
ARTICLES

CULTURAL LINGUISTIC CONTACTS

ON “RESTORATION” AND “LEVELING” OF BORROWINGS IN THE PROCESS OF LINGUISTIC INTERNATIONALIZATION

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The article deals with the tendency for borrowings to restore and expand the weakened ties with the original units in the source language both in their form and, especially, in their semantics. The growing exposure to global English also causes the extension of the meaning of some international lexis to approximate their English language equivalents. These phenomena are defined as “restoration” and “leveling” of borrowings and are treated as a specific type of calquing, induced by globalization and internationalization.

Key words: globalization of the English language, internationalization of languages, borrowings / loanwords, semantic development, semantic borrowings / semantic calques / loan translations.

The antinomy of global vs. local in language, of speakers’ striving for mutual intelligibility with the international community and at the same time for the expression of their own national and cultural identity in the process of linguistic globalization and internationalization is manifested in two coexisting opposite trends or tendencies in the development of borrowings. The major tendency is the adaptation of borrowings, including their phonetico-accentual and grammatical change-over and various semantic transformations, and linguacultural transformations. The result as a rule is complete assimilation and integration of the borrowed lingual unit, which is often no longer perceived as a borrowing. However, the intensification of international contacts, the growing volume of international information flows, the globalization of the English language, and a dramatic increase in bilingualism worldwide lead to the enhancement of a diametrically different tendency in the development of borrowings, predominantly English language borrowings, in different world languages, including Russian. It is a tendency for borrowings to restore, to strengthen and to expand the weakened ties with their counterparts in the source language or in the case of international lexis, with their foreign, predominantly English language equivalents. This tendency can be defined as a “restoration” and “leveling” of loanwords. (The terms were suggested by V.V. Kabakchi in an article dealing with the dynamics of xenonyms, i.e. units that name elements of other cultures [4].)

The tendency towards restoration is especially noticeable in the phonetic make-up of borrowings. Traditionally, borrowings are considered to adapt to the phonetic and accentual system of the recipient language increasingly with the course of time by

copying the analogous phonetic and accentual models, while recent borrowings are as a rule less adjusted and exhibit greater phonetic similarity with the units of the source language. However, many Russian language researchers point out that in the context of increased international communication, many Russian language speakers, alongside the russification of borrowings, tend to pronounce borrowed words, especially proper names, the way they are pronounced in the source language. The clash between these two opposite trends often results in two versions of the borrowed unit: one of them being russified, and the other, as N.S. Valgina puts it, “with the foreign make-up preserved” [2: 72], or, to be more exact, “with the foreign make-up restored”. Cf.: *маркетинг* => *мáркетинг* (*marketing*), *Ваши́нгтон* => *Вáшингтон* (*Washington*), *Флорíда* => *Флóрида* (*Florida*), *Давíд* => *Д’эвид* (*Кóпперфíлд*) (*David*, e.g. as in *David Copperfield*), *Вилья́м* (*Шекспíр*) (as in *William Shakespeare*) => *Уи́лл* (*Смит*) (as in *Will Smith*) и др.

Globalization and internationalization are manifested through similar tendencies in the English language as well. V.V. Kabakchi writes about the fact that many previously assimilated xenonyms in modern English tend to be pronounced and spelt similarly to their original pronunciation and spelling; cf. the following borrowings from Russian: *копейка* => *kopek*, *указ* => *ukaz*, *Севастополь* => *Sevastopol*, *Архангел* => *Arkhangel’sk* [4: 170]. V.V. Kabakchi defines it as a “xenonymic restoration”. He also makes a comment that mainly proper names are influenced by this tendency, which he specifies as “onomastic restoration” [ibid.].

