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ANGLICISMS IN RUSSIAN COMPUTER SLANG

Abstract: Based on the analysis of a 205-unit lexical database, this article examines Russian computer slang as a dynamic sociolect shaped by globalization and technological necessity. It identifies and systematizes the primary methods of Anglicism integration—including direct borrowing, hybrid borrowing, calquing, and phonetic mimicry—and details their adaptation through Russian word-formation models like truncation and suffixation. The study concludes that this slang is a structured, evolving system, where over 95% of its lexicon originates from English, serving as a vital "adaptation layer" that demonstrates the flexibility and vitality of the Russian language in the digital era.

Key words: slang, anglicisms, sociolect, borrowing, word-formation, translation, calquing, phonetic mimicry, truncation, suffixation.

The 21st century is defined by globalization and rapid technological progress, with the English language acting as the primary vehicle for this global exchange. A striking example of this linguistic influence is the penetration of English into the professional lexicon of IT specialists and programmers in Russian-speaking communities, giving rise to a dynamic and ever-evolving sociolect: Russian computer slang.

This phenomenon is not merely a collection of trendy words but a crucial communication tool within a highly specialized field. The relevance of this study is underscored by the growing influence of the IT industry and the need to understand the language of its professionals. Our research hypothesis posits that the active use of Anglicisms is driven by both technological necessity and broader globalization processes, leading to their deep adaptation into Russian.

The purpose of this work is to uncover the dynamics of Anglicisms within Russian computer slang by analyzing their structural, semantic, and word-formative features. To achieve this, we compiled a lexical database of 205 slang units gathered from surveys of Belarusian programmers and students, which served as the primary material for our analysis.

To understand computer slang, one must first place it within the broader spectrum of social dialects. It exists alongside and interacts with:

Argot: A secret language used by closed groups to conceal meaning.

Jargon: Lexis used by a specific social group for linguistic isolation, sharing expressiveness with slang but maintaining a desire for secrecy.

Slang itself is best understood as “the most mobile layer of conversational speech, comprising words borrowed from other languages or created from existing word-formation models, often used in more specific or vivid meanings”.

Therefore, computer slang is a mobile layer of Russian conversational speech used by programmers. It includes words and expressions borrowed predominantly from English, or formed from Russian elements, but used with specific, technical meanings. A key distinction is that, unlike many other slangs, it possesses a written form (in forums, code comments, chats), making it more stable and allowing for a degree of codification in online dictionaries.

The dominance of English in this field is no accident. L.P. Krysin identifies key reasons for borrowing, which are highly applicable here:

The need to name new things and concepts (e.g., ‘*компьютер*’, ‘*интерфейс*’).

The need for specialization (e.g., using ‘*деплой*’ for ‘*deploying software*’ instead of a more general Russian phrase).

The presence of established international terminology, making adoption more efficient than creating new native terms.

Prestige: A foreign word is often perceived as more “scientific” or modern.

Furthermore, slang serves social and psychological functions, such as creating a sense of group identity, adding humor, and making communication more efficient and vivid.

Our analysis of the 205-unit lexicon revealed several primary methods of slang formation, overwhelmingly from English sources.

Primary Formation Methods:

Direct Borrowing: The word is taken entirely with its pronunciation and meaning, but adapted to Cyrillic spelling (e.g., *‘виндоус’* – *‘Windows’*, *‘интерфейс’* – *‘interface’*). This was the most productive method, with 91 lexemes.

Hybrid Borrowing: An English root is integrated and subjected to Russian grammar, often by adding verb endings or noun suffixes (e.g., *‘мониторить’* – *‘to monitor’*, *‘аннлюкха’* – *‘application’*). 68 lexemes were found.

Translation (Calquing): The English term is translated word-for-word (e.g., *‘червь’* – *‘worm’*, *‘несочница’* – *‘sandbox’*) or through associative metaphors (e.g., *‘дрова’* – *‘firewood’* for *‘drivers’*). 18 lexemes identified.

Phonetic Mimicry: A Russian word is used due to its phonetic similarity to an English term (e.g., *‘батон’* – *‘loaf of bread’* for *‘button’*, *‘Егор’* for *‘error’*). This was a smaller group of 7 lexemes.

Composites: Combining words, often from English (e.g., *‘тимлид’* – *‘team leader’*, *‘геймдев’* – *‘game development’*). 14 lexemes were found.

When these borrowings enter the language, they are further shaped by productive Russian word-formation models:

Truncation: The most common model, shortening words for speed (e.g., *‘ава’* – *‘avatar’*, *‘инет’* – *‘Internet’*). 29 units.

Suffixation: Adding Russian suffixes to English roots to create nouns and adjectives (e.g., *‘айтмушник’* – *‘IT specialist’*, *‘пиратка’* – *‘pirated software’*). 19 units.

Suffix-Prefix Method: Primarily used for verbs (e.g., *‘забанить’* – *‘to ban’*, *‘загуглить’* – *‘to google’*). 13 units.

Composition: Creating compound words (e.g., *‘багрепорт’* – *‘bug report’*). 19 units.

Pun Word Formation: Using humorous or playful associations (e.g., *‘хрюша’* – *‘piglet’* for HR/Human Resources, *‘крякнуть’* – *‘from crack’*). 17 units.

This analysis confirms that computer slang is not a chaotic collection of words but a system with recognizable and productive patterns of formation.

Computer slang is a living system that reflects the rapid pace of technological change. A comparison of our modern dictionary with the 2008 Seoded online dictionary revealed a 40% discrepancy. Obsolete terms like *‘числогрыз’* (number-cruncher for a computer) have vanished, while new ones like *‘питониться’* (to code in Python) and *‘скроллить’* (to scroll) have emerged.

This dynamism leads to synonymy, where multiple slang terms compete for a single concept (e.g., *‘егзор’*, *‘егоз’*, *‘Егор’* all for *‘error’*; *‘забанить’*, *‘послать в баню’* for *‘to ban’*). This richness, while sometimes confusing for novices, highlights the creative and organic nature of the slang.

The study confirms that Russian computer slang is a complex and dynamic sociolect, with over 95% of its lexical base originating from Anglicisms. Its formation is driven by the practical needs of a globalized industry and facilitated by the flexible adaptation of English terms into the Russian morphological and word-formative system.

Computer slang is more than a professional jargon; it is a cultural phenomenon that mirrors societal and technological shifts. It serves as a vital "adaptation layer," allowing the Russian language to keep pace with innovation. As information technology continues to evolve, so too will this vibrant digital dialect, ensuring its place as a critical area of linguistic study for years to come. The ongoing integration of Anglicisms is not a sign of linguistic weakness but a testament to the adaptability and vitality of the Russian language in the digital era.