

PHONOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF FRENCH VOWELS IN RUSSIAN

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Abstract. The present article deals with studies and analyzes the lexical innovations of French origin in the Russian literary language on materials of fiction, opinion journalism, as well as etymological, defining, and foreign dictionaries under well-defined criteria of foreign word extraction. Various investigations dedicated to the study of language contacts offer variety of criteria describing the functioning of foreign vocabulary in the Russian lexical system as the result of interaction of various manifestation of language contacts. On the basis of analysis of two languages phonological systems and different approaches to the assimilation typologies, considering also numerous general and specific characteristics of lexical neologisms assimilation in modern Russian (graphic and phonetic), the author offers a clear and complete image of current trends the reception and phonological adaptation of foreign language vocabulary of French origin in the Russian literary language, describing its basic laws and models as well as the types of possible deviations.

Key words: Language, linguistic, borrowing, French, Russian, assimilation.

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the central problems of modern lexicology, the problem of language contacts and loanwords, remains one of the most controversial phenomena in the life of modern society. Being an important source of replenishment of lexical structure of the language, loanwords, however, cause such violent reactions from its speakers, that in the social and humanitarian science there is no other phenomenon that is not associated directly with the survival of society. The attempts to regulate this phenomenon are taken at the level of the highest structures of state power (let us recall the Toubon Law of 1994 in France, which clearly regulates the possibility of using foreign words).

Despite the abundance of study on this subject [1-11], the state of modern linguistic science, which interprets the borrowing process, is characterized by the disorder of a conceptual framework, insufficiently rigorous approach to the problem of typology of foreign language vocabulary, as well as an unreasonably high degree of emotion, complicating a scientific analysis of the adaptation characteristics of foreign words on the background of phonetics, morphology and prototype semantics.

The present study is devoted to the identification and description of certain patterns of interpretation of French vowels by means of the phonological system of the Russian language considering allomorphic and isomorphic characteristics of contacting languages.

Generally, the phonological adaptation of foreign language vocabulary is quite fairly regarded by scholars as the first stage of the complex process of assimilation. The speakers of the receptor language bringing foreign elements, in their attempts to imitate "foreign" pronunciation, to find suitable phonemes in the familiar system or to adapt already existing ones in the language-donor to its demands, give incorrect phonological interpretation of sounds of a foreign language and pass the borrowed vocabulary through the "phonological sieve" of the host language [12, p. 59].

The influence that the phonemes of a language-receptor and its inherent phonetic processes have on the adaptation of foreign words is spontaneous. M. Kalinovich in "Loanwords from the French language in the modern Russian literary language in the light of the phonological and morphological systems," notes cases of "failure to distinguish and

pronounce different phonemes of a foreign language due to the lack of them in the native one" [10, p. 7]. Such a contamination of phonemes can be observed in the early stages of learning French, when students or schoolchildren replace in speaking both raising (open-closed) sounds [a] and [ɑ], [ɛ] and [e], [ɔ] and [o] by phonemes, characteristic for the phonological system of the Russian language: [a], [ə], [o] pronouncing in the same manner mat / mât, fait / fée, Paul / pôle.

From our point of view, to study characteristic for Russian literary language reactions to the penetration to its system of French origin elements, it is advisable to at least conduct a simultaneous analysis of phonemic structures of both languages, all the more so their belonging to different genealogical groups: the romance and the slavic - this comparison allows to identify the most striking specific features of each of the languages.

2. METHODS

The methods used in the present paper include linguistic description methods (examination, description, classification, comparison), as well as lexical-semantic and comparative methods and the method of synchronic description of language which are considered to be traditional for lexical-historical research. Statistical method of quantitative and percentage description was used when studying some aspects of the problem.

3. RESULTS

Russian language in the phonological relation is the language of a pronounced consonant type. The most important typological feature of Russian language in the field of consonantism is the unification of the majority of consonants in two correlative sets: in a set of paired hard – soft consonant phonemes and the set of paired voiced – voiceless consonant phonemes. The set of paired hard – soft and the set of paired voiced – voiceless consonant phonemes form the core of the Russian phonological system and identify all its main features. In the core the main role is played by the juxtaposition of consonants on the basis of hardness – softness, as:

- a. a greater number of consonant phonemes is involved in this opposition;
- b. exactly hard/soft consonants exerting the most significant influence on neighboring vowels, cause

all the originality of realization of the vowel phonemes allophones in the speech flow.

