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Analysis of Neologisms of the Modern Russian Language Based on the Material of the Media and Internet Communication

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A B S T R A C T

Today, the Russian language is in the process of an intense lexicalization that is associated with technological changes, globalization and the increased use of digital communication. Mass media and the Internet are the main channels of spreading and lexicalization of new words. Neologisms used in the Russian language media and Internet communication are studied in terms of their typology, thematic distribution, word-formation processes and lexicalization level. The problem of Russian media neologisms is a topic that has been studied extensively from a theoretical perspective, but has yet to be investigated systematically with representative data from the last five years (2018–2024) and within the context of Internet communication, and is even less investigated in terms of the activity of Russian neologisms among the audience of non-native speakers of Russian. The purpose of this study is to make a systematic analysis of the modern Russian neologisms in media and network communication and to give their structural, thematic and functional characteristics. 1,200 neological units were found out of 1.2 million word tokens in the original corpus, 560 of which had been neologised in the active lexica. The most frequent word-formation mechanism was affixal adaptation of borrowed stems (38.2%), whereas the highest number of borrowed neologisms (31.4%) was most frequently encountered. Vocabulary development of digital technology and internet communication (26.5%) was the most productive thematic group. This study is a comprehensive corpus-based analysis of Russian media neologisms of the last six years (2018-2024) and draws attention to the rapid lexicalization processes that are typical for the digital media context, as well as the functioning of these neologisms within the context of the Russian-language media readership of the Uzbek-speaking community. The results can be used for the research of the current process of lexical changes and to update the language teaching materials, dictionaries and methods of teaching Russian as a second language.

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Introduction

The contemporary Russian language is experiencing one of the most dynamic periods of its lexical development. The unprecedented conditions for fast vocabulary renewal of the language (thanks to the technological revolution, the globalization of the information space, and the appearance of fundamentally new forms of communication in the digital environment) have resulted in an unprecedented speed of vocabulary renewal. The media and internet communication are especially important in this process, as they provide the means for the quickest spread of new lexical items, and the time it takes for a word to become a dictionary entry, from several years to only several weeks/month [1].

The study of neologisms as a dynamic cross-section of language has theoretical significance, and also a significant practical value. In the bilingual environment of the Republic of Uzbekistan, where Russian is used as an interethnic language, as a language of science, and is part of the media space, teachers and instructors of Russian are increasingly faced with the task of explaining the vast amount of neological vocabulary, which is widely reflected in the texts of this period. The difference between the vocabulary found in the norms and the vocabulary in contemporary Russian media has become prominent and a stumbling block in language learning [2].

Though a lot of theoretical studies on neology have been conducted, systematic corpus-based investigations of neologisms in the Russian-language media are still limited due to the specific place of Internet communication – a new channel of lexical innovation, as well as to the representative and recent material for the period 2018-2024. The perception and use of Russian neologisms is even lesser explored from the perspective of audiences for whom Russian is a second language [3].

The goal of the research is to systematically analyze neologs in the contemporary Russian language, using materials from mass media and internet communication, and to describe the typology, word-formation mechanisms, thematic structure and level of lexicalization of the neologs.

To achieve this aim, the following goals were set: (1) to create a representative corpus of texts that are used in Russian-language media and the Internet; (2) to identify criteria for the identification of new units; (3) to classify the identified neologisms according to typological, thematic, and word-formation characteristics; (4) to establish the degree of lexicalization of new units; and (5) to characterize the specific features of neologism functioning in the process of media communication.

Literature Review

Neology theory began to be developed in Russian linguistics in the second half of the 20th century. One of the basic contributions of N. Z. Kotelova is a differentiation between neologisms, which are words newly introduced into a language, and occasionalisms, which are the individual authorial creations. This distinction is still important from the methodological standpoint in modern research because it allows the researcher to distinguish between lexical innovations and isolated cases of word innovation [4].

According to T. V. Popova, there are three main criteria of a neologism: temporal – novelty in time, functional – indication of a new referent and structural – a new linguistic form. This three-pronged approach is the methodological basis of the study that is being presented. R. Yu. Namitokova states that the word-formation potential of neologs, which includes the possibility of fitting them into productive derivational patterns, is the most important aspect of them [5].

In the international scholarly discourse, J. Saahl speaks of a phenomenon of a “neological explosion” in European languages in the digital age, which can be traced back to convergence of media environments and social networks. J. Ayto shows that the frequency of neologism lexicalization is 3-4 times greater in the internet era than during the pre-digital era in a large-scale corpus study of English [6].

