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Set Expressions Borrowed from English into German and Russian: Direct Loans or Calques?

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Abstract

The article discusses the issue of borrowing set expressions from English into German and Russian, which systems, to varying degrees, differ from that of the former. The analysis of the functioning of set expressions borrowed from English in the German news and political magazine *Spiegel online* and the Russian socio-political newspaper *Kommersant* in 2004 to 2014 has revealed direct borrowings and calques. Most of the set expressions borrowed from English are simultaneously newly borrowed concepts and phenomena. The majority of those borrowed from English into German over recent decades are direct loans (about 70%). Although direct loans exist along with calques, the former are more frequently used. Loan translation into modern German has lost its relevance, whereas set expressions borrowed from Russian are still calques.

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1. Introduction

The influence of English on other modern languages has reached such a scale that not only individual words but also set expressions are now being borrowed, including those which can be classified as phraseologisms. We have described some common aspects of borrowing and functioning of set expressions from English into German and Russian in our previous publications (Nefedova 2013; Nefedova, & Polyakov 2014).

The purpose of this article is to consider the issue of which form of set-expression borrowing from English into

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German and Russian prevails because borrowed lexical units can function in the recipient languages as direct loans or be translated, i.e. be calques. Thereby we set the task for ourselves to clarify the role of the current loan translation of set expressions in the two European languages, which systems differ from that of English to varying degrees, though, and in addition, to reveal which forms of borrowed set expressions (original or translated) predominate in modern German and Russian.

The comparative study was based on the material from articles published in the German news magazine *Spiegel online* and the Russian newspaper *Kommersant* in 2004-14. The focus was on certain German set expressions selected from the 1990's – 2000's neologisms dictionary at www.owid.de.

The article highlights the role of loan translation in the field of phraseology. It is viewed from a comparative angle, i.e. the two linguocultures are juxtaposed. Such an approach to the description of language units is now topical for modern intercultural German studies, encouraging research which is aimed at addressing various issues of intercultural communication. Thus, the issue in question is closely connected with that of “false friends,” which can be not only individual words but also collocations and cause failures in German-Russian intercultural communication (Nefedova, 2014).

2. Loan Phraseologisms

Traditionally, Russian researchers on German studies has been used to resorting to I. I. Chernysheva's classification when describing set expressions. According to this classification, all stable verbal complexes can be subdivided into:

- phraseological units (phraseologisms proper);
- phraseologised units;
- formations according to a model;
- lexical composites (Chernysheva, 1970).

H. Burger's classification makes use of the term “collocations” for lexical composites (Burger, 2007:54).

I. I. Chernysheva (1970:39) goes on to subdivide phraseologisms proper into phraseological composites, phraseological combinations and phraseological expressions. From a lexico-syntactic angle, phraseologisms are classified into verbal, substantive, adverbial, pronominal, adjectival, interjectional and propositional ones.

Loan phraseologisms function in recipient languages as calques and/or direct borrowings.

2.1. Loan Phraseologisms – Calques in German and Russian

After 1945, German borrowed lots of set expressions from English, most of which being translated. E.g.: *die Schau stehlen* [steal the show/performance], *das Gesicht wahren/retten* [save face], *den Hut in den Ring werfen* [throw/toss one's hat into the ring], *Jahrmarkt der Eitelkeit/der Eitelkeiten* [vanity fair], *nach Komplimenten fischen* [fish for compliments], *kalter Krieg* [cold war], *die schweigende Mehrheit* [the silent majority], *der eiserne Vorhang* [the iron curtain], etc. Many of them were as well borrowed as calques by Russian.

The 1990's – 2000's neologisms dictionary at www.owid.de includes 41 phrases labeled as phraseologisms, 14 (i.e. a third) of which are borrowings or contain loan elements.

The followings phraseologisms are derivational, structural (translated) calques of English phrases: *am Ende des Tages*, *digitale Signatur*, *globales Dorf*, *goldener Handschlag*, *politisch korrekt*, *politische Korrektheit*.

The phraseologism *am Ende des Tages* is an adverbial phraseological composite and a derivational calque of the English phrase *at the end of the day*. This phraseologism is a professional jargonism which synonyms are the autochthonous phrases *letzten Endes* and *im Endergebnis*. The phraseologism *goldener Handschlag* is a substantive phraseological composite and a derivational calque of the English phrase *golden handshake*, its option being the set expression *goldener Händedruck*. Both phraseologisms are labeled as *vollidiomatisch* [fully idiomatized] in the dictionary.

In Russian, the idiom *v kontse dnya* [at the end of the day] is not known, it has not been borrowed from English. The other calque *zolotoye rukopozhatiye* [golden handshake] is less known in Russian than the corresponding calque

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