

Гуманитарные исследования. 2022. № 3 (83). С. 65–68.

Humanitarian Researches. 2022;3(83):65–68.

Научная статья

УДК 81

The Influence of the English language on Russian song lyrics

Olga V. Chursina¹, Alexandr I. Terehov²

^{1,2}Astrakhan State University named after V. N. Tatishchev, Astrakhan, Russia

¹olga2209@bk.ru

²alex.terehov.2000@mail.ru

Abstract. The influence of the English language on Russian music cannot be denied. Although this process, even with the naked eye, can be defined as constantly developing, there isn't a large amount of research and sufficient analysis made on this topic. This article is intended to complement the existing research and bring out the facts and the relationship between the increase in the amount of borrowings from the English language and English-speaking musical culture. This article aims to pinpoint connections between the English language and Russian song lyrics and find the source of this influence.

Keywords: song lyrics, cultural influence, cultural exchange, the English language, Russian music, borrowings

For citation: Chursina O. V., Terehov A. I. The Influence of the English language on Russian song lyrics. *Gumanitarnyye issledovaniya* = *Humanitarian Researches*. 2022;3(83):65–68. (In Russ.).

Original article

Влияние английского языка на песенные тексты в России

Ольга Владимировна Чурсина¹, Александр Игоревич Терехов²

^{1,2}Астраханский государственный университет имени В. Н. Татищева, Астрахань, Россия

¹olga2209@bk.ru

²alex.terehov.2000@mail.ru

Аннотация. Нельзя отрицать влияние английского языка на русскую музыку. Хотя этот процесс, даже невооружённым глазом, можно определить как постоянно развивающийся, на эту тему проведено не так много исследований и достаточного анализа. Эта статья призвана дополнить существующие исследования и выявить факты и взаимосвязь между увеличением количества заимствований из английского языка и англоязычной музыкальной культуры. Цель этой статьи – выявить связи между английским языком и русскими песенными текстами и найти источник этого влияния.

Ключевые слова: песенные тексты, культурное влияние, культурный обмен, английский язык, русская музыка, заимствования

Для цитирования: Чурсина О. В., Терехов А. И. Влияние английского языка на песенные тексты в России // Гуманитарные исследования. 2022. № 3 (83). С. 65–68.

In modern society language plays a big role as a tool for communication, globalization and cultural exchange between countries and people. That's why it's no secret that the vocabulary of each language is constantly enriched. Russian language is no different. We can assume that one of the tools of the language use to enrich its vocabulary is borrowings; and recently borrowings into the Russian language have especially increased. There is an unprecedented influx of foreign language vocabulary in all areas of our life: science and technology, financial and commercial activities, culture and tourism. One might say that the main borrowing into the Russian language primarily comes from the English language [1, p. 4–7].

When we discuss the influence of the English language on Russian music, we can't ignore the fact that primarily, this influence got significant push into popularity from American rap, rock and pop culture in the early 90's. With the fall of the Soviet Union and the fall of cultural iron curtain, a great amount of cultural influence from America and other countries got injected into Russian culture. Suddenly Russian language music wasn't the only music that a normal citizen could listen to, they got almost unlimited access to an endless amount of music that was written and recorded for English speaking audience; before the fall of the USSR some western music leaked into the country but never in this amount and at this pace [2].

A major way that English language influences Russian music became the fact that a lot of Russian speaking artists and musicians started to use English in their songs incorporating English lyrics into songs that have most of their lyrics in Russian. One of the reasons of such inclusion could be the fact that musicians are not able to find words in Russian with as much impact and recognition as in English. Other reasons for such inclusion can be:

- the prestige of using inclusions in song lyrics, which, in turn, is associated with the prestige of knowing English in the modern world;
- using English inclusions as expressive means, giving lyrics special expression;
- the fact that often foreign inclusions in song lyrics are used for the purpose of rhyming in cases where the author is not able to find the appropriate counterpart of the rhyme for a given word in Russian [3, p. 183].

