

## **FUNCTIONAL FEATURES OF FOREIGN BORROWINGS IN RUSSIAN-LANGUAGE SPEECH (BASED ON INTERVIEW DATA)**

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**Annotation.** The article examines the theoretical as well as functional and communicative aspects of borrowed words in the Russian language. The main approaches to the interpretation of the borrowing process, presented in the works of Russian linguists, are summarized, and its dependence on socio-cultural factors is emphasized. The relevance of the study is determined by the need to analyze the functioning of foreign lexical units based on authentic speech of native speakers. The research material consists of transcripts of more than 100 video interviews selected through continuous sampling. The analysis has revealed the main functions of borrowings, including the nomination of new and obsolete concepts, linguistic economy, specification, euphemization, and the expression of irony. It has been established that the use of borrowed words is determined by a combination of social factors and the specific features of speakers' verbal behavior. The study concludes that borrowings are functionally motivated and play a significant communicative role in contemporary Russian speech.

**Keywords:** Word, borrowing, borrowing process, speech, function of borrowing.

It is well known that there is no developed language in the world that does not contain a layer of foreign borrowings. The very essence of the borrowing process is interpreted differently by researchers: some linguists understand borrowing as the “transfer” of lexical units from one language to another (L.Krysin, A.Mayorov, etc.); others view it as words resulting from the process of assimilation of foreign lexical items (including their graphic, phonetic, and morphological adaptation) (O.Akhmanova, E.Marinova, etc.); still others consider it a consequence of economic, political, and cultural contacts between peoples (D.Rosenthal). Today, more than ever, there is a clear need for a detailed and in-depth analysis of this phenomenon based on extensive empirical speech data.

By analyzing the “trajectory” of individual borrowed units, valuable insights can be gained into the overall pace of language development. The Russian language, like other languages open to interaction, is currently experiencing an *интенсивный* influx of borrowings. Within a relatively short period, foreign elements can enter its active vocabulary, undergoing processes of linguistic assimilation.

However, for linguists, not only the penetration of foreign words and their assimilation into the recipient language is of interest, but also the specific features of their functioning in actual speech. The nature of the verbal units used by a speaker can reveal such characteristics as age, gender, and social affiliation, among others.

There are numerous factors that influence an individual's use of particular borrowed words. Among them, one can identify such social factors as age, socio-communicative context, religious affiliation, gender, and others. In this regard, the functional and communicative load of borrowed lexical units in the speech of elderly speakers appears especially indicative and worthy of analysis.

Over the past two decades, sociolinguistics has seen increased attention to the linguistic features of older speakers. This trend can be explained by the overall aging of the population in developed countries. According to statistical data, in 1980 the proportion of the population in the United Kingdom that had reached retirement age was 11.3%, and by 2030, according to demographic forecasts, older adults will account for one fifth of the total population [3, p. 81]. This situation places on the agenda the study of aging-related issues for gerontologists and questions of speech behavior for sociolinguists. In line with these considerations, the present article attempts to investigate the specific features of elderly people's speech using borrowed words in the Russian language, with a particular focus on identifying the main functions performed by such units.

The issue of borrowing elements, words, and entire phrases from one language into another remains one of the most debated topics in linguistics. Tracing the process of borrowing provides valuable insights into the development of a language as a whole. This problem has long attracted and continues to attract the attention of linguists.

As noted by I.Geranina, the problem of language interaction and the mutual penetration of linguistic elements was first addressed in the works of the prominent linguist of Polish origin, I.Baudouin de Courtenay (1875) [1, pp. 101–102]. The essence of the borrowing process is interpreted differently by scholars. Some linguists define borrowing as the “transfer” of lexical units from one language to another (L.Krysin, A.Mayorov, etc.), while others view it as words that emerge as a result of the assimilation of foreign lexical items (including their graphic, phonetic, and morphological adaptation) (O.Akhmanova, E.V. Marinova, etc.). D.Rosenthal offers a broader interpretation, defining borrowings as “words entering the Russian language from other languages as a result of economic, political, and cultural contacts between the Russian people and other nations... They may also arise as a consequence of snobbery or fashion” [2, p. 69]. It should be emphasized that borrowings are not a redundant linguistic phenomenon; their existence is functionally motivated, including in the everyday speech of Russian speakers.