The study of media discourse as a particular context for neologization has been represented through the studies of T. G. Dobrosklonskay, who revealed the mechanisms of the «neological wave» in the Russian media in the post-Soviet period. The semantic metaphorization processes are one of the important

mechanisms for creation of semantic neologisms in the Russian-language media texts described by G. N. Sklyarevskaya [7].

The research on Internet communication as a source of neologisms has been active since the early 2010's. In his research related to the internet and the Russian language, M. A. Krongauz regards the specifics of internet word formation as "linguistic play", which is a motivating force in the process of neologization. According to Galichkina, the models of word formation typical of internet neologisms are systematized, with special attention to blending and hybrid formations [8].

The research of media neologisms in the context of Uzbekistan is still underdeveloped. In the works of Yu. some features of the interaction of Russian language media neologisms with the Uzbek language are examined. N. Iskandarova; this phenomenon has not yet been systematically analysed. This situation makes a specific significance of the study for Russian linguistics in Uzbekistan [9].

Materials and Methods

Research Corpus. The empirical basis of the study consisted of an author-compiled corpus of texts comprising 1.2 million word tokens, collected between January 2018 and December 2024. The corpus includes four types of sources: (1) publications from federal Russian media outlets (Rossiyskaya Gazeta, Kommersant, and Novaya Gazeta), accounting for 28% of the corpus; (2) regional Russian-language media in Uzbekistan (the newspapers *Pravda Vostoka* and *Novosti Uzbekistana*, and the portal *Gazeta.uz*), accounting for 22%; (3) news-oriented Telegram channels with audiences exceeding 50,000 subscribers, accounting for 31%; and (4) user comments posted under news publications, accounting for 19%.

This corpus structure ensures coverage of various registers of media discourse, ranging from formal and official styles to conversational online communication, and makes it possible to trace the migration of neologisms across different levels of language normativity. The time span of 2018–2024 was selected deliberately, as it encompasses the COVID-19 pandemic period (2020–2021), which acted as a catalyst for mass neologization, as well as the subsequent stage of active assimilation of new vocabulary.

Research Methodology. The identification of neologisms was carried out using a three-stage procedure. At the first stage, automated filtering was applied: words absent from the *Great Explanatory Dictionary of the Russian Language* edited by S. A. Kuznetsov and from the Russian National Corpus prior to 2010 were selected as potential neologisms. At the second stage, the selected units underwent manual verification by two independent experts in Russian linguistics using dictionaries of new words. At the third stage, frequency analysis was conducted: units occurring at least five times across different corpus sources were classified as conventional neologisms.

Neologisms were classified according to four parameters: typological (borrowed, word-formation, semantic, and hybrid); thematic (based on the author's thematic taxonomy consisting of six groups); derivational; and functional (degree of lexicalization according to the scale "occasionalism – potential word – neologism – conventional unit").

The degree of lexicalization was determined on the basis of three criteria: frequency of use (frequency index ≥ 5 ipm), source dispersion (occurrence in at least three different publications), and derivational activity (the presence of word-formation derivatives). Statistical data processing was performed using the R 4.3.2 software package, and Pearson's χ^2 test was employed to determine the significance of frequency differences.

Result

General Characteristics of the Neologism Corpus. As a result of applying the methodology described above, 1,200 neological units were identified in the corpus. Of these, 560 units (46.7%) were classified as conventional neologisms that had undergone a sufficient degree of lexicalization; 412 units (34.3%) were categorized as neologisms with limited lexicalization; and 228 units (19.0%) were identified as potential

words and occasionalisms with only isolated or infrequent occurrences. This distribution indicates the high intensity of neological processes within the Russian-language media space: nearly half of the identified innovations become established in active usage [10].

The typological distribution of neologisms is presented in Table 1. Borrowed neologisms occupy the dominant position (31.4%), reflecting the openness of the Russian language to international lexical influences in the era of globalization. At the same time, the substantial proportion of word-formation neologisms (27.8%) demonstrates the vitality of the language's internal derivational resources, which remain no less active than borrowing processes [11].

