

THE SPECIFICS OF THE ANGLICIZATION PROCESS IN RUSSIAN YOUTH SLANG

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Abstract

The article explores the specifics of Anglicization in Russian youth slang. It examines the reasons for borrowing English vocabulary, the features of phonetic and grammatical assimilation of Anglicisms, and their functions in youth speech. Differences between the literary language and slang in the use of borrowings are highlighted, and the role of socio-psychological factors and grammatical variability as characteristic features of slang is analyzed.

Keywords: anglicisms, youth slang, borrowings, grammatical adaptation, phonetic assimilation, word formation.

As is well known, borrowings are one of the sources for expanding a language's vocabulary, alongside word formation and semantic transformations of words. This is characteristic of both the literary language and various types of slang.

Recently, due to socio-economic and political transformations, the number of foreign borrowings—specifically Anglo-American ones—has sharply increased in the Russian literary language.

In this study, the term “anglicisms” is used to refer to borrowings from the English language and its American variant.

According to researchers [3, p. 150], the main reasons for English-language borrowings in the contemporary linguistic situation are: 1) the need to name a new object or concept; 2) the desire to replace multi-word expressions with single-word designations of an object; 3) the prestige of the English word compared to its Russian or Russified counterpart; 4) the communicative relevance of the concept and its corresponding word; and several other reasons.

In the literary language, these factors operate in combination, driving the intensification of the borrowing process.

The intensive process of borrowing Anglicisms has inevitably affected youth slang as a social subsystem of modern Russian. Compared to the literary language, the “Anglicization” of slang is largely specific in its nature.

As Borisova notes [1, p. 52], intensive borrowing of English-language vocabulary is observed for the first time in the history of youth slang development, although the tendency to use individual foreign borrowings in young people’s speech is not new [6].

The use of Anglicisms by young people is, of course, related to the contemporary linguistic situation. However, not all factors that have triggered active borrowing in the literary language are equally relevant for youth slang.

In youth slang, the primary reason for borrowing found in the literary language—the need to name a new object or concept—is absent. Borrowings in slang are used to designate concepts or objects that already have verbal names in Russian. The function of such borrowings is to provide an expressive, original, and unusual designation.

Therefore, social and psychological reasons for borrowing come to the forefront in slang: the prestige of an English word compared to its Russian or Russified counterpart. An Anglicism is perceived as more “fashionable” or “pleasant-sounding”; humorous or somewhat coarse-lowered (birthday – бездник, dance – дэнсы; parents – пэренты, фазер-мазер, gold medal – голдуха; teacher – тичер).

The functioning of borrowings depends on the degree to which Anglicisms are assimilated in the Russian language. The criteria for assimilation were developed by L.P. Krysin [4] and Y.S. Sorokin [7]. These include:

1. **Graphical assimilation**, i.e., representation using Russian orthography;
2. **Grammatical assimilation**, i.e., subordination to the grammatical norms of the Russian language;
3. **Semantic independence** of words;
4. **Word-formation activity** of words [4].

Based on these criteria, three types of foreign words are distinguished:

1. **Borrowings** (words assimilated by the language);
2. **Exoticisms**;
3. **Foreign insertions** (words not assimilated by the language).

As is well known, exoticisms semantically denote the realities of “foreign” life, while foreign insertions are rendered graphically using the Latin alphabet.

Observations of the functioning of borrowings in youth slang show that only borrowings, assimilated to varying degrees, are represented in slang vocabulary. Exoticisms and foreign insertions are absent. This is explained by the fact that youth slang is oriented toward oral communication rather than written texts.

Phonetic assimilation

Most borrowings in slang reflect the sound rather than the graphic form of a word, i.e., they are borrowed through so-called practical transcription. In this case, the vowelization of the slang word is close to that of the original borrowing:

- браза – bro (from English Brother);
- берздэй – birthday (from English birthday);
- воч – watch (from English watch);
- зиппер – zipper (from English zipper);
- кантри – country house (from English country);
- мэн – man (from English man);
- сейшн (дринк-сейшн) – Session (from English Session and to drink).

In this way, nouns are predominantly added to slang. Among other parts of speech, note the following: the adjective сингл – single (from English single); the pronoun май – my (from English my); adverbs: вэри (e.g., вэри клево) – very (from English very); кул – cool (in American slang, cool meaning “bold, shameless”). It is used to express a high positive evaluation; the function word джаст – just (from English just).

According to preliminary estimates, the roots of approximately 10% of slang words reflect the graphic form of the corresponding English words, i.e., transliteration occurs (letter-by-letter reading): лавер (youth slang) – lover (from English lover); манагер (entrepreneurs' slang) – manager (from English manager); хайр (hippie slang) – hair (from English hair); хом (youth slang) – home (from English home).

The influence of English-language elements on slang is reflected in the pronunciation of certain slang words, which is atypical for the Russian language:

1. unusual sound combinations for Russian speakers (айкн “icon,” берздэй “birthday,” ворк “work,” лэйбл “label,” сэсайэти “society,” чейндж “exchange”);
2. very slight reduction of unstressed vowels (for example, in the words драйвер “taxi driver,” мазер “mother,” покет “pocket,” рекорд “gramophone record,” сайэнс “science”);
3. pronunciation of voiced obstruents at the end of a word, which is completely uncharacteristic of Russian (сайд “side,” сайз “size,” смог “smog from smoking”).

