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## Media as a Reflection of the Buzzword Functional Dynamics

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### Abstract

Despite the popularity and frequency of the use it is impossible to make clear and unambiguous definitions to linguistic fashion and a buzzword. The criteria of the buzzword have not been established with sufficient arguments, the reasons for the drift of some words into the category of buzzwords, and others to the loss of this status are not fully understood. Based on the material of modern media discourse the article, to a certain extent, fills in these lacunae and attempts to trace the functional dynamics of words that can be attributed to the fashionable language units of the Russian language of the XXI century. Changes related to the fashion category in many areas of communication, in functional styles and speech genres have been noted. Borrowings (mainly anglicisms) and substandard (jargon and vernacular) are among the sources of buzzwords. There are few cases of transformation of rearchaic elements into buzzwords. The functional dynamics of buzzwords is due to both linguistic and extralinguistic factors. The modern language material presented by media is studied in the article using a descriptive method with elements of linguoculturological and linguopragmatic analysis. A sociolinguistic technique revealing the conditionality of linguistic fashion by social parameters was also used.

**Keywords:** media discourse, linguistic fashion, buzzword, linguistic taste, pragmatic co-meaning of the word, dynamics of lexical connotations, social changes, anglicism, jargon, slang.

### 1. Introduction

Although the concepts of linguistic fashion and a buzzword have become firmly established in scientific usage, it is still not easy to give them an acceptable definition, since the only formal criterion (frequency) is not at all decisive. The attitude to fashion in general is ambiguous, and even more so to the linguistic fashion. There is a lot of evidence that not all the native speakers accept words that have reasons to be considered as buzzword more than others. Of course, the buzzword cannot be attributed to the traditional objects of linguistics. However, a number of special works are devoted directly to the phenomenon of the buzzword (Cherneyko, Bashkatova, 2008; Klepach, 2000; Vlasova, Titova, 2015; Vrublevskaya, 2015; Zhuravleva, 2010), three issues of dictionaries of buzzwords have been published (Novikov, 2005; Novikov, 2008; Novikov, 2016), several thematic collections of the "Language and Fashion" have been published (for example, articles with representative titles: Huseynova, 2017; Pishchalnikova, Panarina, 2017; Tomskaya, 2017; Troshina, 2017), where different aspects of the correlation of the categories of fashion, prestige and language, communicative categories and media strategies are studied. It is proved that "a buzzword is a

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pragmatic entity” (Zhuravleva, 2010: 8), and therefore, when investigating the causes of the dynamics of buzzwords (the entry of language units towards this group or, conversely, the exit from it), it is necessary to focus on the pragmatic content of a particular unit in the media text that presents the development of the Russian language. The article attempts to explain this dynamic in the language of media, in media texts about scientific discourse and in colloquial speech reflected in the media discourse.

## 2. Materials and methods

The modern language material presented in media is studied in the article using a descriptive method with elements of linguoculturological and linguopragmatic analysis. A sociolinguistic technique revealing the conditionality of linguistic fashion by social parameters was also used.

## 3. Discussion

V.I. Dal defined fashion through two concepts: *walking custom* and *changeable whim*, and denoted an obviously ironic attitude to it: through the proverb *Po mode i mysh' v komode* (according to fashion and a mouse in the chest of drawers chest of drawers) (Dal, 1955: 337). Fashion is considered to be a phenomenon that “is able to leave a deep and culturally significant mark in different areas of human life, despite certain chronological limits of its manifestation” (Troshina, 2017: 7). Fashion associated with the popularity of a particular language as a whole or individual foreign language elements can significantly affect social processes (Yefanov, 2022: 767). For example, the characteristic title of the article “Fashion for language as a way of implementing “soft power” in the context of modern geopolitical changes” (Huseynova, 2017: 28-48).

Fashion is essentially related to a person's need to designate and change social symbols (Kang et al., 2022; Langer, Gruber, 2021).

The researchers are quite right that the actualization of certain words, expressions and language pattern is associated with changes in cognitive structures, which, in turn, are caused by changes in basic values.

As V. Tokareva wrote in the story “The Bird of Happiness”, during perestroika, the word *biznes* (noun *business*), which had previously been shameful, became the buzzword (Tokareva, 2005).

Indeed, the explanatory dictionaries of the Soviet power last years interpreted *biznes* (noun *business*) through such units as a *scam*, *dishonest*. In colloquial speech, the words *kruto* (adverb; slang – very good), *krutoi* (adjective; slang – very good) and the word *zhest'* (noun; slang – very good) that has recently replaced them, which is used by the addressee to express an emotional attitude – both positive and negative one (undifferentiated) to something, could have become (and have become) buzzwords in recent decades, but not in the 60s of XX century.