Table 1. Typological distribution of neologisms in the corpus (N = 1,200)

Type of neologism	Definition	Examples from the corpus	Share in the corpus (%)
Borrowed neologisms	Words that entered the Russian language from foreign languages in the 21st century.	*follower, hashtag, stream, tokenization, disruptor*	31,4
Word-formation neologisms	Words formed according to productive models of the Russian language a	*remote work, COVID-19 patient, get vaccinated, lockdown*	27,8
Semantic neologisms	Words that have acquired a new meaning while retaining their old form	*upgrade (skills), drain (data), upload (video)*	22,3
Hybrid formations	Words that combine a foreign root with a Russian affixation	*like, repost, zoom, chat*	18,5

Thematic structure of neologisms. The distribution of the identified units by thematic groups is presented in Table 2. The statistically significant predominance of the vocabulary of digital technologies and internet communication ($\chi^2 = 47.3$; df = 5; $p < 0.001$) reflects the extralinguistic determination of neological processes: it is the technological sphere that generates the largest number of new denotates requiring nomination.

Table 2. Thematic groups of neologisms and their sources in the corpus

Thematic group	Number of units / share (%)	The most frequent units	Prevailing source
Digital technologies and the Internet	318 / 26,5	*content, streaming, digitalization, cybersecurity*	Online media, blogs
Social networks and communication	247 / 20,6	*influencer, hype, bullying, trolling, deanonymization*	Social networks, online comments
Pandemic and healthcare	189 / 15,7	*covidiot, anti-vaxxer, self-isolation, QR code*	Federal media

Economics and business	176 / 14,7	*startup, pitching, crowdfunding, downshifting*	Business media
Politics and society	152 / 12,7	*hype campaign, foreign agent (new meaning), cancellation, toxic*	News media
Other areas	118 / 9,8	*foodtech, agrotech, edtech, neural network, deepfake*	Mixed sources

Pandemic-Related Vocabulary as a Distinct Thematic Category. Pandemic-related vocabulary, constituting a separate thematic layer (15.7% of the corpus), deserves particular attention. Lexical units such as covidiot, anti-vaxxer, lockdown, self-isolation, and sanitizer demonstrate an exceptionally high rate of lexicalization. Some of these items progressed from journalistic occasionalisms to dictionary entries in less than a year. Notably, the term covidiot (derived from COVID + idiot) was recorded in 17 different publications within the corpus, indicating a high degree of source dispersion and lexical stability.

Word-Formation Mechanisms. Analysis of the derivational basis of the identified neologisms reveals the predominance of the affixational method of word formation, primarily realized through the attachment of Russian verbal suffixes to foreign-language stems (see Table 3). This model exhibits a high degree of productivity, encompassing 214 lexical units (38.2% of all derivationally motivated units)..

Table 3. Word-formation models of neologisms (N = 560 usual units)

Word formation model	**Number of units / share (%)**	**Examples**	**Productivity**
Suffixation (foreign-language base + Russian suffix)	214 / 38,2	*-ить/-нут: to like, to repost, to google*	High
Abbreviation and truncation	142 / 25,4	*AI, WHO, exclusive → exclusive, coronavirus → corona*	High
Prefixation (cyber, online, neo, super)	98 / 17,5	*cyberattack, online voting, super app*	Average
Compounding	67 / 12,0	*Cryptocurrency, video content, neural network*	Average
Semantic rethinking	39 / 7,0	*drain, wind up, unwind, pump up*	Moderate

The suffixal pattern with the highest productivity is the foreign stem + -it/-nut (-ить/-нуть), which is attested by e.g. laiknut’ (to like), repostit’ (to repost), guglit’ (to google), zumit’sya (to Zoom), streamit' (to stream), zadonatit' (to donate). From the functional standpoint this model is similar to the Russian model of the productive general-language type of verbalization of nouns and accepts the high level of acceptance among the native speakers.

Lexicalization Level and Derivational Activity. There are 560 conventional neologisms, of which 218 (38.9%) are engaged in derivational activity, i.e. have yielded at least one derivative. Verbs connected to the digital sphere have the highest degree of derivational productivity. For instance the verb strimit' ("to stream") has developed derivatives such as strim (noun), strimer (agent noun), striming (process noun),

strimerskiy (adjective), zastrimit' (prefixed derivative verb), and strimerstvo (abstract noun). The very large number of derivations is a good sign of the total lexicalisation of a neologism.

Dynamics of Neologization. Frequency analysis over the years allows one to detect three waves of neological activity during the time period studied. In the period 2018–2019, there was an increase in the presence of technological words, while during 2020–2021, due to the pandemic, there was a specific expansion of biomedical and social neologisms, and in 2022–2024, there was a strengthening and typological concentration of political vocabulary. During the studied period, 47% more lexical units were introduced compared to the beginning of 2018.

