

**ASSIMILATION OF BORROWINGS
IN THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE
(on the Example of the Loanword “Ok”)**

S.A. Ilyina

Tambov State Technical University, Tambov

Represented by Doctor of Philological, Professor I.M. Popova

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Abstract: The article identifies the place of the assimilated word “Ok” in the Russian lexical fund. The author gives the examples of this lexeme assimilation in contemporary Russian language dictionaries, specifies the main areas of its existence: colloquial speech, language of advertisement, mass-media, fiction and so on. Making a decision how strong the position of the word “Ok” in modern Russian speech, the author raises the problem of suitability of such loanwords.

Post-Soviet linguistic area is characterized by the active assimilation of borrowings, mostly from the American variant of the English language. Nowadays dozens of foreign words have been fixed in the contemporary Russian.

It is interesting to note that thanks to current loanword process new interjections come to our lexicon, and it turns out to be a very rare phenomenon as there are few examples of borrowed words of this part of speech in the Russian language. However, at the turn of the century four new interjections came to the Russian vocabulary bulk: *вау* (‘wow’ as an expression of delight, surprise, ecstasy, etc.); *еc* (‘yes’ as an exclamation of approval, or satisfaction); *cунep* (‘super’ as an expression of positive assessment), *o’кей* (‘ok’ as an expression of agreement, confirmation or approval). It should be noted that these lexemes display a striking positive colouring against the background of Russian interjections, most of which express negative emotions.

Let’s dwell upon the use of the word ‘o’кей’ (ok) in the Russian speech as this lexical item has taken up a stable position in contemporary lexical fund.

Ильина Светлана Анатольевна – кандидат филологических наук, доцент кафедры русской филологии, e-mail: vaska24@yandex.ru, ТамбГТУ, г. Тамбов.

Assimilation this borrowing by some Russian language dictionaries proves the stability of its position.

Thus, contemporary spelling dictionaries regulate the spelling accuracy of this word: «e.g. о'кей, межд. (традиц. написание)» [1, с. 317]; «ОКЕЙ, неизм., О'КЕЙ и О-КЕЙ, неизм.» [2].

The lexeme 'о'кей' is also presented in the dictionaries of synonyms: «e.g. о'кей хорошо, о-кей, окей, лады, ладушки, первокласно, все в порядке, на славу, славно, согласен» [3].

«О'кей, нареч, кол-во синонимов: (11)

- ↑все в порядке (13);
- ↑все пучком (6);
- ↑ладушки (8);
- ↑лады (21);
- ↑на славу (32);
- ↑о-кей (2);
- ↑окей (17);
- ↑первоклассно (48);
- ↑славно (20);
- ↑согласен (61);
- ↑хорошо (192)» [4].

Moreover, this word is fixed in dictionary definitions, aiming at revealing the meaning, in which it is used by Russian native speakers: «e.g. ОКЕЙ [о слабоударяемое], частица и в знач. сказ. (прост.). Выражение согласия, подтверждения, одобрения; все хорошо, все в порядке» [5].

«О'кей:

I предик. Оценочная характеристика какой-либо ситуации, чьего-либо поступка и т.п. как правильного.

II част. разг. Употребляется при выражении согласия с чем-либо, одобрения чего-либо, соответствия по значению сл.: все правильно, все в порядке, все хорошо.

III межд. разг. Возглас, выражающий согласие с чем-либо, одобрение чего-либо, соответствия по значению сл.: все правильно! все в порядке! все хорошо!» [6].

The dictionary of foreign words of the Russian language by L.P. Krysin contains the definition of this word ('exclamation of approval, agreement'), and also the following etymological reference: «Восходит к выражению all correct все правильно, все в порядке» [7].

It is noteworthy, that the word 'о'кей' is also fixed in 'Russian Associative Dictionary' (**RAD**), as it shows the reaction to some stimuli: «О'КЕЙ ← буква, все, выглядеть, договориться, живется, здорово, Иисус, мороженое, нормальный, отлично, положение, привет, решил, хоккей, хорошо, 5 1; 16+16» [8, с. 556].

This brings us to the hypothesis that 'ok' is taken for granted by most native speakers of the Russian language and the lexeme 'о'кей' is gradually losing its tinge of foreignness.

Another significant factor is the active use of this word in advertising language, which reacts instantly to appearance of new ideas and events. It is the advertising text that reveals every single change happening in modern world.



Fig. 1

Thus, the word ‘о’кей’ was used in the names of different profit-making organizations; besides in some cases foreign spelling was preserved. Take for instance, residents of many Russian cities know the retail network ‘О’кей’; in Moscow there is a publishing house ‘Окей-книга’ and a maintenance firm ‘Мастер ОКей’; in Voronezh there is a beauty salon ‘ОКей’; in Novosibirsk there is a hotel ‘ОКей’; in Krasnodar there is a Limited Liability Company ‘Окей-компьютер’ and an advertising agency ‘О’Кей-Пресс’, etc. This list of examples is far from being complete.

Why is this word so popular? Obviously, the authors of such-like names are attracted by the positive connotation of the word ‘о’кей’; it is not only an emotionally expressed meaning of ‘everything’s all right’, but also a reference to a western lifestyle,

which is usually associated with success, prosperity and stability.

Abbreviated version of the borrowing ‘о’кей’ is the word ‘ok’, which is successfully used in advertisements, to illustrate the pun on words. Advertisement-makers often play on the same spelling of ok (which stands for о’кей) and ok (which stands for a really productive Russian suffix). This results in appearance of new-types of names.

