

## Language Situation in Russia Today with Special Reference to new Russian Dictionaries

**Olga Karpova**

Vice-Rector for Public Relations  
Head of English Philology Department  
Ivanovo State University  
Yermak street 39  
Ivanovo 153025  
Russia

### Abstract

The article is devoted to the general review of modern language situation in Russia as reflected in recently published dictionaries of Russian language. Main trends in current Russian lexicography are distinguished through criticism of new types of dictionaries of literary language with special reference to three editions of "An Explanatory Dictionary of the Modern Russian Language" edited by G.N. Sklyarevskaya (Moscow, 1998, 2001, 2005). Language modifications of the end of the XXth century (i.e. terms of various subject areas: computers, sport, business and finance, abbreviations, jargon, youth slang, etc.) registered in their macrostructure are being analysed. Special attention is given to the entries showing the latest changes in Russian society (politics, army and order, religion and faith, etc.), borrowings and new words defining meals, drinks, clothes, music. Current developments and perspectives in progress are mentioned.

The end of the XXth century was marked with growing interest to native language (Dobrovolskij 1997) and Russian linguistic studies were focused on creating a profound dictionary of living Russian language. Perestroika brought a stream of borrowings from modern foreign languages mainly English as well as low flown words and jargon historically not fixed in dictionaries of national language.

The role of social and public political factors in modern Russian society has intensified. This process is closely connected with the development of social and political vocabulary. The latter has resulted in both a considerable extension of such vocabulary, and in qualitative changes of the lexicon. A close examination of the Russian public political vocabulary (Karpova, Manik 2002) showed that ideologically coloured words characteristic of communist times: *агитатор* – *agitator (political campaigner)*, *активист* – *activist (activist)*, *аппаратчик* – *apparatchik (operative)*, *большевик* (*Bolshevik*), *гегемон* – *hegemon (working class)*, *диссидент* (*dissident*), *ленинизм* (*Leninism*), *пятилетка* – *piatiletka (five-year plan)*, *партовзыскание* – *partvziskanie (party penalty)*, *соцлагерь* – *sotslager' (a union of social nations)* went out of use.

This significant period of transfer from command administrative system to democratic society: *гласность* (*glasnost'*), *перестройка* (*perestroika*) was immediately registered in

new types of reference works which had never existed before in Russian lexicography. "Vocabulary of Soviet Society and Culture" by I. Corten was published in Great Britain (Corten 1992) simultaneously with Russian lexicographic product "A Dictionary of Perestroika" edited by V. Maximov (Maksimov 1992).

Another new trend appeared in Russian lexicography at the end of the XXth c. marked by numerous borrowings into Russian language. The process of borrowings adaptation into Russian language can be explained first and foremost by a number of socio-physiological reasons, prestige of the foreign word being the leading one. Borrowings began to be used instead of Russian words, for example: *презентация* – *prezentatsia* (*presentation*) instead of *представление* – *predstavlenie*; *экслюзивный* – *eksklusivnij* (*exquisite*) instead of *исключительный* – *iskluchitelnij*; *консалтинг* – *konsalting* (*consulting*) instead of *консультированию* – *konsultirovanie*, etc.

Along with the previous reason another one should be mentioned, called "zone of social attention". This is the part of vocabulary defining contemporary situation in Russian society such as: *демократизация* – *demokratizatsia* (*democratization*), *беженцы* – *bezhentsi* (*refugees*), *ваучер* – *vaucher* (*voucher*), *наркомафия* – *narkomafia* (*drug mafia*), *криминогенный* – *kriminogennij* (*criminal*), *референдум* (*referendum*), *конверсия* – *konversia* (*conversion*), *экология* – *ekologia* (*ecology*), *суверенитет* – *suverinitet* (*sovereignty*).

One can also notice changing of nomination units in political power vocabulary which turned out to be a transfer of foreign nomination into Russian language: *парламент* (*parliament*) instead of *верховный совет* – *verhovnij sovet* (*Supreme Soviet*), *кабинет министров* – *cabinet ministrov* (*cabinet of ministers*) instead of *совет министров* – *sovet ministrov* (*Soviet of Ministers*), *администрация* – *administratsia* (*administration*) instead of *советы* – *soveti* (*Soviets*) и *вице-премьеры* – *vitse-prem'eri* (*vice-ministers*), *пресс-секретарь* – *press-sekretar'* (*press secretary*), *пресс-конференции* – *press-konferentsii* (*press conferences*), *саммит* (*summit*) instead of *meeting of high officials*.