In the French language, on the contrary, the vowel system is pronounced, and it has some characteristics that do not allow it to occupy a subordinate position in relation to the consonantism:

- French vowels are articulated with greater tension of the speech organs than Russian ones; the tone remains unchanged for the entire period of the sound;

- All French vowels are pronounced in the same way regardless of their position in the word (with the exception of [ə] - e caduc); they are not reduced in unstressed position.

Thus, the specificity of the consonant and vowel systems of both languages is not only in quantitative terms of vowels and consonants, but in its qualitative characteristics, from which it follows that none of the French vowel or consonant is identical to the Russian vowel or consonant respectively, although the difference in articulation is often only in different intensity.

Many researchers [1-3; 7; 8; 10; 13] note that the vowel system of French is a much richer than Russian both from a qualitative and quantitative points of view.

Thus, vowels of the French language are classified by the position of the tongue, lips and soft palate.

1. According to the degree of lifting of the tongue to the palate the vowels are divided into open and closed: open are vowels, which are pronounced with less lifting of the back of tongue [ɛ], [ɔ], [œ] / [ə], [ɑ], [ê], [ɔ̃], [â], [œ̃]), closed are pronounced with a higher rise ([e], [i], [ø], [y], [o], [u]).

2. The place and position of the tongue determines the functioning front & back vowels: when pronouncing front vowels the tip of the tongue is placed against the lower teeth ([a], [ɛ], [œ] / [ə], [ê], [œ̃], [e], [i], [ø], [y]), in the pronunciation of back vowels the tip of the tongue is pulled back and lowered ([ɔ], [ɑ], [ɔ̃], [â], [o], [u]).

3. Labialization (involvement of the lips in the sound articulation) of French vowels allows to define 6 labializing vowels: [ɔ], [ɔ̃], [o], [u], [œ], [œ̃], [ø], [y].

4. The position of the palate allows dividing vowels in nasal and clear. When pronouncing a clear sound, the palate is raised, blocking the entrance to the nasal cavity and exhaled air resonates only in the mouth, while the lowered palate opens the entrance into the nasal cavity, causing the air resonance in the mouth and in the nose, creating a nasal vowel sounds: [ɛ̃], [ɔ̃], [ẫ], [œ̃].

In general, all the previous classifications can be captured in the summary table of vowel phonemes of the French language based on classic tables presented in the monograph of L.V. Scherba "Phonetics of the French language" (Table 1):

Table 1: Classification of vowel phonemes of the French language

	Voyelles antérieures	Voyelles antérieures	Voyelles postérieures	
	Non-labialisées	Labialisées	Labialisées	Non-labialisées
Voyelles orales (fermées)	i e	y ø	u o	
Voyelles orales (ouvertes)	ɛ a	œ ə	ɔ	A
Voyelles nasales (ouvertes)	ễ	œ̃	ɔ̃	ẫ

The accuracy and brightness of the French vowels is due to the tension of their articulation: even the French unstressed vowels are more accurate and brighter than the Russian stressed. This is due to a much stronger tension of the articulation organs at the moment of speech. This feature explains the absence of vowel reduction in French characteristic to the Russian language.

The second important feature of the French vowel system is a vowel quality smoothness, a complete lack of diphthongization: the sound of French vowels is the same for all the stages of articulation, from excursion to recursion, determining the absence of any overtones and/or split

The vowel system of the Russian language consists of 6 phonemes [a], [o], [y], [ы], [э], [и], which are opposed according to three differential qualifiers.

1. The vowels. Front vowels ([э], [и]) in identical phonetic conditions (e.g., in an isolated position) are pronounced with a more advanced tongue than non-front vowels ([a], [o], [y], [ы]). In modern phonetics the phonemes [a], [o], [y] are defined as back vowels. According to the tradition established by L.V. Shcherba, the phoneme [ы] is considered to be a mixed vowel.