Researchers point out changes related to the fashion category in many areas of communication (Algavi et al., 2021: 6), in functional styles and speech genres. The researchers note “conspicuous specific intonation features of youth speech, demonstrating carelessness, inconsequence of communication for speakers, often disdainful attitude towards communication partners, which manifests itself in intentional slurring of speech” (Pishchalnikova, Panarina, 2017: 173).

A kind of xenophilia is also a typical feature of youth speech.

“Today's children know perfectly well what “kheiter” (hayter) or “bulling” (bullying) is. But at the same time they do not understand Russian classical poetry – they do not know these words” (Serdechnova, 2022: 15).

Of course, the focus on anglicisms is a sign not only of youth speech (Shin et al., 2022), but a sign of almost all the spheres of communication such as advertising, mass media (Kulikova, 2022; Kulikova et al., 2023; Osipovskaya, Savelyeva, 2023; Shilina et al., 2023; Van Duyn, Collier, 2019), even scientific speech (Manca, 2020; Wenzel, 2019). On the one hand, the fashion for English-language terminology has more than good reasons (borrowed terms can act as eliminated conceptual lacunae, for example, in the economics), and on the other hand, in many humanitarian spheres they turn out to be more prestigious, status names but not essentially proved.

The fascination with English-language terminology correlates with characteristics such as imitation and phatic communication, not inherent in scientific discourse before (Brusenskaya, Kulikova, 2019: 133).

G.G. Khazagerov wrote about the direct proportionality between the use of fashionable terms *kognitivnyi* (adjective *cognitive*) and *kreativnyi* (adjective *creative*) and “standard solutions and formulaic statements” camouflaged by these words (Khazagerov, 2010; 2013).

“The spectacular word *diskurs* (discourse) often becomes the subject of quasi-scientific speculations” (Novikov, 2008: 44). It must be admitted that N.M. Shansky in one of his last articles protested against the *novomodnyi* (newfangled) term *diskurs* (discourse) (Shansky, 2010: 101), and after 20 years V. Novikov writes: “And at the same time, maybe we should flaunt less scientific beauties such as *diskurs* (discourse), *paradigma* (paradigm), *kognitivnyi dissonans* (cognitive dissonance). I am sure that *kognitivnyi dissonans* (cognitive dissonance) is an imaginary concept that Leon Festinger invented in America in order to be paid more for the work of a psychologist. There is no phenomenon that could only be called so, it is decorative sciolism” (Interview..., 2023b).

In the article “Someone else's name”, V. Novikov expressed his opinion on the fashionable term *intertekst* (intertext): “It is a foreign and alien word for me. When it is necessary, I use it to contact with colleagues. But in my intimate consciousness, such a category does not exist. In a widely quoted anecdote, the boy Vovochka argues with those who say that there is no word “w...”. How is it: there is “w...”, but there is no word? And here, in my opinion, there is such a case when there is a word, but “w...” ..., that is, there is no real essence. There is no such phenomenon that can be called only *intertekst* (intertext) and nothing else. For any text within another text, there are ancient and quite adequate designations: quotation, reminiscence, allusion, parody, etc. I will not argue here with the concept of *intertekstual'nost'* (intertextuality) introduced by Yulia Kristeva. I think that it will live not long and will die a natural death. Because through this concept, truisms are either smeared, or deliberate inventions are proved” (Novikov, 2023).

V. Novikov left an evidence of the attitude of representatives of elite speech culture to buzzwords: “I did not communicate personally with Dmitry Sergeevich Likhachev, but his speech was truly intelligent. Or the speech of Mikhail Viktorovich Panov. They didn't flaunt buzzwords, especially scientific ones” (Interview..., 2023b).

Fashion in science is connected not only with terminology, but with favourite topics and characteristic references (instead of Marx and Engels now Foucault and Derrida are used), for example, the title of the article “The study of gender as a manifestation of *research fashion* in Russian linguistics” (Tomskaya, 2017: 146-158). That is, fashion, which most often reflects the superficial (not essential) aspects of life, is also relevant to the field of science (in any case, humanitarian one) with its aim to the search for truth.

Its own linguistic fashion is formed in Internet communications, which is partly reflected in the Dictionary of the Internet language: *a hamster* is “a person who is easily manipulated on the Internet, a fanatical thoughtless fan of an idea or a famous person” (Slovar..., 2016: 236).

Thus, borrowings (mainly anglicisms) and substandard (jargon and vernacular) are among the sources of buzzwords. There are few cases of transformation of rearchaic elements into buzzwords, as happened with the word *respekt* (respect), which existed in the variant *reshpekt* back in the XVIII century and in an updated form returned to the buzzword. For example, the expression *respekt i uvazhukha* (in this expression two variants of the word *respect* are used: the first variant is anglicism (*respekt* – *respect*) and the second one (*uvazhukha* – *respect*; occasionalism) and such a modification:

“Great *respektishche* (respect with the suffix of magnification *-ishche*) to the author of “KP” Evgeny Belyakov for being able to show the hypocrisy and stupidity of the Central Bank's main *pozorishche* (disgrace with the suffix of magnification *-ishche*)” (Gataullin, 2021: 2).

