

## Conference Paper

# Blended Neologisms and Multilingualism: Breaking Rules or New Literacy?

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## Abstract

Being a completely new communicative environment, the internet network generates new designations (including verbal) for several phenomena. Among them, there are blended nonce-words that are on the verge of norms violation. A number of these lexical units, which should be considered as a demonstration of linguistic personality creative potential, are related to the stock vocabulary of native twenty-first century Russian-language speakers. This phenomenon occurs various languages and different cultures. Therefore the article dwells upon blended neologisms, including native Russian and borrowed elements. The predominant role of situation and context in that pattern is obvious: those nonce-words have not been fixed in lexical system yet. Contaminants should be treated as an evidence of sustainable development of the whole language system, as a component of various discourses as well as integral part of everyday communication (via the internet network), and slang. Non-standard structure as well as combination of native and borrowed elements in blended nonce-words, provide them with strong emotive and expressive potential.

**Keywords:** blended nonce-words, Internet communication, word building, borrowing

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## 1. Introduction

As a completely new communicative space, the Internet network is becoming a source of neologisms denoting various phenomena. So, we deal with the new problem of word formation, especially in case of *nonce-words* which are produced in accordance with typical word-building patterns, but at the same time are on the verge of norm violation. Most of those nonce-words should be treated as results of word game, as a demonstration of creative thinking and creative potential of linguistic personality. In the XXI century, due to globalization, language game results in such specific phenomenon as blending, consisting of native and borrowed components (in our case, they are Russian and English ones). Those word parts are "representatives" of various languages and cultures amalgamated in one word.

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## 2. Literature Review

As it was stated by E.S. Kubryakova and I.S. Ulukhanov, "without describing mechanisms of analogy, it is hardly possible to offer complete description of word building processes, as well as explain a variety of real word-formation acts enriching language system with new words" [1]. In our opinion, this statement is completely true concerning contaminants (blended nonce-words) that are widely represented in the Internet network. Thus, I. A. Kovyneva pointed out that those words are created "by merging a whole sentence (or part of it) into a single unit" [2]. On the other hand, A. A. Aleshina and S. Zh. Nukhov argue that there is a lack of clear terminology for this phenomenon in contemporary linguistics, as "those nonce-words are called "phrasal composites", "poly-component occasional syntactic composites", "compressions", "syntactic composites", "metaphorical transpositions" [3, 4]. In our research, we have chosen the terms "contaminants", "holophrastic nonce-words", "blended words" as the most appropriate ones because they are strongly correlated with our research material. At the same time, special attention should be paid to the fact that those words are emotive and, as a result, expressive due to their abnormality; their figurative meanings (mainly negative) make significant emotional impact on the recipient. In this case, graphics plays an important role in breaking language rules, because holophrastic words (contaminants) have merged spelling instead of the separate words. It is a signal of irregularity for the native speakers of Russian language who expect to see 2, 3 or even 4 words, or an analogue of the whole sentence instead of nonce-word. According to N. B. Mechkovskaya, "the choice of a specific "colour" is presupposed rather by "artistic expediency" and aesthetic motivation than by language norms" [5].

## 3. Methods

This study is based on collecting data done directly in the Internet. As data collection tools, Yandex and Google web source services have been used.

### 3.1. Study Approach

Taking all the aforementioned into account, we have focused on the specific blended nonce-words built on the basis of the typical pattern *Russian noun+ free*, which means 'free of something' (see: *Childfree*, etc). In our opinion, such nonce-words represent the expressivity as a result of multi-lingual communication; on the other hand, they can

be considered as the code-switching examples related to the cognitive operation of meaning and form compression.

### 3.2. Method of Collecting Data

As a material for our research we have chosen such blended words as елкфри, совестьфри (**Christmas-tree-free, conscience-free**, etc.) represented in the Internet communication as a result of the spontaneous creative word-building process. The utterances containing those lexical units were excerpted from the Internet (various sites, especially social networks like OK, VK and others) by means of continuous sampling.

## 4. Data Analysis

### 4.1. Word building pattern

While studying those expressive nonce-words it is necessary to find out the source of their emotiveness. In our opinion, axiological meaning, as a cause of expressivity, has been induced by the pragmatic shift or pragmatic discrepancy, and breaking of language rules in case of its repeated use can start a new language rule, a new way of word building and a new meaning or shade of meaning. N.A. Lavrova says, that “blended nonce-word (contaminants) ... at first, should be treated as innovative and effective nomination and denotation of the outer world; secondly, in many cases it is the result of individual reflection and subjective world view; thirdly, nonce-word as a language phenomenon shows intrinsic originality because of the unpredictable combination of its morphological constituents” [6]. Also, Lavrova argues that, being emotive/expressive synonyms for usual words, blended nonce-words realize the alternative in understanding the World; and, finally, both direct and figurative meanings of those new words are determined by the certain context as a result of the creative activity of a certain person» [7].