2. The raising of vowels. There are close ([и], [ы], [y]), mixed ([э], [o]) and open ([a]) vowels. The close vowels are pronounced with the tongue positioned as close as possible to the roof of the mouth (which gives the opportunity to call them close; in the French language, as we shall see below, this term is more wide). The open vowels are pronounced with minimum raising, mixed vowels – with an average raise.

3. Labialization. Labialised vowels are [o], [y], non-labialised are [a], [э], [и], [ы].

One of the most important features of the system of Russian vowels is the presence of reduction, which appears in a weak, i.e. unstressed position, which leads to the formation of 6 phonemic rows, thereby automatically increasing the number of vowels in the Russian language through allophones (Table 2).

Table 2: The vowel phonemes system of the Russian language

Position	Phoneme	
	Main type	Varieties
Strong	и ы э а о у	и ы э а – ä о – ö у – ŷ
Weak	л и³ ы³ у ь ь	и³ – ы³ и³ ы³ у – ŷ ь ь

Taking in consideration the above, even taking into account the almost three-fold numerical superiority of the French vowels over the Russian, we decide to object to M. Kalinovich questioned: "how a miserable system of Russian vowels could convey the nuances multi-phonemic French vocalic system?" [10, p. 11]. First of all we should not forget the fact that because of the nature of the phonological organization of the Russian language, not only positional, but also the combinatorial changes in the system of vowels are manifested much stronger in the Russian language than in the French. Among these mentioned are the processes of accommodation, to a large extent influencing the quality of the vowel: thus, for example, after a soft consonant phonemes [a], [o], [y] become more front, [э] after a soft consonant is more closed than in the initial position, etc. Let us illustrate it on a specific material.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Models of phonological interpretation of the phonemes [œ] and [ø]

The opposition open [œ] and close [ø] is extremely important for French phonetics: if the first functions as, for example, in an open syllable in the middle of a word (*déjeuner*), and in the final close before any pronounced consonant (*soeur*, *neuf*, *veuve*), except for [z], the second activates only in the end of a word in an open syllable before a mute consonant (*noeud*, *heureux*), or before [z] (*chartreuse*, *sérieuse*).

M. Kalinovich distinguishes only three words, borrowed into the Russian language and containing the phoneme [ø]: *chartreuse* – *Chartreuse*, *chartreuse* – *шармрез*, *dormtuse* – *дормез*, *lieu* – *лье*, and all of them have a substitution of the French phoneme by Russian [e]. We can add here the word *monsieur* – *мсье* (*мосье*), it also fits in the above-mentioned tradition.

Neither the phoneme [ø] nor the phoneme [œ] have equivalents in the Russian language, however, basing on the teaching experience, we can make the following observation: learners of the French language usually make the same mistake as in the case with the phoneme [y]: the interpretation of this sound in the word as the sound [o] in combination with a soft consonant. However, transmission of the phoneme [œ] by means of Russian phonetics is complicated not only by lack of its analogue in the Russian language, but rather the lack of fixed position in the French word. In

case of adaptation of the phoneme [œ], the prosodic feature of the syllable is of utmost importance, as the Russian phoneme [o] (and its allophone after a soft consonant [ö]) are strong, while weak is introduced with a considerable range of options.

Thus, when borrowing the Russian language phoneme [œ]

a. in a strong position is passed by the phoneme [o] after a hard consonant, its allophones [ö] after a soft phoneme [e] after a soft consonant and its allophones [ɛ] after a hard one.

[œ] – [ö]: *manoeuvre* – манёвр, *souffleur* – суфлёр, *marquandeur* – мародёр, *gouverneur* – гувернёр, *visiteur* – визитёр, *jongleur* – жонглёр, *raisonneur* – резонёр, *breteur* – бретёр, *acteur* – актер;

[œ] – [o]: *chargeur* – шаржёр, *crédeur* – кредитор;

[œ] – [e]: *feutre* – фетр, *portefeuille* – портфель, *parfumeur* – парфюмер, *intérieur* – интерьер;

[œ] – [ɛ]: *chef-d'oeuvre* – шедевр, *accoucheur* – акушер.

b. phonemes [ʏ], [ɨ] in a strong position.