Available data indicates that the tendency

towards increasing resemblance to the source language equivalents can be traced not only in the transformations of the form of the borrowings, but in the dynamics of their semantic development as well. The fact is, most borrowings make their way into the host language in just one of their meanings, or lexico-semantic variants. Thus, the semantic structure of practically any borrowed unit implicitly contains all the other semantic variants, which bilingual speakers perceive by analogy with the semantic structure of the original lexeme. These semantic variants or meanings make some semantic gaps, “niches”, or “vacant spots” which, in terms of the lacunae theory, can be described as “inter-lingual segmental lacunae” (on lacunae theory, see [1], and on “intra-lingual segmental lacunae”, specifically [1: 123–125]). Natural lacunality of borrowings offers the potential of their further semantic development in the direction of the meanings not yet current in the recipient language, but existent in the source language, in other words, the potential for such inter-lingual lacunae to be filled and for the borrowings to be “semantically restored”.

The idea of a “semantically restored” borrowing can be exemplified by the evolution of the word *аутсайдер* (*outsider*) in Russian: after being initially borrowed as a sports term (“a person or an animal taking part in a race or competition that is not expected to win”), this word has gradually extended its meaning to the scope suggested by the inner form of the original English word *outsider* (“out” + “side”) – “a person who is not accepted as a member of a society, group, etc.”, e.g.:

Ты родилась и жила под счастливой звездой, Я – аутсайдер, нищий изгой, жил всегда за чертой / You were born and you’ve lived under a lucky star, I’m an outsider, a poor maverick, I’ve always lived out of line (Outsider by “Krematoryi” rock-band);

*... бывший одноклассник был невзрачный, типичный аутсайдер, из тех, которых никто никогда не замечает, а молодой человек наоборот - был богато одет, лощён, представитель и очень хорошо выглядел / ... her former classmate was plain, a regular outsider, whom nobody noticed, while her boyfriend, visa versa, was well-dressed, polished, respectable and looked great (Daliya Truskinovskaya, *Outsiders*).*

This word is subject to frequent metalinguistic commentary by Russian language speakers, which shows that it is still new and preserves the “flavor of other-languageness” (to use the phrase of N.B. Mechkovskaya, [5: 226]), e.g.:

Слово «аутсайдер» можно перевести с английского как «посторонний», «вне данного

*круга». Этот термин начали применять в психологии для обозначения человека, который не может влиться в круг общения, оставаясь чужим среди своих. Считается, что статус аутсайдера создается в подростковом возрасте, когда тинейджер не может найти понимания у окружающих / The word “outsider” can be translated from English as “a stranger”, “one who does not belong to a group”. The term is applied in psychology to a person who cannot integrate, who remains a stranger among his peers. An outsider status is considered to be attained in adolescence, when a teenager fails to obtain understanding from people around him (the *Molod’ezsh Estoniyi* newspaper, 2003).*

The growing pressure of global English impacts not only English language borrowings proper; the same happens to a large group of international lexis, i.e. the words borrowed by different languages, Russian and English inclusive, from the same source, usually from classical languages, or successively from one to the other. For example, the Russian words *идеология* (*ideology*) and *философия* (*philosophy*) have been semantically extended to approximate the scope of meaning of the etymologically related or cognate words in English. Traditionally, as P. Palazhchenko puts it, the English words *philosophy* and *ideology* have wider, more “pragmatic” and “down to earth” connotations in accord with the established Anglo-Saxon philosophic practices, while in the Russian worldview they are treated in a more sublime way [6: 217]. Russian-English translation manuals usually advise against translations of the following type: *the philosophy of this project – философия данного проекта*, or *the ideology of this project – идеология данного проекта*, suggesting lexical substitutions to make the translation more “subdued”, e.g.: *концепция (the concept) данного проекта* [ibid.]. However, modern Russian mass media discourse testifies to the development of similar “down to earth” extended meanings of the Russian *идеология* and *философия*, cf.:

*... в задачи совета входит в первую очередь выработка идеологии пенсионного обеспечения на новой основе / ... one of the primary goals of the council is the development of the ideology of pension benefits on a completely new basis (the *Nezavis’imaya Gazeta* newspaper, example borrowed from [2: 85]);*

Свердловские школьники на занятиях по биологии следят, как меняется философия питания... / In their biology class, students from Sverdlovsk follow the changes in the philosophy of nutrition (NTV news program, 2007);

or, cf. some examples from various Internet sources: *философия дизайна / the philosophy of design*, *философия пятизвездочного уровня жизни / five-star hotel philosophy*, *идеология Интернет-сайта (принцип построения сайта) / the ideology of an Internet site (the concept of site development)*, *идеология ведения бизнеса / the ideology of business administration*, etc.