Discussion

The obtained results allow for several theoretically significant generalizations. First and foremost, the findings support the concept of the "diffuse norm" proposed by Kostomarov (1999), according to which media discourse functions as the primary testing ground for lexical innovations, where the forms and meanings of future normative lexical units are developed and refined. The high proportion of conventionalized neologisms (46.7%) demonstrates the effectiveness of the media environment as a mechanism of lexical selection.

The predominance of borrowings over word-formation neologisms corresponds to the pan-European trend described by Saahl (2019). However, the ratio between the two groups (31.4% versus 27.8%) is considerably narrower than that observed in Western European languages. This indicates the continuing derivational strength of the Russian language, which relies on a productive affixational system. Hybrid formations (18.5%) occupy a special position as evidence of the morphological integration of borrowings: the language not only adopts ready-made lexical items but also actively assimilates them into its own grammatical system [12].

Semantic neologisms (22.3%) deserve particular attention. Verbs such as slit' ("to leak"), zalit' ("to upload"), nakrutit' ("to artificially boost"), and prokachat' ("to enhance/upgrade") in technological contexts demonstrate the systematic nature of semantic reinterpretation. The metaphorical extension of meaning affects entire derivational families of words. This observation is consistent with Sklyarevskaya's concept of "semantic drift," according to which technological metaphors generate stable semantic models that subsequently spread to related lexical domains [13].

The functioning of neologisms in the Russian-language media environment of Uzbekistan exhibits several distinctive features. First, the speed at which new lexical units spread from Russian media to local Russian-language publications has decreased from 3–6 months in the early 2000s to only 2–4 weeks in the contemporary period, largely due to the real-time accessibility of Russian online sources. Second, some neologisms undergo semantic adaptation. For example, the term influenser ("influencer") has acquired an additional connotation in Uzbekistani media, referring to a patriotically oriented media activist, a nuance absent from Russian usage [14].

The identified three-wave pattern of neologization corresponds to the theoretical model of "linguistic crisis responses" proposed by Dobrosklonskaya, according to which each form of social turbulence technological, epidemiological, or political generates a wave of lexical innovation. The peak of such a wave occurs during the first year of the event, after which some lexical units become stabilized while others gradually disappear from active use. The present analysis confirms this pattern for the Russian-language media space during the period 2018–2024 [15].

Several limitations of the study should be acknowledged. The corpus consists exclusively of written texts and therefore does not account for spoken media discourse, such as podcasts and video blogs, which constitute an active source of neologisms. In addition, the restricted accessibility of certain Telegram channels limited the completeness of representation of this segment. Finally, the criterion of "five occurrences" as a threshold for lexicalization represents an operational simplification that does not fully account for genre- and register-based variation in the distribution of lexical units within the corpus.

Conclusion

The systematic analysis of neologisms in contemporary Russian based on a corpus of media and internet communication texts comprising 1.2 million word tokens makes it possible to formulate the following key conclusions.

Intensive processes of neologization are currently taking place within the Russian-language media space: of the 1,200 identified innovative lexical units, nearly half (46.7%) have reached the stage of conventional lexicalization. The leading structural mechanism of neologization is the affixal adaptation of borrowed stems through the use of productive Russian suffixes, demonstrating the morphological flexibility of Russian as a recipient language. In terms of thematic distribution, the vocabulary of digital technologies and internet communication occupies the leading position (26.5%), surpassing all other thematic groups.

The media environment functions as the principal accelerator of lexicalization: neologisms that gain widespread circulation through Telegram channels and online news platforms become established in the active vocabulary considerably faster than was the case in the pre-digital era. The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020–2021 generated the most dynamic wave of neologization during the period under investigation; however, the majority of pandemic-related neologisms exhibit signs of stable lexicalization and continue to be actively used.

The practical significance of the study is reflected in several areas. For teachers of Russian language and literature, the identified corpus of neologisms provides a valuable resource for updating the lexical minimum of educational curricula, revising lexicographic materials, and developing instructional tasks based on media texts. For the methodology of teaching Russian as a non-native language, the findings highlight the need to pay particular attention to hybrid formations and semantic neologisms, as these represent the most challenging types of lexical innovations for language learners to master.

A promising direction for future research is a comparative analysis of the perception and acquisition of Russian media neologisms by native speakers of Uzbek in comparison with Russian-speaking audiences. Another перспективе area is the longitudinal study of neologisms in order to identify predictors of their long-term lexicalization and integration into the language system.

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