[œ] – [ʏ]: *feu[œ]lleton* – фе[ʏ]льтон;

[œ] – [ɨ]: *spéculateur* – спекулятор, *improvisateur* – импровизатор, *commentateur* – комментатор.

4.2 [ə] Caduc and peculiarities of its transfer in the Russian language

The phoneme [ə], the so-called e caduc (fluent e), articulationally coincides with the phoneme [œ] to such extent that the majority of phoneticians consider it to be a second option. We will stick to the opinion of L.V. Scherba, M. Leon and P. Foucher [13], recognizing it as a separate phoneme, distinctive feature of which is its alternation with zero sound in the flow of speech.

We stipulate, following previous researchers [7; 10] that the problem of the transmission of this sound is not in the selection of the appropriate vowel of the Russian language, but in fixation of cases of its conservation / loss when borrowing.

In our view, there is a clear correlation with the rules of the source language, where the articulation of the e caduc may depend on the style of speech (thus, in fluent conversational speech [ə] often drops out in pronunciation, while it is maintained obligatorily in public speeches and on the contrary, in poetry it serves for the rhythm building of the verse and is pronounced almost always), but is subjected to certain rules:

1. [ə] is not pronounced:

a. before a vowel or after it (*flageolet* – флажолет, *contre-escarpe* – контрэскарп)

b. in rapid speech between two consonants, surrounded by vowels: (*canavas* – канва, *otmelette* – омлет, *caleçon* – кальсоны, *décolleté* – декольте, *cauchemar* – кошмар, *bracelet* – браслет).

In a formal or official speech, the phoneme [ə] in this case may be preserved, which gave the start to the variant series, some of which have retained their relevance up to our days: *mademoiselle* – *mademoiselle* – мадемуазель/мадмуазель, *cachemire* – кашемир/кашмир, *vaudeville* – водевиль/водвиль.

2. [ə] is usually pronounced:

a. within the group of three or more consonants (the so-called rule of three consonants).

[ə] – [ɨ³]: *marmelade* – мармелад, *arsenal* – арсенал, *se[ə]crétaire* – се[ɨ³]кретарь, *garde-robe* – гардероб, *parvenu* – парвеню;

[ə] – [ɨ³]: *corps de ballet* – кордебалет;

b. before the combination of [rj], [lj], [nj].

[ə] – [ɨ³]: *re[ə]lief* – ре[ɨ³]льеф;

[ə] – [ɨ³]: *denier* – денье, *atelier* – ате[ɨ³]лье;

c. in the initial syllable.

[ə] – [ɨ³]: *de jour* – дежурный, *recrue* – рекрут, *ve[ə]dette* – ве[ɨ³]дет, *redoute* – редут, *relique* – реликвия, *revanche* – реванш, *remonte* – ремонт, *devise* – девиз, *cheve[ə]lure* – шеве[ɨ³]юра;

[ə] – [ɨ³]: *che[ə]velure* – ше[ɨ³]велюра.

5. SUMMARY

Thus, as follows from the examples, the opposition of open and closed phonemes, functional in the source-language does not appear the same in the language-receptor, but this statement does not mean that both French vowels are always transmitted by the same Russian sound. When entering into the Russian phonological system, other factors become important (combination with hard / soft consonants, stressed / unstressed position), due to which the actualization of new oppositions appears: as a rule, graphically, both French phonemes are transmitted through *ë/e* in the Russian language, determining the functioning of the [o]/[ö] in a strong position or [иэ]/[ь] after a soft consonant and [ыэ]/[ь] after a hard consonant in a weak position. The vowel [э], functioning solely in an unstressed syllable fits into this principle, except for the cases of alternation with zero sound, caused, apparently, by direct oral contact with native speakers of the source.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Through the analysis of phonetic structure of French prototypes and foreign words in the recipient language, the authors of this study came to conclusion that foreign vocabulary of French origin is being comprehensively and actively assimilated by the Russian language and incorporated into the Russian language system. During this process foreign words lose their original characteristics and get new ones common for a recipient language.

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