The world-building pattern that we have chosen as an object for our study totally corresponds to all the criteria proposed by Lavrova. The componential structure of this pattern should be represented in the following way:

**Russian noun + - free (English):** *Cristmas-tree-free; conscience-free.*

There is no doubt that in this case we deal with a new nomination, as it is impossible to denote the given phenomenon in one word (without use of contamination). Otherwise, we have to use the whole utterance for that purpose: елкфри – «человек, не

празднующий Новый год, «свободный от ёлки, не имеющий ёлки»; совестьфри – «Тот, кто свободен от совести, не имеющий совести»//*Christmas-tree-free* – “a person, who does not have a Christmas tree”, i.e. “a person, who does not celebrate Christmas”; *conscience-free* – “a person, who does not have conscience”.

## 4.2. Blended nonce-words: non-standard processes of creation and perception

The predominant role of situation and context in that pattern is also quite obvious: those nonce-words have not been fixed in the lexical system yet; moreover, they are not represented in dictionaries despite their frequent use in the Internet. Thus, Yandex and Google services have found 2000/2040 cases of ёлкфри/*Christmas-tree-free* respectively; concerning the second case, such as совестьфри/*conscience-free*, there are much fewer contexts with such new word: 658 (in Yandex system), or even 7 (results of Google search). So, those contaminated words are rather spontaneous – emotional and creative – reactions of the native speakers to the certain situations than the facts of the language system. Moreover, as Lavrova says, we deal with specific “morphological shatters” combined in an unpredictable way (for instance, the Russian and English components have been combined in order to denote a new phenomenon), counting on such world-building patterns as *childfree*, *duty free*, which are frequently used by the native speaker of Russian nowadays. Right now, there are a lot of cases of using the Cyrillic alphabet in order to write down those patterns: чайлдфри, дьютифри/дьютифри). The only thing which does not correspond to Lavrova’s statement is their functioning as synonyms for usual words, because there are no usual words with the same or similar meaning as ёлкфри/*Christmas-tree-free*, or совестьфри/*conscience-free*. One can assume that despite emotive and expressive functions, those blended nonce-words represent such cognitive operations as compression and meaning constriction; from this viewpoint, it is a case of maintenance of “the minimal amount of differential meaning” [7]. O.K. Iriskhanova also points out that such creative word-building process is closely associated with cognitive development, and she argues that “this process requires direct links with integrative abilities of the human beings converting diverse concepts into new flexible units” [8].

On the other hand, L.D. Kadyrova and T.A. Gridina investigate such blended nonce-words as an implementation of the language game strategy. They state that the main principle of the language game consists in finding out psychologically relevant multifaceted associations between language signs (which are familiar for the native speakers

of a certain language) and the deliberate use of non-standard processes of their creation and perception. In the frame of such approach, language stereotypes should be ruptured by means of the appropriate linguistic techniques [9, 10].

Finally, it is necessary to focus on such characteristics of contamination as the clear connection between its structure and its meaning. While generating blended nonce-word, every speaker acts deliberately, because he/she uses that word in the communicative act, therefore, the main purpose of word building is to create a comprehensible and coherent language unit. In other words, all participants of the communicative act should be aware of the meaning of a “newborn” word, that is why it should be determined by semantic and pragmatic characteristics of its components. In this case, such contamination can be perceived as a result of very complicated language game, as an implemented intention which should be deciphered by the speech recipient. As it was stated by Lavrova, «the meaning of the compound word can be based on its components’ meanings. On the other hand, in many cases there are no close associations between the meaning of the compound and the meanings of its components: e.g. “cross-patch”, which means «ворчунья, брюзга» in Russian. On the contrary, the contaminant meaning is always predetermined by the semantic and pragmatic characteristics of its components and by mental information represented there ...» [6].

So, the transparency of the blended nonce-words (contaminations) structure allows them to become an effective means of spreading emotions; they balance dynamically between language rules and breaking rules; they are still on the way to the language system; they are very expressive. Moreover, their negative or positive meaning is quite clear for all native speakers. In case of contaminations including components from different languages (e.g. Russian and English), we also deal with the language unit used as a persuasive tool, even if it is used in the neutral utterance or definition:

Елкфри - это о тех, кто сознательно отказывается от новогодней елки...  
(<https://snob.ru/profile/25785/print/118938>);

Ёлкфри, или восьмая свеча. Вот вы знаете, кто такие «ёлкфри»? Это те, кто совершенно сознательно, я бы сказала демонстративно отказываются от праздников, потому что они "не такие", глубже, тоньше, умнее, не толпа. Такое подростково-протестное.

*Christmas-tree-free are those who refuse to celebrate Christmas; so they do not have Christmas tree...*

**Christmas-tree-free or the 8<sup>th</sup> candle**  
*Do you know who Christmas-tree-free are? They consciously, or even demonstratively, refuse to celebrate holidays, being "quite different" from ordinary people, i.e. being much more clever and aristocratic. It seems to be like teenagers rebellion.*

(all the peculiarities of spelling and punctuation represented in our examples are related to the authors' individual style).

