

Social Aspects of Foreign Borrowings in Modern Russian

R M K Atitsogbui¹, E N Atitsogbui², N V Zimovets³

¹Belgorod State Technological University, Foreign Languages Department,
 Kostyukova 46, Belgorod 308012, Russia

²Belgorod State Technological University, Foreign Languages Department,
 Kostyukova 46, Belgorod 308012, Russia

³Belgorod State University, Foreign Languages Department, Studencheskaya 14,
 Belgorod 308007, Russia

E-mail: mawu@mail.ru

Abstract. In this article we are considering the social aspects of foreign borrowings in the Russian language. We are analyzing the ways French, German, and English words came into Russian during different historical periods and under various social and cultural circumstances. The special attention is paid to the level of adaptability of these borrowings. We also emphasize that when borrowed the words went through morphological and lexical changes. In the conclusion we point out both positive and negative influence of foreign borrowings.

1. Introduction

A lot of linguists do believe that language can be considered as a 'living organism' which 'grows' internally as well as undergoes external activity influence. Hence there is a mutual interaction constantly taking place among different languages. The result is that many languages borrow as many words as possible and this way they naturally develop and enrich national ones.

The borrowed words demonstrate the lexical energy of the "receiving" language as the new words adapt the grammatical standards of the "receiving" language. Russian is an example of how a language can constantly be enriched by borrowings from other languages due to the influence of various political, economic, social and historical processes.

The issue of foreign borrowings is very relevant today within the scope of current political, economic and social development of the modern Russian society. In this article we consider the cultural and social aspects of borrowed foreign words in the Russian language.

2. Reasons for foreign borrowings in Russian

The Linguistic Encyclopedic Dictionary offers the following definition of the borrowing: "Borrowing is the element of foreign language (word, morpheme, syntactic design, etc.) transferred from one language into another as a result of language interactions and also the transition process of elements of one language into another". Akhmanova O.S. defines the borrowing as "the use of lexical fund of other languages for new concept expressions, further differentiation which already exists and the derivation of new and previously unknown objects."

Rosenthal D.E. defined the borrowed words as a natural consequence of the establishment of economic, political, cultural ties between people when realities and concepts of words designating them are also integrated into the language.

Very often external factors are the primary reasons of lexical borrowings. The main external reason is the strong political, economic and cultural ties between people. For example, during Peter the Great time, many words were borrowed from the German and Dutch languages.

During this period the Russian language under the influence of economic and social contacts with Germany and Holland was enriched with such words as: *бутерброд* (belegtes Brot), *бухгалтер* (Buchhalter), *фейерверк* (Feuerwerk), *ярмарка* (Jahrmarkt), *стул* (Stuhl), *иницель* (Schnitzel). As a result of Russian interest in the German military system the following military terminologies were adapted: *аксельбанты* (Achselfchnur), *гауптвахта* (Hauptwache), *ефрейтор* (Gefreite), *гаубица* (Haubitzer).

The other external reason for borrowing was to use a single word instead of longer expression to determine a certain subject or concept. For example, the French word "*портье*" was used to replace a designated position of a manager on duty in a hotel and the English word "jam" has become the common Russian word to define a dense grade of fruit puree.

Political and social 'vagabondism' and 'verboselism' also serve as a factor in the use of foreign words especially in the 1990s in the Russian Federation. It depicted to some extent the social status image of success and prominence in the society at that material moment. However, not everybody really understood and was able to use those borrowed foreign words appropriately.

It is important to underline that the intralinguistic and external reasons of borrowings are interconnected. The social request to specify different concepts leads to the linguistic tendency of more accurate and differentiated definitions of various notions. As a result, similar in meaning but not always synonymous words have appeared in the Russian language: *репортаж* (report) и *сообщение* (message), *тотальный* (total) и *всеобщий* (general), *хобби* (hobby) и *увлечение* (pastime activities) and others.

Another intralinguistic reason for borrowings was to replace a long descriptive definition by a single word definition. Therefore a foreign borrowing displaces an original Russian descriptive expression if they both have the same meaning. For example, *снайпер* instead of *меткий стрелок*, *турне* instead of *кругосветное путешествие*, *мотель* instead *гостиница для автотуристов*, *спринт* instead of *бег на короткие дистанции*, etc.

We can also mention one more factor explaining the foreign borrowings. When the borrowed words create a linguistic group with some similar meaning and similar morphological structure, it becomes easier to adapt them into the system of another language. As an example we can look at the following group of foreign borrowings: *gentleman* and *policeman* taken from English in the 19th century and supplemented by English words *sportsman*, *recordsman* and *yachtsman* in the 20th century. This is the way a number of borrowings indicating people's activities with the same morpheme 'man' created the whole linguistic group which was later enriched by other words with same morpheme: *barman*, *businessman*, *congressman*, *showman* and others.

3. Adaptation of borrowed foreign words into Russian language

Depending on the adaptation level of the borrowed words into Russian, we can outline several groups that substantially differ in style.

