

Syntactic Linearization and Functional Specialization of Anglicisms in Russian Microblogging: A Corpus-Based Analysis of social media X (Twitter)

While traditional linguistic analysis has often focused on the morphosyntactic characteristics of loanwords, the rapid rise of English loanwords (Anglicisms) in Russian digital communication highlights a significant gap in the literature regarding their discourse-pragmatic functions. By moving beyond the traditional emphasis on lexical borrowing, this study accounts for the distinct syntactic mobility of non-canonical categories—such as predicatives and interjections—whose roles in discourse remain virtually unexamined. In line with recent work on computer-mediated communication and networked multilingualism, such borrowings are increasingly understood not only as lexical imports but as resources for stance-taking and discourse organization. The present study investigates the syntactic distribution and functional specialization of Anglicisms within contemporary Russian-language microblogging discourse on platform X.

The methodology centers on the construction of a specialized corpus using a multi-platform sampling approach. Potential target tokens were first identified through ethnographic observation on Twitch; subsequently, a primary dataset was compiled by extracting contextualized utterances from X using custom Python scripts to ensure a representative sample of digital discourse.

This strategy focused on 30 unique lexical types within gaming terminology. The data underwent cleaning and tokenization in RStudio, with categorical grouping performed according to the framework established during the INTERMET summer school (May 2025). While limited in size, the dataset is intended to capture emerging tendencies in a highly productive domain of digital discourse. This data acquisition strategy was designed to evaluate whether these borrowings—imported from a language with rigid word order—mirror the syntactic behavior of their Russian equivalents or introduce new positional preferences.

The quantitative analysis reveals a significant correlation between morphosyntactic characteristics and linear position. Lexical borrowings categorized as nouns and verbs (*ливнуть* [livnut'] – ‘to leave’, *контент* [kontent] – ‘content’) are predominantly characterized by medial placement, indicating their successful assimilation into the Russian clause structure as core arguments or predicates. Conversely, Anglicisms functioning as predicatives and interjections (*найс* [najs] – ‘nice’, *анлак* [anlak] – ‘unluck’, *вмф* [vtf] – ‘WTF’) exhibit a high degree of syntactic mobility, appearing with significantly greater frequency in the left and right peripheries.

Drawing on the framework of functional sentence perspective, as well as sociolinguistic approaches to English influence in Russian discourse, the study argues that these peripheral positions are not arbitrary but reflect a pragmatic shift from lexical to functional utility, a process that may be interpreted as a form of pragmaticalization in digital discourse. Peripheral Anglicisms often serve as extra-clausal constituents—functioning as either frame-setting operators that establish the speaker's evaluative stance or as prosodically detached reactive markers. These findings suggest that the adoption of Anglicisms in digital Russian is driven by a need for communicative economy and expressive pragmatic force, contributing to a shifting paradigm of word order in computer-mediated communication.

References

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