The phenomenon of foreign words intrusion into Russian language and society is obvious due to *appearance* of new concepts: *джип* – *džip* (*jeep*), *вэб-сайт* (*web site*), *лимузин* – *limuzin* (*limousine*), *ноутбук* (*note book*), *прайвеси* (*privacy*) and specific features of new concepts: *бренд* (*brand*), *визажист* (*visagiste*), *гешефт* (*Geschäft*), *гран-при* (*Grand Prix*), *ремейк* (*remake*).

Many titles of Russian modern newspapers and TV programmes were changed into those ones borrowed from English, for instance: *Хит-парад* (*Hitparade*), *Брифинг* (*Briefing*), *Криминал* (*Criminal*), *Резонанс* (*Resonance*), *Триллер* (*Thriller*), *Экспресс-камера* (*Express Camera*), *Пресс-клуб* (*Press club*), *Тинейджер* (*Teenager*), *Пресс-экспресс* (*Press Express*).

Terminology of different subject areas, for instance *business and economics*: *акционер* – *aktsinber* (*shareholder*), *кредитная карта* – *kreditnaya karta* (*credit card*), *дефолт* – *defolt* (*default*), *дилер* – *diler* (*dealer*), *индексация* – *indeksatsia* (*indexation*), *маркетинг* (*marketing*); *sport*: *бобслей* – *bobslei* (*bobsleigh*), *кикбоксинг* – *kik boksing* (*kick boxing*), *скейтборд* – *skeitbord* (*skateboard*), *файтер* – *faiter* (*fighter*); *computers*: *гейм* (*game*), *дискета* – *disketa* (*diskette*), *дисплей* (*display*), *драйвер* (*driver*), *картридж*

(cartridge), компакт-диск (CD), лэпторн (laptop), сканер (scanner), etc. were also borrowed into Russian language and immediately appeared in present day dictionaries for general and special purposes (see for example: Encyclopedia of a Businessman 1994; Lexicon of a Businessman 1992 and the like).

It's also interesting to note, that modern Russian language and speech are characterized by usage of a considerable number of euphemisms which can be divided into several distinct groups:

- **cliche:** заслуженный отдых – *zasluzhennij odih* instead of покой – *pokoï* (retirement), проводить на заслуженный отдых – *provodit' na zasluzhennij odih* instead of проводить на пенсию – *provodit' na pensiu* (retirement process);

- **camouflage:** спецконтингент – *spetskontingent* (prisoners), первый отдел – *per-vij ot-del* (цензура – *sensorship*);

- **diplomacy:** непредсказуемые последствия – *nepredskazuemie posledstvia* (unexpected consequences), миротворческие акции – *mirotvorcheskie aktsii* (peaceful actions), соответствующая инстанция – *sootvetstvushchie instantsii* (special authority);

- **authorities' measures:** задержать – *zaderzhat'* (арестовать – *to arrest*), высшая мера – *visshaya mera* (смертная казнь – *death penalty*);

- **state and military secrets:** задание – *zadanie* (aim), объект – *objekt* (object), операция, акция – *operatsia, aktsia* (action);

- **relations between national and social groups:** этническая чистка – *etnicheskaya chistka* (ethnic purge), некоренное население – *nekorennoe naselenie* (non-native population), группа повышенного риска – *gruppa povishennogog riska* (high risk group).