We can say that American and British pop music occupies a dominant position in the music world and has a huge impact on the pop art of the world community. It is the American and British charts that are the legislators of modern musical fashion.

Modern teenagers are already used to English influence in Russian music, English words and whole sentences have been used in Russian songs frequently at least for the last 10–15 years. Today while listening to a song from a modern Russian artist it's strange for teenagers not to hear English words or at least a reference to English rap, pop or rock culture and songs, these words are not that hard to understand even for people with minimal knowledge of the English language. These words are easy to pronounce and sing along and, last but not the least, – these words have an impact that surpasses its Russian counterpart and has a lot more emotional response when comparing to well-known, but boring, long and unpronounceable words.

The process of borrowing from English into Russian is intensifying at the present time, because English is the language of international communication and it is widely used in modern youth's slang. English has penetrated into all spheres of human life without exception and is firmly entrenched in them due to many factors, including borrowing in the musical sphere.

The popularity of learning foreign languages, especially English, has increased. Most of today's young people speak English, are fond of foreign, most often American, culture, and listen to English-language music. In this regard, foreign words are increasingly used in their speech, popular culture and songs.

Due to the differences between Russian and English morphology and syntax, Russian musicians allow deviations from the Standard English norms. As a result of the qualitative analysis of Russian song lyrics, the following features of Russian English grammar have been distinguished: omitting auxiliary verbs, substituting auxiliary verbs, substituting gerunds by verbs, using adjectives instead of adverbs, calquing preposition patterns, calquing pronouns, and omitting or inserting articles. Thus, we can determine that Russian musicians and songwriters rely largely on their competence in the native language and often translate from Russian what they want to express in English [4, p. 305].

The examples given above illustrate that, being native Russian speakers, many musicians and songwriters employ the Russian variety of English as a means of communication with audience outside their native country. Since their knowledge of English is insufficient, Russian musicians and songwriters often think in Russian and "translate" their thoughts from their native tongue into English. It leads to "russification" of English, as grammatical, lexical, conceptual features of Russian are transferred to the English language. Thus, the English they employ is characterized by distinctive features such as specific word order patterns and confusing basic grammatical patterns, as learning the English language in simulated conditions forms a set of stable structural and functional peculiarities [5, p. 247].

With the rise of accessibility of the Internet, western mass media and increasing amount of music in English on music-streaming services and internet sites, it's no wonder that Russian

speaking community has been increasingly interested in incorporating English words and western music genres into their own music.

Modern Russian artist's that have somewhat of a popularity and following in Russia have been exposed to English music and English language since childhood, they have been through many changes in western music, shifts in popularity of certain genres, from rock to rap to pop, from dub-step to techno. It is certainly hard to find Russian songwriters that hadn't been exposed to western music influence, it's even harder to find popular songwriters that are exposed, influenced and inspired by classic all-Russian songs that their parents listened to. Honestly speaking, there is no popular modern songwriters that record and create songs that teenagers listen to, that have been using Russian songwriting history and experience, they don't use songs by Vladimir Visotskiy or Gregoriy Leps or any other Russian artist as inspiration and an example for their music. They are inspired by Pink Floyd, Nirvana, 50 cent, Eminem, and others, more modern, primarily American artists.

People who remember early and mid -2000's can recall that a vast majority of songs played on the popular radio-stations hardly could be differentiated; this period is characterized by similarities between Russian and English music, mostly because Russian musicians and song writers were mimicking American music trends, usage of English words in Russian songs became more and more apparent and popular, this can be mostly explained by the fact that there was no major trend-leading artist or music genre in Russian music industry, popular artists stuck to already established in the west genres and were not ready to experiment with it to create a Russian-specific genre that would be popular and financially viable.