Grammatical assimilation. During the borrowing process, changes affected not only the phonetic form of words but also their grammatical structure. As a result, some borrowings acquired non-zero inflections and word-forming affixes in their base form, for example: герла “girl” — from girl; олды “parents” — from old; трузера “trousers” — from trousers; дринкать “to drink” — from drink; мэйкаться “to succeed, to work out” — from make; бестовый “excellent” — from best; хаевый “high” — from high; френдиться “to be friends” — from friend; лавить (from love) — “to love.”

Since, as a result of phonetic transformations of English words, the stems of the vast majority of borrowings denoting objects and phenomena end in a consonant, these words are treated as masculine nouns. For example, all borrowings whose Russian equivalents are inanimate and animate nouns of the masculine or neuter gender become masculine nouns in slang: войс “voice” (from voice), сайз “size” (from size), тэйбл “table” (from table), вайн “wine” (from wine), лак “luck” (from luck), фэйс “face” (from face), блэк “Black person” (from black), драйвер “taxi driver” (from driver), фрэнд “friend” (from friend).

For nouns whose Russian equivalents are inanimate feminine nouns, there are three possible outcomes:

1. they are treated as masculine nouns with a zero ending in the base form;
2. they are treated as feminine nouns ending in **-a** in the base form;
3. they are treated as indeclinable nouns of syntactic feminine gender.

bottle “бутылка” Nom. — Gen. — Dat.

| Forms | Nominative | Genitive | Dative |
|---|------------|-------------|-------------|
| Мужской (склоняемый) род | мой ботл | моего ботла | моему ботлу |
| Женский род с -а (склоняемый) | моя ботла | моей ботлы | моей ботле |
| Женский (несклоняемое) род | моя ботл | моей ботл | моей ботл |

The first type is the most widespread; the majority of such nouns follow this pattern: брѣст “breast”, зиппер “zipper”, стрит “street”, and many others. The second type includes only two recorded words: лэйбла “label” and ботла “bottle”. The third type also comprises a small number of words: мюзик “music”, лѣкшн “lection”.

For animate nouns whose equivalents are feminine, it is possible to use the second or the third type of inflection: моя вайфа – моя вайф (wife).

Nouns whose Russian equivalents are pluralia tantum are, as a rule, also formed as pluralia tantum in slang: вотчи “watch” (watch), джины “jeans” (jeans), спектра “glasses” (spectacles), трузера “trousers” (trousers). However, there are several exceptions: воч “watch,” джин “jeans,” хэйр “hair”.

A characteristic feature of inflection in slang is the tendency to place stress on the inflectional ending: герла “girl” — герлы́ (Gen.), герле́ (Dat.); стрит “street” — на стриту́ (Prep.); флэт “apartment” — на флэту́ (Prep.); хип “hippie” — хипа́ (Gen.), хипу́ (Dat.). This tendency is especially strong in the plural: гай “guy” — гаёв (Gen.); диск “record” — диски́ (Nom.); зиппер “zipper” — зиппера́ (Nom.); покет “pocket” — в покета́х (Prep.); сайд “side” — по сайда́м (Dat.).

Among adjectives in slang, two groups can be distinguished in terms of grammatical structure.

The first, larger group consists of adjectives with the stressed suffix -ов- such as вайтовый “white,” лэфтовый “left,” файновый “fine,” хитовый “popular.”

The second group includes indeclinable adjectives: брэйнд-нью “new,” хайлайт “good, worthy of approval,” хэппи “happy.” These latter adjectives either appear only in fixed expressions (for example, хэппи берздэй “happy birthday”) or are used exclusively in the predicative function (Вот это хайлайт).

English-based verbs in slang most often acquire the suffix -а- (or -ть): stressed — дринкать “to drink,” камать “to come,” киссаться “to kiss,” лукать “to look”; or unstressed — воркать “to work,” лайкать “to like,” спикать “to speak.”

They may also take other suffixes, such as -ну- (/ -ть/) — искейпнуть “to get away, escape,” or -ану- (/ -ть/) — рингануть “to call on the phone, ring.”

Thus, in terms of grammatical adaptation of English-based slang words, the following regularities can be observed:

1. The predominant use of a single inflectional or word-formation suffix (for nouns — zero ending, for adjectives — suffix -ов-, for verbs — suffix -а / -ть) and a tendency toward uniform inflection within the same part of speech;

2. The presence of variability in grammatical adaptation: ботл – ботла “bottle,” лэйбл – лэйбла “label,” дринкать – дринчить “to drink,” etc., with full identity of meaning. We consider this to be one of the manifestations of slang specificity as a social variety of speech, in contrast to the literary language.

The richness of inflectional means with clearly established differentiation is a generally recognized feature of the literary language, whereas grammatical variability is regarded as an undesirable phenomenon.

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