There is a marked tendency towards semantic approximation with the English language in the development of the Russian verb *артикулировать* (*to articulate*): until not long ago, it was used almost exclusively in linguistics as a term, meaning “to make the movements and adjustments of the speech organs necessary to utter a speech sound”. In English, the verb *to articulate*, besides the linguistic contexts, is also widely used in everyday speech to denote the following: “to express or explain your thoughts or feelings clearly in words”, as in *to articulate one’s anger (grievances, distress)*. It is this very meaning that the Russian verb *артикулировать* conveys in the following examples:

... мы стали более внятно артикулировать наши внешнеполитические интересы/ ... we now articulate our foreign interests more clearly; ... когда мы артикулируем свои национальные интересы, это вызывает странную реакцию, вплоть до обвинения России в имперских амбициях/ ... when we articulate our national interests, it provokes a strange reaction, all the way to accusing Russia of imperial ambitions (S. Ivanov, Defence Minister of Russia, 2008);

Молодые люди не всегда умеют четко артикулировать свои желания.../ Young people sometimes cannot articulate their desires clearly (the *Joy* magazine, 2006); etc.

The examples show that the word is gradually losing its purely terminological status and its meaning is extended to fill in the segmental lacuna, revealed in the dichotomy of the English *to articulate* and the Russian *артикулировать*.

Similar observations on cognate words are offered in prof. Kabakchi’s publication. He writes: “... up to the last quarter of the 20th century, only academic subjects could be “humanitarian” in Russian, and now people talk about “humanitarian aid”. “Chauvinism” used to be a synonym of “nationalism” in Russian, and today Russian followers of American feminists also talk about “male chauvinism” (discrimination on the basis of sex, or rather on the basis of “gender”, as they say it) [4: 171]. V.V. Kabakchi defines this linguistic phenomenon as “semantic leveling” of cognate polyonyms, and stresses the fact that many cognate

lexemes which used to be xenonyms in Russian, i.e. used to denote elements of a foreign culture, tend to lose their xenonymic status: “... instead of the idionym “техникум” (*‘technicum’* – “technical school, elementary vocational training”) the Anglicism “college” is used today (though this word used to be a xenonym in Russian). The municipal head is either “a mayor” or “a governor” [ibid.]. One more example is given by P. Palazchenko: he maintains that the word *ресторан* (“restaurant”) has extended its meaning to include more public catering facilities than before (by analogy with “Macdonald’s restaurants”), though traditionally, in Russia, it was used to denote only really expensive venues [7: 116]. These are just some of the examples; the list can be enlarged.

The given examples indicate that both the semantic restoration of borrowings from English and the semantic leveling of international cognate lexis can be seen actually as a common linguistic process, induced by the contact of various world languages with globalized English. Speakers do not distinguish whether the word has been borrowed from English per se, or whether it has become international due to wider etymological affinity; in the context of the growing exposure to global English, many previously borrowed lexical units extend their meanings to approximate the semantic structures of their English language equivalents.

The semantic shift of the Russian words *агрессивный* (“aggressive”) and *амбициозный* (“ambitious”), which has been commented on in numerous publications on innovations in connotative meanings in Russian in the last several years, can be seen as yet another example of “semantic restoration” and “semantic leveling”. Different authors point out the fact that until not long ago these words were used in Russian to denote predominantly derogatory meanings (according to the most widely recognized Russian language dictionary by S. Ozshegov, *амбиция* (“ambition”) means “extreme conceit”, “arrogance”, or “haughtiness”, and *агрессивный* (“aggressive”) means “belligerent”, “behaving in a threatening way”, or “provocative”), while in English, their counterparts can be used in an appreciative sense too: they denote “showing a desire to do something that demands great effort, skill, etc.” and “not afraid of opposition, determined and forceful, assertive”, respectively. Russian-English translation manuals traditionally treat *агрессивный* - *aggressive* and *амбициозный* - *ambitious* as culture-related “translator’s false friends” and suggest lexical substitutions as follows: *an ambitious project* - *очень перспективный проект/ a project which has*