All these changes in contemporary Russian society were constantly fixed in new generation of dictionaries appeared in the 90s of the XXth. in Russia. The first "Dictionary of Russian Language of the End of the XX c." registering all groups of words mentioned above was first published in 1998, enlarged and revised in 2001 (Sklarevskaya 1998, 2001). It is a new type of a national language dictionary having no similar predecessors which included:

- **new concepts of the new reality:** рынок – *rinok* (market), перестройка – *partperestroika* (perestroika), контрперестройка – *kontrperestroika* (contrperestroika), постперестроечный – *postperestroechnij* (postperestroika);

- **borrowings:** рюшюр (haute couture), лейбл (label), прайс лист (price list), промоутер (promoter), секьюрити (security), имидж (image), сингл (single), слоган (slogan);

- **low flown words:** балдеж – *baldezh* (liking something very much), лимон – *limon* (million), лажа – *lazha* (lies), вешать лапши на уши – *veshat' lapshu na ushi* (to lie), на халяву – *na haluavu* (to get something for nothing), затрахать – *zatrahat'* (to be sick or tired);

- **jargon (mainly youthful one):** гиниы – *grini* (dollars), стипунха – *stipuha* (scholarship), шпора – *shpora* (notes used in an exam), удочка *udochka* (a satisfactory mark); потрясно – *potrasno*, классно – *klassno*, обалденно – *obaldenno* (great, fantastic), убойный – *uboinij*, клевый – *kliovij* (the best), ржать – *rzhat'* (to laugh out loud), кайф – *kaif* (happy, pleasant experience), балдеть – *baldet'* (to like something very much),

*прокол* – *prokol* (failure in something), *ишачить* – *ishachit'*, *пахать* – *пахat'* (work very hard), *заказать* – *zakazat'* (to kill);

• **vocabulary of underworld (crime, prison):** *шмон* – *shmon* (обыск – search), *баланда* – *balanda* (похлебка – soup in prison), *стукач* – *stukach* (доносчик – 'grass'); *блатной* – *blatnoi* (jailbird), *перо* – *pero* (нож – knife).

Entry lines contained thorough definitions of headwords and illustrative examples – quotations from different modern language sources, mass media text prevailing. See for instance:

**Тусовка** – *сбопище, гулянка, уличные посиделки молодежи, скопление людей, драка, инцидент. Рок-шоу.*

**Значения:** 1) круг людей одного менталитета, объединенных для неформального общения; 2) фопма неофициального, полуофициального, дпужеского общения; 3) светское мепоппийтне, события светской жизни: кинофестиваль, презентация и т.п.; 4) митинг, демонстрация. **Примеры из газет:** 1) «Так распадаются многие *тусовки*, теряются друзья»; 2) «Былые *тусовки* перекочевали из скверов и подвалов в так называемые «стильные клубы»; 3) «Мне вообще нравится этот фестиваль, такая прелестная, как сегодня говопят, *тусовка*, общение»; 4) «верховодившие на *тусовке* вожди «Трудовой России» (Sklarevskaya 1998).

The majority of entries in a completely revised edition of the most popular Russian language dictionary edited by G. Sklarevskaya (Sklarevskaya 2005) register words which define the latest changes in Russian society in:

• **politics:** *конфронтировать* – *konfrontirovat'* (to confrontate), *посткоммунистический* – *postkommunisticheskij* (postcommunist), *фундаментализм* (fundamentalist);

• **army and order:** *дедовщина* – *dedovschina* (the abuse of new conscripts by older soldiers), *КГБ (KGB)*, *декриминализация* – *dekriminalizatsia* (elimination of criminals), *захват* – *zachvat* (seizure), *группа захвата* – *gruppa zachvata* (group of seizure);

• **some names of professions:** *сотрудник пиар-службы* (*sotrudnik piar sluzhbi*), *пиаровец* (*piarovets*), *пиарщик* – *piarschik* (PR officer), *продюсер* (*producer*), *диск жокей* (*disk jockey*), *кооператор* – *kooperator* (member of a private enterprise);

• **religion and faith:** *Бог* – *Bog* (God), *Богородица* – *Bogoroditsa* (the Virgin Mary), *буддизм* – *budism* (Buddhism), *йога* (*yoga*), *всенощная* – *vsenoschnaya* (*vespers*).

Detailed analysis of the dictionary corpus shows that the biggest groups of new words are **meals and drinks:** *гамбурген* – *gamburger* (burger), *чизбурген* – *chisburger* (cheeseburger), *тоник* (tonic), *пон корн* (pop corn), *сникерс* (snickers); **music:** *пон* (pop), *рок* (rock), *нейв* (rave), *рэн* (rap) and **clothes:** *карго* (cargo), *тон* (top), *шазюбль* (chasuble), *слаксы* (slacks).

