as expressive lexical units parallel to native denominations. Their thematic domains are mainly restricted to journalistic writings about pop-music, politics, sport, and the language of youngsters, recorded in mass-media sources and electronic messages;
- 3) Socially and culturally marked, mainly evaluative words, which reveal human intellectual achievements of Western culture.

The biggest inflow of Anglicisms within the last few years has emerged in the first and second groups. Sometimes it was difficult for us to differentiate between the mentioned groups of words, as the key words of the first category have a tendency to develop their semantic structure and transfer into the group of expressive means of the language.

Professional Jargon and Fashionable Neologisms

Some of the loan words registered 15 years ago proved to be stable in the pres-

ent-day language of mass media and are very frequent in their usage. We find a lot of such borrowings in the group of pop-music: *pank*, *reggi*, *singl*, *hip-hop*, *hit*, *rep*, etc. The possible permanent additions to the vocabulary are universal in all European languages. Some new foreignisms referring to pop-music have been registered in the mass media recently, for example, the following: *hedlainer* »a star performer«, *set* »a sequence of songs and pieces performed in pop music«. Among them we distinguish compound neologisms formed on the basis of the known foreign roots: *saund-trek*, *diskohit*, *breik-bit*, *frontmen*, *pank-rok*, *serf-pank* and others. The further semantic and morphological adaptation of pop-music terms reveals the playful character of new words and transfers them into the group of expressive unstable elements of the language. We find a great number of such innovations on the pages of the papers for the young (for example: *pop-stsena* »pop-stage«, *pop-prilavok* »pop-counter«, *pop-tsitata* »pop-quotation«, *rep-komanda* »rap-team«, *dans-veteran* »dance-veteran«, etc.

Among the buzzwords, which have spread in Russia within the last 15 years, is the word *show*, though the word has been known since the beginning of the 20th century. The majority of the English etymon meanings and derived compounds of the word have been adopted in the Russian language easily and developed additional pragmatic shades of meaning. One of the new entries is the compound *show business*. The attempt of the users to analyze the meaning of the borrowing shows that its sense is still under formation. The following example illustrates the author's striving to differentiate the two English words that are very fashionable nowadays:

То, что у нас называют »шоу-бизнес« , за границей называют »энттертейнмент«, то есть »развлечение« – не только музыка, концерты, но и профессиональный спорт, и кино, и цирк, – все, что развлекает людей. (E.P. What we call here »show-business« is named »entertainment« abroad and means not only music, concerts, but also professional sport, cinema, circus, – everything that entertains people.) (МК, March 26, 2003)*

On Russian TV we observe a great splash of interest in introducing innovative show programs that are Western cultural borrowings and attract a lot of the audience. One of the terms is a *reality-show* or a *real show*, which penetrated the language of mass media in Russian transcription. The following context illustrates the usage of the compound and clearly reveals the derogatory meaning of the English etymon:

*We have already seen a lot of things in reality shows: the first showed the sex behind the glass, then the famous stars were »eating« each other on the island, etc. »That will do!« decided the managers of REN-TV. It occurred to them to create an excitingly wonderful reality-show »Everything for you«. (Translated by E.P.) (NDV** 9, 2003)*

So we see that some Anglicisms express concepts and objects, which had already existed in our reality, but they describe some specific and new features of a denominated thing. We find a lot of such words in the group of job-titles. For example, the usage of the word *menedzher* produced heated debates about the expediency of its adoption, as Russian possesses quite a number of its own lexical units for expressing the job-position. Nevertheless, the Anglicism was accepted and brought

* »Московский комсомолец« (Moscow Youth Communist Party Newspaper)

** »Новые деловые вести« («Business News»)

a lot of new compounds: *ofis-menedzher*, *finans-menedzher*, *ekaunt-menedzher*, *brend-menedzher*, etc. The key term may even express the meaning of «a collective doer of the action»:

В качестве лид-менеджеров выбраны два банка (E.P. »Two banks were chosen as lead-managers ...

The next example shows the rise of new concepts, which were not typical of Soviet Russia. In business speech we observe the first registrations of the term *fundraising* with its original English etymon meaning «the seeking of financial support». The article under discussion describes the workshops on fundraising held in Russia and supported by an American charity organization. The first projects were aimed at improving the financial situation in culture, which earlier had been financed from the national budget sources. The new entry was used in the headline of the business newspaper twice in order to attract readers' attention:

Андрей Лисицкий знает, что такое фандрейзинг. Он получил уроки фандрейзинга в Лондоне.» (E.P. »Andrei Lisitskiy knows what fundraising means. He took the course of fundraising in London.) (NDV, 9, 2003)

So, as we see in the previous examples, the majority of Anglicisms start their life in Russian as necessary or fashionable innovations in the professional vocabulary. Some of them are used with expressive function. Later on they become very frequent in other domains of language application and may change their pragmatic function.

Semantic Modifications

Now I'd like to draw your attention to semantic modifications of some adopted

words. The dynamics of their lexical meanings depends on the social situation in Russia under the new world order, which reflects societal strengths and pathologies.