great potential, he is very ambitious – он стремится сделать блестящую карьеру/ he strives to carve out a career, he is not aggressive enough – ему не достаёт хватки/ he has a weak grip [3: 168; 6: 142–143]. But in today’s Russian, these two words are increasingly often used with neutral or positive overtones, influenced by the extensive interaction with global English, especially in business-related contexts, e.g.: *aggressive marketing strategy – агрессивная стратегия сбыта* [6: 142], as well as various other spheres, cf.:

Я буду агрессивно поддерживать любого кандидата в президенты с центристской программой / I will aggressively support any presidential candidate with a centrist program (the mayor of Moscow Yu. Luzhkov, 2004);

У песни хорошая агрессия... Ритм в песне жесткий, она агрессивна, но агрессивна по-хорошему с музыкальной точки зрения... / This song has good aggression... The rhythm of the song is rough, the song is aggressive, but aggressive in a positive musical sense... (Russian singer O. Gazmanov, 2006);

Достижение лидерства в энергетике – это амбициозная задача / To become leaders in the sphere of power engineering is an ambitious goal (the then President of Russia V. Putin, 2007);

... нам, людям амбициозным (в хорошем смысле этого понятия), желающим оставить свой след в профессии, в бизнесе и в жизни, даны в руки все карты, чтобы ставить новые смелые задачи и их выполнять /... we, ambitious people (in a good sense of this notion), who want to make a difference in our profession, in business and in our life, have all the opportunities to set challenging new goals and to reach them (the *Samara Segodnia* newspaper, 2005).

And, visa versa, the initially neutral or positive borrowing *креативный* (“creative”), synonymous with Russian *творческий* (*креативный / творческий директор* – “creative director”, *креативная / творческая личность* – “creative personality”), as well as its derivatives, exhibits a shift towards a derogatory meaning unusual for Russian, as in the English expression *creative accounting* – “a way of doing or presenting the accounts of a business that might not show what the true situation really is”. Cf.:

Недостатки популярности приходится восполнять напором креативности... / The lack of popularity has to be compensated for by a push for creativity...

(the *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* newspaper, 2004);

Кто сказал, что это подлый плагиат? Это креативная защита! / Who says that this is

unscrupulous plagiarism? It is creative defense! (K. Earnst on the trade-off of a TV host named Oxana Pushkina for another one, named Tatyana Pushkina).

Without going into the linguacultural underpinnings behind these semantic innovations (they were covered in [8; 9] and some other publications), it has to be stressed once again that the tendency has been triggered by the intensification of international communication and the growing number of bilingual Russians, who are aware of the meanings and use of the corresponding English words and subconsciously tend to transfer the contexts of their use into Russian language discourse; in other words, they tend to level the semantic differences and to reconstruct the semantic structures of borrowings to approximate the structures of their English equivalents.

Semantic reconstruction and leveling can be fraught with potential linguistic blunders. One of such blunders was made by a Russian speaker trying to extend the meaning of an assimilated borrowing *канал* (“channel”) and to derive new words from it by analogy with the English semantic-derivational model of the word *channel*, cf.:

Необходимо канализировать негативные эмоции... Такая канализация очень важна для психологического баланса человека... / Negative emotions need to be properly channeled... Such channeling is crucially important for a person's psychological balance... (O. Sviblova, 2004).