## 5. Results

As we have stated before, communication in the Internet is a spontaneous one. Moreover, in many cases it requires an instant addressee's response. So, the language game as a process and a result also represents spontaneous unpredictable associations and spontaneous word combinations, including native and borrowed elements. In this case, multilingualism should be treated as a reason for the language game and creative word-building process:

В общем ребзя, быть ёлкфри, это так же прогрессивно как чайлдфри, только в отношении ёлок. Считаю, что чем меньше людей срубят живые растения в угоду застольно-пьяному празднику, тем лучше. А кто до сих пор ставит дома труп невинно убиенного растения? Прекращайте.

So, guys, being **Christmas-tree-free** is as progressive as being childfree. In my opinion, the less people cut down fur trees in order to celebrate this holiday (full of alcohol and chow-down) the better it would be. Who still uses the "dead body" of killed tree in order to follow that tradition? Come on, guys

The strong challenge represented in such utterances generates the addressee's response. It also seems to be the creative act, the similar language game which becomes possible just because of the use of borrowing. On the other hand, in order to be recognized, this borrowed word should be a part of the active vocabulary in the contemporary Russian language, i.e. a part of a multi-lingual communication. The native speakers of the Russian language should be familiar with all semantic and pragmatic peculiarities of that word as a component of their multilingual, multicultural world view:

Сначала ёлкфри, потом оливьефри, а что дальше? Водкфри? а что дальше? Водкфри? (отсылка к предыдущему высказыванию – Л.М.)  
ДютиФри Сначала ёлкфри, потом оливьефри, а что дальше? Водкфри? (отсылка к предыдущему высказыванию – Л.М.) Быстрее б уже ФВТфри ([https://www.heroeswm.ru/forum\\_messages.php?tid=2603925](https://www.heroeswm.ru/forum_messages.php?tid=2603925))

*Firstly – **Christmas-tree-free**, than – salad-free, and what about the next step? To become **vodka-free**? (the next participant): Dutyfree... Firstly – **Christmas-tree-free** than – salad-free, and what about the next step? To become vodka-free? *It will be better to become FWT-free as soon as possible**

Creative word-building in the Internet represents the following strong tendency: if a pattern is accepted, perceived and used with a good effect, it becomes a part of the communication process and an object for further language games:

А потом до кучи назовут елкнигилистом и елкдиссидентом. Крайности и ярлыки это всегда плохо. Мне нравятся елки, и по новомуднему волшебству скучаю, но вот пока не штырит. Может, еще вернется.

And after that they will top it off, and call me **Christmas-tree-negativist**, or **Christmas-tree-non-conformist**. All the stereotypes are related to narrow-mindedness. Yes, I like Christmas-trees, I really miss it, but right now I am not keen on it. Maybe, later...

So, at present those blended nonce-words (contaminations) have become a part of national world view, and it can be proved by some extracts which do not contain any explanations or definitions in the context. In those cases, all the communicants have common background knowledge or presupposition, that is why the multilingual contaminant is quite clear for all of them:

Хы, а я ф этом году ёлкфри получаюсь. Докатился... И я ёлкфри. Максимум гирлянда, на люстре. Туда не допрыгнут (животные, которые находятся в квартире у автора – Л.М.) <http://antidotte.com/viewtopic.php?t=4211>

*Ha-ha! This year, I have also become a **Christmas-tree-free** ...How did I even get here? **Christmas-tree-free** ... Just a Christmas-tree-set, on the ceiling lamp... They (pets) will not get there...*

Узнала новое слово "ёлкфри". Я – ёлкфри, у меня дома и конь не валялся... [https://twitter.com/mrs\\_riplie/status/814109287425470464](https://twitter.com/mrs_riplie/status/814109287425470464);

*Now, I've known a new word...**Christmas-tree-free**... Yes, I'm **Christmas-tree-free**, and not a bone in the truck in my flat...*

Frequent use of the pattern as well as a variety of the Russian components used as parts of such blended words (together with the fixed English part) indicates the typical character of this model, e.g.:

была уже тема про чайлдфри. смысл заново? чайлдфри просто эстеты по сравнению с совестьфри, честьфри и всесвободны <https://forums.drom.ru/habarovsk/t1151832638-p9.html>;

*We've just discussed this topic about *childfree*; do you want to repeat? *Childfree* are the noblest people in comparison to **consciencefree**, **honourfree** and **all-of-you-are-free***

И дьюти-фри, и совесть-фри, то есть ни налогов, ни совести demotivation. [me/ou38sf4tn5s9pic.html](http://me/ou38sf4tn5s9pic.html);

*Duty-free, conscience-free... No taxes, no conscience. Nothing.*

## 6. Conclusion

To sum up, we can state that contaminants (blended nonce-words) represent one of the main trends of the contemporary world such as multilingualism and multiculturalism.

Being typical and frequently used those patterns make great contribution in building of the new worldview based on the multilingual communication.

Probably, those new words represent the new language rules as well, because they are culturally entrenched. Also, the blended nonce-words reveal a new tendency of the word formation.



Contaminants should be treated as an evidence of the sustainable development of the whole language system, as a component of various discourses as well as an integral part of the everyday communication and slang. Their non-standard structure, as well as the combination of native and borrowed elements, provide them with the strong emotive and expressive potential.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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