**In order to identify, analyze, and describe the functional features of borrowed units in everyday Russian speech, more than 100 video interviews from YouTube were selected using the method of continuous sampling. The analysis made it possible to determine that, in everyday communication, borrowings are primarily used to denote new objects and phenomena, refer to obsolete concepts, achieve linguistic economy, provide specification, enable personal self-expression, and serve euphemistic purposes, among other functions. Nomination of new objects, phenomena, and concepts. According to L.Krysin, the principal reason for lexical borrowing is the need to name a new object or phenomenon within the everyday reality of a language community [4, pp. 89–90]. Thus, a new word enters the language together with the object it denotes. Examples of such borrowings identified in the speech of informants include диплом, интернет, компьютер, санкция, электростанция. Examples of the use of these units are as follows: *Если вынимаем из кармана диплом МГУ или Гарварда, то это не гарантирует, что мы имеем высокий интеллектуальный потенциал* [11]; *Слава богу, у нее интернет, она может работать, мы с ней общаемся* [11]; *Он был блестящим математиком, занимался и компьютерами* [11]; *Почему на нас наложили санкции?* [11]; *Недавно электростанция взорвалась, все сгорело, т.к. было сухое* [11].**

Indeed, one of the primary reasons for lexical borrowing is the need to name a new object or phenomenon. Even if a concept is designated by a newly formed native word created through

the language's own derivational resources, this does not guarantee that it will successfully compete with a foreign equivalent. In this regard, it is worth recalling the unstable native formations *колоземица* and *мироколица*, once proposed by Vladimir Dahl as substitutes for the foreign word *атмосфера*.

Nomination of obsolete concepts. Borrowings in the speech of Russian speakers may also be used to denote objects and phenomena that have disappeared. In particular, a number of such units were identified in the speech of elderly informants, including *губерния*, *кулак*, *купон*, *мануфактура*, among others.

During the analysis, a case was identified in which an informant used the outdated lexeme *губерния* instead of the word *область*: *Мои дедушки были из Орловской губернии и оба погибли на войне, пропали без вести* [11]. Apparently, the informant retained the place of origin of their ancestors in the form it was used in the speech of those ancestors themselves: *Орловская губерния*. In any case, the use of the unit *губерния* is вполне justified, since at the time referred to in the statement (the period of the ancestors' birth), what is now known as the Oryol region was indeed called a *губерния*.

The next borrowed unit that has fallen out of use due to the disappearance of the concept it denotes is *кулак*. As is well known, one of the meanings of this word (a hand with clenched fingers) belongs to common vocabulary. Its second meaning – a class of wealthy peasants – is obsolete. In the speech of the informants, this borrowing was identified in both meanings: *Продукты свои были, картошки – по кулаку* [11]. In this example, the meaning “a hand with clenched fingers” is intended, which remains in active use in the Russian language to this day: *... с нами жил кулак, которого раскулачили во время коллективизации* [11].

In the last sentence, the word is used in its obsolete meaning. During the collectivization of agriculture initiated in the USSR in 1928, the Politburo of the Communist Party issued a decree providing for the liquidation of the kulaks as a class. This indicates that the second meaning of the unit was not only well known to representatives of the older generation but also widely used, as evidenced by the derivative lexeme *раскулачивание*, formed from the word under consideration.

*... время было сложное: купоны, талоны...* [11]. This meaning of the word *купон* is not characteristic of the present-day language, as it refers to the period of wartime and post-war years. The informant uses it specifically when describing events of that time. Here, it denotes a voucher entitling the holder to obtain essential goods.

As for the word *мануфактура*, it should be noted that the concept it denotes (enterprises based on manual labor) largely disappeared in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the exception of certain textile factories where production still relied primarily on human labor. In the given context, the informant refers to a Moscow textile factory founded in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century: *Дали нам путевку на Трехгорную мануфактуру Москвы* [11].

**Linguistic economy.** One of the important reasons for the use of borrowed units by Russian speakers is the tendency toward “linguistic economy,” whereby a foreign word is introduced into speech to replace lengthy word combinations (primarily of native origin) with a single lexical item. For example, in the sentence *«Наша свадьба была первая в группе, поэтому однокурсники собрались и с букетами цветов нас встретили»* [11], the word *букет* is used instead of the phrase *a bunch of flowers for a gift*.

*Кто сказал, что ветераны – это жалобы и охи?!* [11]. Here, the unit *ветеран* replaces the construction *a participant in World War II*.

To replace the construction *костюм*, consisting of *a combination of a jacket and trousers*, the informant uses the word *комбинезон*: *Ни платьишек, ни комбинезонов у нас не было. Помню, что у меня было пальтишко [11].*

In the following example, the informant uses the borrowed word *фаст-фуд*, referring to fast-prepared food products. At the same time, the construction containing this unit is used figuratively: *Ныне наблюдается общее падение уровня культуры на планете: все согласны на фаст-фуд вместо хорошего шеф-повара [11].*

The construction *a person who takes photographs using a camera* is rendered by the informant as *фотограф*: *Потому что мои друзья (я потом о них пишу где-то) ... благодаря одному из них я стал фотографом [11].* It is important to note that most units denoting specialists in a particular field typically consist of two-component nomenclatural constructions of the type “*specialist in the field of + name of a scientific discipline*”. For example, *a specialist in the field of geology* is replaced in the informant’s speech by the unit *геолог*: *Советские геологи нам базу подготовили, а на Украине ничего нет [11].*

Thus, Russian speakers employ borrowed words to achieve linguistic economy, specifically by replacing multi-word constructions with concise one-word designations of foreign origin.