Quite a number of concepts and words penetrated the language of mass media through business speech and were well adapted in everyday life. Among them is the word *brend* («brand»), which has made notable headway against some native expressions with the sense of face, image. In particular, it's very fashionable in the meaning of «a special or characteristic kind»⁶. The frequency of its usage is immense. One may come across it when the authors dwell on the quality of literature, writers, political parties, towns, etc.:

Достоевский – это всемирно-известная марка, »бренд«.... (E.P. Dostoyevsky is the world known trademark, »brand«) (MK, February 5, 2003)

КПРФ – это бренд, который в любом случае соберет от 20 до 25 % голосов. (E.P. CPRF /the Communist party of the Russian Federation/ is a brand that in any case will collect from 20 to 25% of votes.) (MK, February 5, 2003)

In fashionable journalism the term is often mentioned when they speak about music and songs of the Soviet period:

Ностальгия превратилась в новый бренд отечественного шоу-бизнеса. (E.P. Nostalgia has turned into a new brand of the national show business.) (NDV, 2, 2003)

Some philologists are also very indignant at hearing such phrases as «Ильич как бренд нашего города» (E. P. «Ilyich (Lenin) is the brand of our city») (LG* 22, 2003). The author speaks here about the town of Ulyanovsk named after the Ulyanovs – Lenin's family).

* «Литературная газета» («Literary News»)

The spread of concepts and loanwords with the meaning of financial support is explicable in modern-day Russia as the residents of the former Soviet Union used to rely just on the aid of the government. The most fashionable and fully adopted word is *sponsor*, which retained all original meanings. Nevertheless, we observe the semantic extension of the word when we speak about the types of activities in which sponsors are involved. For example, in the system of education the term may name a person who provides universities, schools, individuals with up-to-date equipment; helps to restructure buildings, etc. In the opinion of many people such kind of sponsoring may be qualified as a concealed sort of bribery, because such sponsors are usually interested in pulling strings to make their children students. There is also a common practice of the so-called sponsors to involve jobless people into the process of selling goods to customers. The activity of attracting sellers is accompanied with the promise to get a fortune out of this business. In one of the articles the author severely criticizes this fraud operation and defines the term *sponsor* as »a man who hangs Chinese pasta on the ears of a new partner of the net trade pyramid«⁷. Here Chinese businessmen are such sponsors and the author alludes to the famous Russian proverb, which means »to deceive«.

The second example of the occasional use of the word *sponsor* is even more emphatic. The essence of it is that some automobile crashes are provoked by groups of criminals who trick the s.c. sponsors, the culprits of the accident, out of money in order to compensate for the set-up damage of the frauds' cars. The following examples illustrate the use of the borrowed word:

»Подстава« всем своим поведением дает понять »спонсору«, что пропускает его....
...»спонсора« начнут убеждать заплатить добровольно и прямо на месте. (Е.Р.)

The dummy-car shows »the sponsor« that it lets his or her car go.... »the sponsor« will be persuaded to pay voluntarily and just at the scene of the crash.» (NDV 2, 2003)

Cultural Borrowings

Within the last two decades quite a number of Anglicisms have emerged in mass media in order to reflect the social and cultural values of the Western style of life. One of the concepts reflects the idea of placing a person or a thing in a rank or class. We can say that this idea has been known for the Soviet people before: the differentiation of the society into classes was the basis of the ideology and the notion of socialist competition was very popular, too. Nevertheless the idea of estimating the standing of a person as regards credit and the relative popularity of some social activities as determined by the estimated size of the population has become widely spread lately. The frequency of the borrowing *rating* and its derivatives is amazing. It is applied to the characteristics of politicians, parties, businesses, educational establishments, spheres of entertainment, etc. For example:

Без сомнения, »Единая Россия« и Евгений Ищенко – рейтинговая сила и рейтинговая личность – стали друг для друга весьма полезными приобретениями. (Е. Р. We don't doubt that the Yedinaya Rossia (party) and Eugeny Ischenko – a rating power and a rating personality – have become rather valuable assets for each other.) (МК, July 2, 2003)

One of the ways of spreading Western cultural values in democratic Russia is publicistic writing of our former Soviet citizens, emigrant writers, who came back to Russia or just contribute their essays to our press.