It is clear that the origins of buzzwords are connected with factors such as the spiritual orientation to the West, typical for the domestic linguoculture of recent decades, tolerance to the substandard, on the one hand, and inattention to the traditional “root stream” of the Russian language (as a result of which many words naming important moral concepts prematurely left the language), on the other hand. All these circumstances have caused exactly such a configuration of buzzwords that has developed in the XXI century.

#### 4. Results

The qualification of a language unit as a buzzword are often included in author's reflections: “... it seems that without realizing it, keeping in mind a completely different scale of the plan, we became the initiators – or perhaps we can use a buzzword, trigger (trigger) – of some large-scale, global process affecting the entire planet” (Vlasov, 2023: 2);

“No one denies the benefits of ZOZH (abbreviation of *zdorovyi obraz zhizni* – healthy lifestyle), but how to force ourselves? Or rather, as it is fashionable to say now, to *zamotivirovat'* (motivate)” (Dobryukha, 2023: 3).

The source of the fashionable lexis, along with anglicisms, are substandard units, which, when repeatedly used in a common language, for instance in media, even in public political communication – “rise in rank”. Today, the frequency of such words, originating from jargon, including criminal one, is extremely high.

For example, The use of the fashionable jargonism in a strong position:

The headline “*Pilot Alexander Rutskoy pereobulsya* (ad litteram: *changed his shoes on the fly*; slang meaning: *radically changed his political views for benefits*)” (Murashev, 2021: 1).

The title of the article by D. Sokolov “*Vlasov sdelal* (ad litteram: *made*, slang meaning: *won a complete victory*) *even Schwarzenegger*” (Sokolov, 2021: 21).

“If you imagine an imaginary “*Encyclopedia of human traits*”, then I would illustrate the concept of “wholeness” with a photograph of Vladimir Menshov. “Wholeness”. Quite so. At the heart of Menshov's creative personality and character, a kind of strict crystal lattice seemed to lie and hold all his actions. No throwing, no transformation and *pereobuvaniya* (ad litteram: *changing shoes*, slang meaning: *changing views for benefits*) in the air – crystal. <...> Wholeness of this kind limits the creative range, I won't argue – but at a time when people almost turn from heroes into a bunch of foul-smelling substance within one day, you rather admire such wholeness” (Moskvina, 2021: 5)

“Without exaggeration, crowds of paid bloggers and journalists were rushing to Batumi as if to work, praising the standard fraudulent *zavlekukha* (slang: *lure*). In words, it turned out like with a scam of the 90s called *timeshare*, when *lokhi* (slang: *fools*) bought out a share in an unknown hotel business, and then did not know what to do with it and where to complain” (Steshin, Alyokhina, 2021: 5);

“And there is a catastrophic *palevo* (slang: *danger*, a dangerous situation in which a breakdown, failure of the case is possible) immediately in all the episodes of 20 years of marriage. Even if there was money for their own housing, there would still be 17 % overgrown with *rodaki* (slang: *parents*)” (Terentyev, 2020: 7).

All three issues of the “Dictionary of Buzzwords” by V. Novikov (Novikov, 2005; Novikov, 2008; Novikov, 2016) at least half consist of units such as (*babki* (slang: *money*), *bablo* (slang: *money*), *bespredel* (slang: *actions that go beyond any framework of written and unwritten laws; the extreme degree of lawlessness, disorder*), *golimyi* (slang: *bad, disgusting, unfashionable, not giving any pleasure, dull*), *goluboi* (slang: *homosexual*), *dostat'* (slang: *to get bored, lead to a state of irritation, dislike.*), *kolbasit'* (slang: *to feel bad*), etc. And the author in his essays often express his negative view on these words, in order to recognize a language unit as a buzzword (an it must be admitted), it is not necessary to approve it as an useful lexical unit:

“*Gnobit'* (jargon: *to harass, to persecute, to drive, to press*). A nasty word. I didn't want even to include it in the book, but scientific objectivity requires...” (Novikov, 2016: 53).

“*Po ponyatiyam* (ad litteram: *by concepts*; jargon: *to comply with the laws of the underworld*). One of the ugliest expressions produced by the Russian language” (Novikov, 2016: 206).