**The specifying (differentiating) function of borrowings.** Foreign words in the speech of informants also perform a differentiating, or more precisely, a specifying function. In particular, one example revealed the use of the unit *рюкзак* instead of the word *сумка*. Unlike *сумка*, the word *рюкзак* carries the connotation of being “worn on the back.” Therefore, in this case, the borrowed word cannot be replaced by the native *сумка*: *Я сюда [в Житомирскую область] приехал с рюкзаком книг, женой и ребенком [11].*

The unit *шквал*, also identified in the informant’s speech, carries a similar specifying load: *Вот, например, немцы пишут о событиях Сталинграда, что они обличены на гибель стальным шквалом ледяной пустыни [11].* At first glance, this unit could be replaced by the earlier borrowing *ураган*. The word *шквал* is borrowed from the English squall (“to produce a sharp sound”), whereas *ураган* originates from the Arawakan languages (one of the largest language families of South America), where it denoted the name of a wind deity, Huracan, and entered Russian via French. It can be assumed that *ураган* was borrowed earlier than *шквал*: the most active influx of French borrowings into Russian occurred in the 16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries [5, p. 97], whereas the mass borrowing of English words began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century [6, p. 89]. However, the reason for the non-substitutability of these units lies not in the time of borrowing, but in their semantics: *шквал* differs from *ураган* in its short duration and its typical occurrence in zones of atmospheric fronts and instability lines [7].

Thus, the specifying function of a borrowed word is ensured by the additional semantic component inherent in the unit. Such borrowings, however, occur relatively rarely in the speech of informants.

**The function of “personal self-expression.”** N.Sidakova notes that some speakers tend to use unjustified borrowings in their vocabulary, the meanings of which are known only to a limited circle of people [8, p. 112], while L.Bukina emphasizes that the use of foreign words in speech may serve as an indicator of a speaker’s erudition and high social status [9, p. 96]. Thus, the skillful use of foreign lexical units can signal a speaker’s affiliation with the intelligence. However, the demonstration of high status is more characteristic of the speech of younger speakers than of representatives of the older generation.

In the speech of two informants (scholars in the fields of philology and medicine), instances of barbarisms were identified, which could be interpreted as an attempt to emphasize the speaker’s



education and erudition; however, we do not fully share this view: *Это [общение через социальные сети, находясь за одним столом] addiction в самом прямом смысле [11]; ... с другой стороны, вот это memento mori – это такая штука, чтобы оценивать каждый день [11].*

At the same time, the possibility of conveying the meaning of these barbarisms through native lexical means (addiction – *зависимость*; memento mori – *помни о смерти*) brings us closer to the position of L.Bukina.

Thus, the function of “personal self-expression” is more typical of borrowings used by younger speakers, since imitation of fashion, including linguistic fashion, is characteristic of youth. The use of barbarisms by the informants, in turn, can be attributed to the individual speech characteristics of the mentioned scholars, as no other borrowings of this type were identified in the material.

**The function of euphemization.** As noted by N.Valgina, one of the reasons for using borrowed words is the need for a euphemistic substitution of a native lexical unit [10]. In the speech of the informants, we identified borrowings that serve to convey meanings more mildly than their native equivalents. This can be observed in the use of the units *депрессия, insult, фенотоз*: *Мы видим, как на глазах наши пенсионеры оживают от депрессии [11].* Here, the borrowed unit *депрессия* replaces the native word *подавленность*.

*После insultа мои пальцы не работают вот эти [11].* The word *insult* is used in the meaning of the death of brain cells.

*Мы назвали это явление фенотозом [11].* Here, *фенотоз* refers to programmed death.

As can be seen, the borrowings used for euphemistic purposes are predominantly represented by terms from the field of medicine.

**The function of irony.** As is well known, certain words may carry an expressive and stylistic load. In the speech of the informants, we identified borrowed words used for the purpose of mild irony: *Мы сейчас живем благодаря тому, что советские геологи нам базу подготовили, а на Украине ничего нет. Что было делать украинским олигархам? Они начали как в России, так называемую модернизацию, реструктуризацию и оптимизацию [11].*

Thus, the units *модернизация, реструктуризация, and оптимизация* convey the speaker’s ironic attitude toward the events in Ukraine following the collapse of the USSR, which is also reinforced by intonation.

In conclusion, the analysis of the functional and speech-related features of the use of borrowed units in the informants’ speech has made it possible to establish that foreign words perform the following functions:

- nomination of new objects, phenomena, and concepts;
- nomination of obsolete concepts;
- linguistic economy;
- specification;
- personal self-expression;
- euphemization, among others.

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