A big group of words referring to **social jargons** (vocabulary of underworld) never having been included into Russian language dictionaries before also contain a significant part of the corpus: *алкаш* – *alkash* (alky), *заместу* – *zamesti* (to arrest), *доходяга* – *dohodiaga* (a very thin prisoner), *разборка* – *razborka* (infighting), *травка* – *travka* (наркотик – drug), *черняга* – *chernyaga* (low kind of morphine).

But headwords representing **youth slang:** *байк* (bike), *видак* – *vidak* (video set), *висеть* – *viset'* (do not react to questions), *въехать* – *v'ehat'* (to understand), *жутик* –

*zhutik* (horror film), *забугорье* – *zabugorje* (foreign countries), *закидон* – *zakidon* (strange behaviour), *запасть* – *zarast'* (to like smb immensely), *крутой* – *krutoi* (a person having power, connections), *крутизна* – *krutizna* (steepness), *прикалываться* – *prikalivat'* (to play jokes on smb), *мобильник* – *tobilnik* (cell phone) are especially numerous (see for example: Sternin 1992) which explains the growing popularity of this dictionary not only among native but also among foreign users who want to master a living Russian language.

Constant stream of foreign borrowings (mainly English and American) into Russian language (especially fixed in modern dictionaries – “*tolkovij slovar'*”) caused a real campaign for ecology in the native language (called *Greenpeace movement in language policy*) in Russian society, especially among linguists who tried to change this situation in favour of literary language dictionaries based on the norm. Their attention was thus focused on the so-called ‘culture oriented’ dictionaries. Among their positive measures were effectively with the help of culture of speech reference works. It gave an impulse to compilation of culture oriented dictionaries a good example being an encyclopedic dictionary “Culture of Russian Speech” edited by L. Ivanov (Ivanov 2003).

Dictionaries of Russian present day language continue to be published, their main goal being the answer to the question how to speak Russian effectively? The bright example of such dictionary is a product of publishing house Astrel “Dictionary of the Russian Language” edited by D. Dmitriev which appeared in 2003 (Dmitriev 2003).

This is a real representative of a new generation of Russian dictionaries. Its compilers, a group of lexicographers from St.-Petersburg, managed to introduce rich experience of famous British publishers HarperCollins into Russian practical lexicography. This dictionary is corpus-based, differs from other Russian language dictionaries by new means of polygraphic semiotics: colour boxes, scripts, full sentences illustrating key words and other innovations. It immediately became popular not only among Russian users, but first and foremost with foreigners studying Russian as a foreign language.

Nowadays Russian publishing house Astrel signed an agreement with HarperCollins and produced a wide range of bilingualized dictionaries in different formats typical for HarperCollins: gem, pocket and concise (Collins 2003; Karpova 2005a).

A lot of dictionaries for special purposes: slang, dialectal, new words, author lexicons, glossaries of proper names, phraseological reference books and a big range of LSP dictionaries of such subject areas as economics, business, finance, computers, biology, chemistry, law, etc. appeared in Russian lexicography along with general purpose dictionaries (Kozyrev, Chernyak 2000; Sorokaletov 1998). Their range of types is rather innovative and combines both traditional and new genres of linguistic and encyclopedic reference works created for special purposes and aimed at different groups of users (Karpova 2005b).

Thus Russian lexicography today has at its disposal new types of reference works either unique for Russian lexicography or implementing international features of foreign (mainly Western-European) applied lexicography. This combination of national and international features significantly contributes to the main purpose of any national lexicography: *how to master language effectively?*

It's especially important for European and American society which became rather diverse, for the last three decades having accepted thousands of immigrants from the third world. Such situation forced lexicographers to change their lexicographic policy because the concept 'native speaker' itself had been changed. The same situation is observed in contemporary Russia. That's why authors of some dictionaries of modern Russian language began to include entries illustrating other cultures realities in the corpus because of the influence of thousand of refugees integrated into Russian society from former Soviet republics. It's a long and difficult process demanding new lexicographic decisions and changing of traditional lexicographic policy.

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