Even though the amount of English words in Russian songs has been steadily increasing throughout the years, popularity of said songs outside Russia, in Europe and America has stayed the same – practically non-existent. One reason for this can be low level in intelligibility of English lyrics by Russian artist's, bad and hard to understand pronunciation of native Russian speakers trying to construct English lyrics, and generally "broken" state of English used by most, but not all Russian musicians. There are examples of native Russian speakers having some amount of popularity in the West. This amount of popularity is generally increased when musicians use some amount of English in their songs and is greatly increased if the songs are written, created and recorded in English and for English speaking audience in mind. It should be mentioned that there are some exceptions among the Russian songwriters, some of them got exposure and even success in the western musical culture, for example – famous Russian rapper Timati, who was the first among Russian rappers to release an English-language album in 2012 and turned out to be a success in Europe. His most successful track called "Welcome to Saint Tropez" was among top 5 on main European charts for more than 20 weeks and became gold and platinum in Switzerland, Germany, and France. One reason for Timati's success lies in the fact that his English sounds "much more authentic". However, in hip hop, such cases are practically impossible; it does not happen often that Russian artists' albums written in English become more popular in Europe than in Russia [6].

In conclusion, we can say that it is undeniable that the English language had a big influence on Russian music, lyrics and use of different music genres in Russian musical culture.

Russian musicians differ in their understanding of the authenticity of the English language used in lyrics, and their perception often depends on the musical genre. Thus, in hip hop, to sound authentic requires performing in fluent African American English. In rock and heavy metal, authenticity implies the dominance of particular musical sounds (guitar effects, singing techniques, etc.), and Russian songwriters sometimes sacrifice authenticity in the interest of the musical qualities.

English at large shaped future of Russian music and how it evolved over the years; throughout 90's and 2000's Russian songwriters used English music culture and the English language on the whole to structure their own music and evolve from it, adopt it into Russian songwriting culture.

References

1. Dmitrieva I. G. Vliyanie anglijskogo yazyka na muzykal'nuyu kul'turu v Rossii. Nauchno-issledovatel'skaya rabota. Cheboksary. 2017:12.
2. Russian Classical Music. URL: <https://www.expressrussia.com/experience-russia/russian-classical-music>.
3. Schennikova N. V. Russian idiom of the English language: some features of its grammatical system. Proceedings of Voronezh State University. 2013:183–187.
4. Proshina, Z. Slavic Englishes: Education or culture? In A. Kirkpatrick (ed.), The Routledge Handbook of World Englishes, 307. London, New York: Routledge. 2010:305–307.

5. Davies E. E., Bentahila A. Translation and code switching in the lyrics of bilingual popular songs. *The Translator*. 2008;14(2):247–272.

6. Pop musik: the sound of the charts in ... Russia. Andrew Khan. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/music/musicblog/2012/mar/14/pop-musik-sound-charts-russia>.

Список источников

1. Дмитриева И. Г. Влияние английского языка на музыкальную культуру в России // Научно-исследовательская работа. Чебоксары, 2017. 12 с.

2. Russian Classical Music. URL: <https://www.expressrussia.com/experience-russia/russian-classical-music>.

3. Schennikova N. V. Russian idiom of the English language: some features of its grammatical system. *Proceedings of Voronezh State University*. 2013. P.183–187.

4. Proshina Z. Slavic Englishes: Education or culture? In A. Kirkpatrick (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of World Englishes*, 307. London, New York : Routledge. 2010. P. 305–307.

5. Davies E. E., Bentahila A. Translation and code switching in the lyrics of bilingual popular songs. *The Translator* 14(2). 2008. P. 247–272.

6. Pop musik: the sound of the charts in ... Russia. Andrew Khan. URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/music/musicblog/2012/mar/14/pop-musik-sound-charts-russia>.

Информация об авторе

О. В. Чурсина – кандидат филологических наук.

А. И. Терехов – студент.

Information about the author

O. V. Chursina – Candidate of Philological Sciences.

A. I. Terehov – student.

Вклад авторов: все авторы сделали эквивалентный вклад в подготовку публикации.

Авторы заявляют об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

Contribution of the authors: the authors contributed equally to this article.

The authors declare no conflicts of interests.

Статья поступила в редакцию 04.06.2022; одобрена после рецензирования 12.07.2022; принята к публикации 20.07.2022.

The article was submitted 04.06.2022; approved after reviewing 12.07.2022; accepted for publication 20.07.2022.