In English, the verb *to channel* derived from the noun *channel* means “to direct money, feelings, ideas, etc. towards a particular thing or purpose”. In Russian, similar derivation cannot be regarded as appropriate, first of all, because the attempted derivation of the verbal noun *канализация* has turned out to be homonymous with another Russian word *канализация* meaning “sewage, sewer system” (though, it must be admitted, that the term *канализация – channeling* is used in physics), and second, because there is an adequate, though not one-word equivalent of the verb *to channel* in Russian - «давать выход (чувствам, эмоциям)» (“to vent one’s feelings, emotions, etc.”). It looks as if the speaker, being bilingual, having formulated her thought in English, just failed to find an appropriate Russian equivalent and resorted to unjustified and clumsy borrowing.

The process of semantic restoration and semantic leveling is induced by language contact in the English language as well, though in English, this tendency is less pronounced and less evident. For example, the word *babushka*, when borrowed from Russian, developed a new meaning – “a woman’s head scarf”. In many English language dictionaries it

occupies the first place in the list of meanings, and in some dictionaries, for example in The American Heritage Dictionary, it is given as the only lexico-semantic variant. However, the original meaning of the word, "an elderly woman, a grandmother", as in Russian, is gradually coming back to the forefront of the semantic structure of *babushka*, strongly enough to serve as the base for further semantic derivation, as in the case of the neologism *babushkaphobia*, registered in The Longman Register of New Words. V.V. Kabakchi's research also shows that the English words *norm* and *liquidate* developed their meanings "output norm" for the first and "to annihilate" for the second, under the influence of the Russian language [4: 171].

The linguistic mechanism behind semantic restoration and semantic leveling of borrowings is well investigated in the theory of language contact: it is the phenomenon of semantic borrowings, also known as semantic calques or loan translations. G. Paul defined it as "the influence on the inner form of the word". The intensification of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural communication triggers the influx of both lexical borrowings and semantic calques, with the semantic influence experienced by the native vocabulary of the host language (cf. the examples of the Russian lexemes calquing the meanings from English: *челночный, ящик (= телевизор)* [5: 227], *вызов* (as in «угрозы и вызовы») [9] and others) and by a large group of borrowings. The latter, defined as "semantic restoration" and "semantic leveling", can be treated as a subtype of semantic calquing.

Restoration and leveling of lexical semantics can be also traced when phrases and collocations are calqued. The fact is, more and more speakers choose to calque expressions in the process of cross-cultural communication instead of translating them; the case usually lamented by professional linguists and translators/interpreters, but absolutely inevitable in the context of globalization and internationalization. For example, the Russian language has embraced the expression *политически корректный* ("politically correct"), though numerous translations were suggested for it, such as *общественно приемлемый* ("socially acceptable"), *идеологически выдержанный* ("ideologically consistent") and others. This phrase generates the semantic extension of the Russian adjective *политический*, making it closer in semantic scope with its English counterpart *political*. The English language also increasingly often calques expressions from other world languages. For example, when talking about the situation in present-day Russia, English language

speakers today tend to use the phrase *werewolves in uniforms*, calquing the Russian phrase *оборотни в погонах*, though there are similar expressions *rogue policemen* and *police turncoats* in English [7: 168; 186].

Coming back to the issue of the antinomy of local vs. global in language, it is important to emphasize that the globalization of the English language, being the major influence in the linguistic situation throughout the world, is manifested in various linguistic phenomena and various, often diametrically different tendencies in the development of the world languages, all of them united within the process defined as "glocalization" (globalization + localization). Centripetal and centrifugal forces determining the linguistic convergence/divergence unity are dynamically balanced, and when a certain trend is enhanced as a certain stage of development, it often triggers the reinforcement of the opposite tendency to counterbalance and restrain the first one. Borrowings, in particular, when transferred from one language to another, can adapt to the linguistic environment and divert far enough from their original, on the one hand. But on the other hand, reflecting the need of the speakers in mutual intelligibility and comprehensibility with the global community, they can exhibit a tendency towards restoration of the semantic structure of the original lingual unit at a certain point of their development, if only as an approximation. Acceleration of the restoration and leveling of borrowings in their pronunciation and spelling as well as in their semantic development by analogy with their foreign language counterparts (not only in different local languages, but in the global English language as well) is one of the determining factors in what can be defined as "the linguistic flavor of modern times" (to use the expression of V. G. Kostomarov).

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