One of the examples is ‘Лист’ок’ – a complex fertilizer for dosing ornamental plants which tend to turn yellow (made by ‘Селигер-Холдинг’ in Tver) (Fig. 1).

Another example is ‘Цвет’ок’ – a network of floristic design salons (in Tambov) (Fig. 2).

In the above mentioned examples the pun on words broadens the essence of the naming process as the name of the fertilizer convinces its consumers in the fact that the leaves of his plants are going to be ‘ok’, i.e. sound, strong and green (the potential consumer would be eager to continue this list of qualities taking their own subjective opinion of ‘ok-leaves’ as the basis); furthermore, a potential consumer gets this information without studying the product annotation. While visiting a flower shop named ‘Цвет’ок’, a customer is subconsciously inclined to buy something bright, beautiful and colourful, because he/she combines ‘colour’ and ‘ok’ and it means for him/her that ‘everything is all right’ or ‘everything is correct’.



Fig. 2

The word 'о'кей' has been fixed not only in the spoken language and in advertisements, but also in the products of mass culture: in the texts of the songs (Чиж, «Все ОК»: «Ну а у меня пока, пока все окей»), in the film titles («Окей», 2002, Russia, directed by O. Fomin), in the names of magazines (Russian edition of the magazine about celebrities 'OK!', the knitting magazine 'Клуб'ОКей') and in the names of newspapers (the humorous newspaper 'О'Кей').

Tolerant attitude to this borrowing is manifested in the fact, that the word 'о'кей' takes up a noticeable position in the language of contemporary writers. One can easily find examples of it in the books of the most widely read contemporary authors such as D. Dontsova, N. Perumov, T. Ustinova, A. Bushkov, B. Akunin, D. Bykov, N. Levitina and many others.

Another sign of fixation of this loanword in the language is presence of its derivatives: *оки, окейно, окейный (окейная, окейное, окейные), оки-доки*. The word has apparently become 'russified', as in some contexts it is even being conjugated. For instance, «Не думаю, что украинский "Окей" когда-то станет дочерним предприятием российского "*О'кея*"» [9]; «Булочки с сюрпризом из *Окея*» [10] (in both cases a retail network 'О'кей' is meant); «О'кей, никаких больше *о'кеев*. О'кей?» (Ник Перунов «Армагеддон»). *<the word is italicized by the author S.I.>*

An occasional use of this word by M. Zadornov has also been fixed in the language of contemporary native-speakers. Paradoxically enough, but by speaking ironically about non-motivated borrowings, the satirist was popularizing the word of American origin against his own will. By now users of the Internet website 'Словоново' [11] have formulated the meaning of a new lexeme with a mark note of 'youth slang':

«Океюшки

28 марта 2009, anonymous

Подтверждение своего согласия с чем бы то ни было.

– Встретимся в 20:00. – Океюшки.» [12].

Why has the word 'о'кей' been assimilated in the Russian language? Maybe it's because of fast speed of a modern life that makes us save time even while formulating our own thoughts. The following example from N. Perumov's book 'Армагеддон' seems to prove a such-like situation:

«– Привет, Броша, – вполне доброжелательно и даже ласково поприветствовал Влад домового. – Как тут у нас дела?

– *В целом не так уж и плохо, хозяин. Все на своих местах, в полной сохранности и отличном состоянии. Кое-что требует ремонта, но, полагаю, с такими делами я управлюсь самостоятельно...*

– *Чтоб тебя эльфы побрали, Броша! Неужели так трудно сказать: «Все о'кей!» – и дело с концом?»* *<the words are italicized by the author S.I.>*

The example illustrates the capacity of the loanword 'ok' to compress the ideas. Although some information is partly lost («все на своих местах, в полной сохранности и отличном состоянии», «кое-что требует ремонта», «с такими делами я управлюсь самостоятельно»), the main idea remains the same («в целом не так уж и плохо» = «Все о'кей!»). Maybe this is the reason

for frequent use of the informative ‘О’кей!’ and of its short alternative ‘OK’ in written speech (in e-mail correspondence, or text messages, or simply in Internet chatrooms).

The problem of loanword suitability is being constantly and broadly discussed by the opponents who put forward arguments for and against. Undoubtedly, the Russian language is full of words to convey all the tinges of the meaning expressed by ‘ok’. However, expressiveness and laconism of this Americanism tend to make Russian native speakers to give preference to this loanword.

Would such a tendency turn to an ‘ecological disaster’ of the Russian language? It’s obvious that the development of any language is connected with penetrating of borrowed words into it. There is no doubt that today loanword process tends to be excessive and unjustified. However, according to M. Aksenova, the author of the book «Знаем ли мы русский язык» (‘Do we know the Russian language?’), there’s no reason for panic. Thousands of foreign words penetrate the language, but only a few of them are assimilated, and only these ‘foreigners’ get ‘russified’.

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**Адаптация иноязычной лексики в русском языке
(на примере заимствования слова «о'кей»)**

С.А. Ильина

ФГБОУ ВПО «Тамбовский государственный технический университет», г. Тамбов

Ключевые слова и фразы: заимствованная лексика; лексический фонд русского языка; словари русского языка; слово “о'кей”; язык рекламы.

Аннотация: Определено место заимствованного слова «о'кей» в лексическом фонде русского языка. Приведены факты фиксации этой лексемы в современных словарях русского языка, обозначены основные сферы его бытования: разговорная речь, язык рекламы, СМИ, художественная литература и пр. Делая вывод о прочности позиций слова «о'кей» в современной русской речи, автор поднимает проблему целесообразности подобных заимствований.

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