

BORROWINGS IN THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE

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The article examines the process of borrowing words in the Russian language, its causes, sources, and its influence on the modern lexical system. It is shown that borrowings play an important role in the development of the language, reflecting the historical, cultural, and scientific-technical contacts of Russia with other countries. The paper highlights the main periods of active borrowing as well as the peculiarities of assimilation of foreign words in Russian speech.

Keywords: borrowing, vocabulary, foreign words, Russian speech, language, culture, history.

Language is a living organism that constantly develops and changes under the influence of various factors. One of the most noticeable processes occurring in a language is borrowing — the inclusion of words from other languages into its system. The Russian language is no exception: throughout its history, it has experienced waves of active borrowing related to the development of culture, science, trade, technology, and international communication. Borrowings not only enrich the vocabulary but also reflect the historical ties of the Russian people with other nations, as well as the evolution of social relations and cultural traditions.

Borrowing is the process of transferring words from one language to another. As a result, foreign words appear in the language, which may retain their original form or undergo changes in pronunciation, spelling, and meaning. Borrowed words are also called **foreign borrowings**, **barbarisms**, or **loan elements**. In linguistics, a distinction is made between **complete** and **partial borrowings**:

Complete borrowings occur when a ready-made word enters the language (for example, *computer, manager*).

Partial borrowings occur when only a part of a word is borrowed (for example, the prefix *anti-* from Greek or the suffix *-logy*).

The history of the Russian language demonstrates several distinct periods of active borrowing.

Old Russian Period (9th–14th centuries)

During this period, the main source of borrowings was the Old Church Slavonic language, which enriched Russian vocabulary with religious and literary words such as *resurrection*, *cross*, *grace*, *priest*. Words of Greek origin also entered the language: *icon*, *angel*, *monastery*.

16th–17th centuries

With the development of trade and diplomatic relations, the Russian language adopted numerous words from Turkic, Polish, German, and Dutch: *treasury*, *guard*, *shirt*, *anchor*, *trousers*, *schooner*, *shipyard*.

The Petrine Era (18th century)

During the reign of Peter the Great, Russia actively adopted Western European experience. At this time, many words entered Russian from Dutch, German, and French: *officer*, *captain*, *camp*, *wig*, *uniform*, *menu*, *ballet*, *carriage*.

19th century

This period was marked by strong French influence. The Russian language absorbed many French words such as *garçon*, *buffet*, *compliment*, *visit*, *jacket*, *manners*.

20th–21st centuries

The modern stage is primarily associated with English borrowings, especially in the fields of science, technology, business, and the Internet: *computer*, *Internet*, *file*, *marketing*, *management*, *startup*, *like*, *blogger*.

The main reasons for borrowing words into the Russian language are as follows:

1. **The need to name new concepts, phenomena, and objects.**
2. When new realities appear in society, the language requires new words. Example: English borrowings in the IT sphere — *chat*, *site*, *browser*.
3. **Prestige and fashion.**
4. Some words are borrowed due to a desire to imitate a culture considered more advanced. In the 19th century, for instance, French was the language of the aristocracy and “high society.”
5. **Internationalization of science and culture.** Many scientific terms have Greek or Latin roots: *physics*, *mathematics*, *biology*, *philosophy*.
6. **Close economic and cultural ties between nations.** In today’s globalized world, linguistic exchange occurs rapidly between different languages.

Assimilation of Borrowed Words

Once a foreign word enters the Russian language, it gradually becomes **assimilated** — its

pronunciation, spelling, and grammatical forms adapt to the rules of Russian.

Examples:

- The French *garage* became *гараж* (*garazh*);
- The English *computer* became *компьютер* (*kompyuter*);
- The German *Butterbrot* became *бутерброд* (*buterbrod*).

Some words become so habitual that they are no longer perceived as borrowed (*school, theater, notebook*).

Others retain a foreign flavor and are used mainly in specific professional or social contexts, e.g., *manager, marketing, brand*.

Positive and Negative Roles of Borrowings

Borrowings play a **dual role** in language. On the one hand, they **enrich** the language, contributing to the development of science, technology, and culture. On the other hand, excessive use of foreign words can **obscure meaning** and **displace native expressions**.

For example, the English word *manager* often replaces the native *управляющий* (“administrator”), while *briefing* is used instead of *совещание* (“meeting”).

It is important to maintain a **linguistic balance**, using borrowings consciously and only when the Russian language lacks a precise equivalent.

Conclusion

Borrowing is a natural and necessary process in the development of any language. It reflects historical and cultural interactions among nations, enriches the vocabulary, and facilitates communication. However, it is essential to preserve the national uniqueness, richness, and expressiveness of the native language.

Competent use of borrowed words makes speech modern and precise, whereas excessive borrowing may lead to the loss of the language’s distinctive character.

References

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