1. The words which obviously lost strong indications of their foreign origin are: *картина* (picture), *кровать* (bed), *стул* (chair), *тетрадь* (notebook), *школа* (school).

2. The words keeping certain external features of non-Russian origin: foreign language sounding: *джаз* (jazz), *вуаль* (veil), *жюри* (jury); non-Russian suffixes: *техникум* (technical school), *директор* (director), *студент* (student) and prefixes: *трансляция* (broadcasting), *антибиотики* (antibiotics); indeclinable words: *кино*(cinema), *кофе* (coffee), *пальто* (coat).

3. The common words from the field of policy, science, art and culture with similar sounding in other European languages. Such words are referred to as international words: *телеграф* (telegraph),

телефон (telephone), *интернет* (Internet), *компьютер* (computer), *мобильный телефон* (mobile phone), etc. This group of borrowed words has no Russian synonyms and is used without restrictions since they are neutral and bring any emotions to the speech.

4. Modern borrowed foreign words

The public opinion that foreign words sound more prestigious plays its role why borrowings rapidly penetrates the Russian everyday language and replace similar Russian words, for example, *продолжить* (to prolong) instead of *продлить*, *презентация* (presentation) instead of *представление*, *эксклюзивный* (exclusive) instead of *исключительный*, *консенсус* (consensus) instead of *согласие*, *эгоистичный* (arrogant) instead of *высокомерный* etc.

The idea of being part of the band wagon i.e. following the trend of the day to show or indicate how successful and knowledgeable a person seems to be dictates the use of foreign unusual words in the national language. Psychologically, the usage of such unfamiliar words draws special attention to the user.

The big social prestige of using a foreign word (in comparison with original Russian or earlier borrowed, but become 'russified') sometimes causes the phenomenon which can be called 'high profile' rank: the word that actually designates a usual object but this object seems to acquire a more considerable prestigious and important status. For example, the French word *boutique* means "a small shop" while in modern Russian *boutique* means a fashionable exclusive clothes shop. Here is another example: *cottage* in English means *a country house* but as an English borrowing in Russian it means *a big country house*.

This proves the idea that if a new borrowing reflects current social need it will be often used by people and will have a high level of adaptability to the Russian language. Borrowings which mirror the interests of a large number of people receive social attention and become widely used in the society, sometimes for a short period of time though. They easily form derivatives which become the subject of word games and verbal puns (rating, dress code, casting, promoter, headhunter, HR, interview, partner, contract, games, *l'etoile*, *rive gauche*).

Another reason to use foreign borrowings is to have effect on the listener. As ordinary listeners we don't pay attention at the methods used advertising companies which work on developing new methods and instruments to influence each of us as buyers as much as possible. One of the ways "win" our minds and make public get interested in their goods is the use of foreign words. As practice shows, a foreign word sounds more attractive and appealing because it is unfamiliar. In fact, they try to entice, intrigue and deceive us. For example, *парфюм* (perfume) instead of *духи*, *лонгслив* (longsleeve) instead of *футболка с длинными рукавами*, *худи* (hoodie) instead of *кофта с капюшоном*, and also a large number of words from area of beauty, for example, *шейпинг* (shaping), *шугаринг* (sugaring), *пилинг* (peeling), etc. On restaurant café menus, we can see *донатсы* (doughnuts) instead *пончики* or *бублики*, *панкейки* (pancakes) instead *блинчики*. All this create understanding problems. For a person who doesn't often eat out it can be difficult to find on the menu what he really wants and he will have to ask about each dish description putting himself in an awkward and uncomfortable situation.

Unfortunately, when we borrow words from another language we don't pay attention at the repetition we make in the same word expression that is we encounter the pleonasm problem: *короткий брифинг* (briefing), *ландшафт местности* (Landschaft), *короткий блицтурнир* (Blitz-Turnier), *народный фольклор* (folklore), etc. These are inappropriate use of foreign words.

5. Conclusion

Thus, there is an obvious fact that in Russian language there are really a lot of borrowed words particularly from the western countries. They are used in various spheres of the society and the number of these spheres is constantly increasing. We cannot of course avoid an inevitable influence of the West, however, without taking the necessary measures the Russian language risks to be crowded with misleading words, expressions and sentences. We believe that these phenomena, foreign

borrowings, have to be studied by and explained to the young generation when they are in the secondary school. Professional educators have to explain appropriate and correct meanings of borrowed words, give examples and Russian synonyms, teach how to use the borrowings to make the speech vivid and expressive.

In our opinion, it would be appropriate to introduce a course of modern Russian at all levels of education and the study and use of foreign borrowings should be included in linguistic discussions. It is necessary to teach people to live with, understand, and recognize foreign words. Besides, it can be promoted by creating dictionaries of foreign borrowings which can quickly react to all changes and give the right meaning and short glossary of borrowed words. The current information technology century will definitely increase the penetration and use of foreign words and therefore pose more problems to national languages including the Russian language. It is also important to raise education level everywhere and whenever possible to reduce unnecessary and incorrect use of foreign borrowings including mass media. In our opinion, all these measures would be very productive for maintaining Russian language and culture.

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