V. Novikov builds his “lexical entries” very personally, which, in fact, turn out to be original essays about buzzwords. His Dictionaries of buzzwords fairly can be attributed to linguistic publicistics, where, along with informativeness, polemicity and perlocution, distractivity (entertaining) turns out to be important. There is no verified exact definition of a buzzword anywhere: since the object is ambivalent, the author confines himself to pointing out that these are interesting words in some respect, frequent, modern ones. In fact, the texts by V. Novikov is the most complete collection of information about the pragmatics of buzzwords and about dynamic changes in this area.

It is well-known fact that fashion is consumed by suicidal desire, fleeting and changeable. V. Novikov believes that the word *reiting* (rating) today hardly belongs to the category of buzzwords: it has become frequent in various communication spheres, but ordinary, not attracting attention. “... once the buzzword *consensus* lives out its life in anecdotes about Gorbachev's perestroika” (Zhuravleva, 2010: 143).

According to V. Novikov's predictions some words not only will leave the category of buzzwords, but even they will leave the language.

In the interview, in response to a question about new buzzwords that will be included in the new issues of the dictionary of buzzwords (and they are being prepared for publication), V. Novikov said: “Firstly, the unusually buzzword *gender* (gender). Then a little bit funny expression *zakryt' geshtal't* (ad litteram: close the gestalt; slang: to bring some life situation to completion)”, a very widespread word *keis* (case) in the meaning of *judicial case*. There are also not very good words of quite Slavic origin, by the way, such as *nishchebrod* (slang: a poor man). There are also negative characters in the dictionary! Another strange expression is *ot slova sousem* (ad litteram: from the word *at all*; slang: completely, at all)”. I want to study it. So far, my attitude to this word is extremely negative. And, of course, there is no getting away from *khaip* (hype), *ehmpatiya* (empathy) and *toksichnyi* (toxic) (Interview..., 2023a: 10).

The fashion for foreign words naturally gives way to a balanced, reasonable, ecologically proved use of borrowings. It became obvious that “... in the 1990s and 2000s, a very strong linguistic blow was dealt to the Russian language. Now it is necessary to gradually get rid of harmful influences, but at the same time not to rush” (Serdechnova, 2023: 25).

Dictionaries of buzzwords by V. Novikov give important information, indicate the reasons for the necessity of many anglicisms, with which there is no need to hurry at all (for example, lexical entries for the words *dedlain* (deadline), *meinstrim* (mainstream), *mem* (meme), *n'yusmeiker* (newsmaker), *tresh* (trash), *troll* (troll), etc.

The reason for the need for anglicism may be not only the notorious “lack of analogues”, it is also the brightness of the internal form (quite intelligible even with minimal familiarity with the English language, like the word *lajfkhak* (life hack) 'hacking life'. This is something more important than just a 'useful tip' or a 'little trick'. For example: the title and lead of article by M. Paty “*Washing with water from a washing machine*”. *How to save on housing and communal services: 10 laifkhaki* (life hacks) *from the most diligent tenant*” (Pati, 2023: 8).

“*Mironov's ehseriy* (social revolutionaries), *soft-bodied and gentle, were cheered up by black-and-red national Bolshevism with a rattling khaip* (hype) *performed by Zakhar Prilepin*” (Krashennikova, 2021: 5).

Modern society has taken a course to “*make Russia the leader of social, cultural, economic, technological progress, firstly; secondly, to withdraw culture, and first of all the linguistic space – education, literature, cinema – from subordination to the market, which was, is and in the future will be a space, in many ways alien to the national culture and language*” (Buzgalin, 2023: 2).

The movement in this direction will certainly contribute to the elimination of excessive anglicisms from all the communicative spheres, and the category of buzzwords will mainly include words created on the basis of ancestral roots.

## 5. Conclusion

Although there is no strict definition of buzzwords, it is possible to specify their distinctive features such as frequency in all the styles and genres, or in one of them; “aura of novelty and freshness” (pragmatics of novelty). V. Novikov writes, “a buzzword is a word with ambition”, which often “pushes aside fellows” (Novikov, 2016: 3).

These words do not always correspond to strict normativity: even the author of the “Dictionary of Buzzwords” calls to distance from many of them, especially from jargon ones, and not to rush to include them in our speech. That is, buzzwords do not have a sign of unequivocal social approval. So, the criteria of a buzzword are ambivalent and very far from the scientific ideal.

Nevertheless, a buzzword is a very real category, intuitively comprehended by native speakers and reproduced in media. It is possible to speak about buzzwords in connection with different communicative spheres such as colloquial speech, advertising, media discourse, the language of science. If some fashionable word is actively replicated, it can be felt as a disadvantage, as a harbinger of exhaustion – an early leaving the category of buzzwords.

The functional dynamics of buzzwords is due to both linguistic and extralinguistic factors. Very often, a buzzword turns out to be a direct reflection of the most important socio-political and cultural-historical changes that are instantly picked up by media and introduced into the language. And, therefore the buzzword deserves the closest research attention.

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