Our attention was attracted by the following opposition: *loser* versus *user*. The

emigrant writer and journalist Vladimir Solovyov employed these borrowings to characterize the personalities of the famous Russian writers and poets (Brodsky is the Noble Prize winner; Limonov, a notorious writer, who came back to Russia and organized the political party of the extreme left wing):

Бродский в изгнании стал частью всемирного литературного истеблишмента, ... тогда как Лимонов... застрял в андеграунде. Лимонов такой же типичный лузер, как Бродский – юзер. Лимонов ... всегда на стороне аутсайдеров, сам аутсайдер. (E.P. Living in exile, Brodsky has become a part of the global literary establishment, ... though Limonov ... has stuck in the underground. Limonov is a typical loser, as well as Brodsky is a user. Limonov is always in the team of outsiders, an outsider himself.) (LG, 11, 2003)

The expressive effect here is achieved not only by the usage of Anglicisms and the opposition of concepts but also by the social and cultural allusion: under socialism we did not define and classify people through such an opposition, as the main slogan of the society at that time was the equality of all people. That does not mean of course that we did not realize the existing social, intellectual and other peculiarities concerning people. Moreover, in the Russian language we can find a lot of successful equivalents to the English words. What makes a difference is the cultural contrast of two concepts imported from competitive societies.

The concept of politics has also acquired new connotations nowadays and it is clearly shown in the same extract, where the Anglicisms *publicity, performance, happening* are employed to qualify the term *politics*:

Политика для него (Лимонова) – одна из форм публицити, перформанс, хэппенинг, его потешная партия – пьедестал для ее дуче. (E.P. Politics for him (Limo-

nov) is a form of publicity, performance, happening, his funny party is a pedestal for the duce.) (LG, 11, 2003)

As we have already mentioned before, the sphere of public entertainment has brought to life a lot of new concepts. The negative associations of politicians' behavior with show-business activities are apparent in many contexts. Extravagant political leaders are termed as *showmen*. Normally, the attribute *political* is added to the Anglicism in the description of politicians. The following quotation has a particular expressiveness and refers to such an eccentric figure of our political life as the leader of the Liberal-democratic Party, Zhirinovsky:

Чаще, однако, нам бывает явлен именно первый лик – лик политического шоумена, когда он таскает женщину-депутата за волосы, плещет лимонад из стакана в физиономию своему телевизионному оппоненту. (E.P. More often we watch his first image – the image of a political showman, when he is dragging the woman-deputy by hair, pouring out the lemonade into the face of his TV-opponent. (MK, February 5, 2003)

The word *show* even acquired a more generic meaning when reporters and authors of articles speak about the situation in the state in general. For example, our famous actor Mark Zakharov criticizes the criminality and the negative role of TV in raising violence. His article is headlined in the following way: «Здравствуй, мурка! Шоу маст гоу он.» (E.P. «Hello, Murka! Show must go on») (MK, January 22, 2003). In this phrase we observe the play of two meanings of the word «show»: the major meaning and the contextual sarcastic sense, which is the hint at the social situation and the government's disability to do away with criminality.

Negative images of some politicians are also created through using foreign compounds and hybrid words with the

element »maker«. Semantically, they developed towards a general term of abuse when we speak about those who spread rumours or create images of public figures, in particular, before elections. The three of them are: *imidzhmeiker* »image-maker«, *nyuzmeiker* »newsmaker«, *slukhmeiker* »rumours-maker« (the first root of the last word is Russian, which means »rumours«). The following example illustrates the use of the hybrid word:

Слукhmeйкеры утверждают, что у Глазьева испортились отношения с Зюгановым. (E.P. Slukhmakers affirm that Glazjev and Zyuganov (the leaders of the Communist party) are at loggerheads.) (MK, April 23, 2003)

The same negative social association accompanies the originally neutral combination of words »public relations«, which is used in Russian in the abbreviated form: *piar*. A semantically modified word means »making some community or political activities or ideas public, known to everybody«. Adjectives, which are used with the noun, very often possess the evaluative meaning »black«, »hard«, »impudent«. We observe all that in the following context:

За чрезмерно жесткий пиар однажды (E. П.: М. Литвинович – политтехнолог) была избита в собственном подъезде. (E.P. For an extremely hard PR, the political technologist M. Litvinovich was beaten on the stairs of her own house.) (MK, July 2, 2003)

We also observe the rise of morphological derivatives with Russian verbal and

noun suffixes, which possess a very strong derogatory meaning, as in the following:

У власти есть и деньги, и избирательные технологии, ... и изворотливые пиарщики. (E.P. The power possesses both money and election technology, ... as well as resourceful PR-men.) (LG, 25, 2003)

Conclusions

The transition of Russia to a new dynamic political life and the establishment of market economy after 1985 influenced the revival of some old passive layers of English loan-words and the drastic inflow of Anglicisms: either motivated, denominating new concepts and objects, or unmotivated fashion words. All motivated neologisms function in the sphere of terminology, possess a professional application and form a rather stable layer of the vocabulary.

Both motivated and unmotivated Anglicisms may transfer into linguistically valid intakes that acquire new sociocultural and expressive connotations typical of post-socialism. They reflect societal pathologies or cultural values borrowed from the Western style of life.

Philologists, educators and intellectuals should not worry about the future of the Russian language concerning the quality and quantity of borrowings. As a natural phenomenon and a self-regulated mechanism, the language will remain a very efficient vehicle of communication and oust all negative unmotivated influences.

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NOVE RIJEČI I POJMOVI U POSTSOVJETSKOJ RUSIJI

S A Ž E T A K

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