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**МЕЖДИСЦИПЛИНАРНЫЕ ОСНОВЫ
ЛИНГВИСТИЧЕСКОЙ ГИБРИДИЗАЦИИ
(НА МАТЕРИАЛЕ РЕТРО-КОМПОНЕНТА В
АНГЛОЯЗЫЧНЫХ ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИХ МЕДИАТЕКСТАХ)**

Настоящая статья посвящена гибридации как объекту лингвистического изучения. Термин «гибридизация» был интегрирован в терминологический оборот гуманитарных наук, в том числе лингвистики, посредством метафорического переноса из биологии. Несмотря на наличие устойчивого исследовательского интереса к гибридации, ее методологический статус в лингвистике еще не был определен. Цель статьи – выявить биологические, философские и собственно лингвистические основы гибридации, демонстрирующие ее междисциплинарный характер. Междисциплинарные основы иллюстрируются с помощью ретро-компонента современного политического медиадискурса. Материалом исследования послужили более 500 англоязычных текстов публикаций в Твиттер («твитов»), опубликованных британскими, американскими и канадскими политиками и политическими организациями в период с 2010 по 2022 гг. Эмпирический материал был проанализирован с

привлечением комплексных методов лингвистического анализа, анализа текста и дискурсивного анализа. В результате исследования были сделаны следующие основные выводы. Во-первых, есть основы гибридизации, общие для биологии, философии и лингвистики. К ним относятся дискретность «родителей», отсутствие ограничений на взаимодействие, выраженная потребность в гибридизации, возникновение нового свойства и некомпозициональность гибрида. Во-вторых, есть основы, специфичные для лингвистической гибридизации, а именно наличие минимального коммуникативного контекста и вербальная выраженность «идентичностей» (голосов).

Ключевые слова: гибридизация, лингвистическая гибридизация, метафоризация, ретро, политический медиадискурс, постмодернизм, полифония

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**THE INTERDISCIPLINARY BASIS OF LINGUISTIC
HYBRIDIZATION
(AN ANALYSIS OF THE RETRO-COMPONENT IN
ENGLISH-LANGUAGE POLITICAL MEDIA TEXTS)**

The article is devoted to hybridization as an object of linguistic study. Having originated from biology, through metaphorical rethinking the term “hybridization” was transferred to different humanitarian sciences, including linguistics. Despite the growing research interest in hybridization, its methodological status in linguistics has not been decided upon yet. The aim of the present article is to reveal the facilitators of hybridization in biology, philosophy, and linguistics which constitute its interdisciplinary basis. The facilitators are illustrated with the retro-component of modern political media discourse that was retrieved from over 500 English-language texts of Twitter posts published between 2010 and 2022 by British, American, and Canadian politicians and political organizations. The research material was analyzed with methods of linguistic, text and discourse analysis, yielding

the following conclusions. First, there are facilitators that are common to the three sciences, which is probably a consequence of metaphorization as a universal means of term transfer. The common facilitators include discretion of the “parents” and absence of constraints on interaction, a pronounced need for hybridization, emergence of a new property, non-compositionality of the hybrid. Second, there are properties specific to linguistic hybridization. These are the presence of a minimal communicative context and discernable verbalized identities.

Keywords: hybridization, linguistic hybridization, metaphorization, retro, political media discourse, postmodernism, polyphony

Introduction

Hybridization is a relatively new cultural and civilizational phenomenon which is believed to have risen to prominence against the background of the ongoing globalization and digitalization in various spheres of social life. Being essentially human-caused, hybridization has an explicit anthropological dimension and hence has long been an object of humanitarian study. For the most part of the XX c. hybridization predominantly fell within the scope of anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, and history, until it was taken up by post-colonial and literary studies in the 1980s (Ackermann, 2012, p. 5). In anthropology, sociology and cultural studies hybridization is mainly approached as the mixing of cultures fostered by the world-scale sociocultural processes of colonization, decolonization, migration, and globalization (Burke, 2009, Canclini, 2005, Freyre, 1946, Pieterse, 1993, Young, 1995).

Linguistic hybridization is most often studied from the perspective of sociolinguistics and communicative linguistics. In sociolinguistics the study of hybridization mainly focuses on changes induced by language contact, such as creolization, pidginization, borrowing, code-mixing, and code-switching (Hall & Nilep, 2015, Rahman & Rahman, 2021, Whinnom, 1971). In communicative linguistics research into hybridization most frequently aims to describe its mechanisms, strategies and scenarios and model the “hybrid” product, drawing upon methods of discourse analysis and genre analysis (Bunia, 2012, Guseinova, 2011, Ivanova, 2017).

The problem of determining the methodological status of hybridization remains essentially unresolved in linguistics, which makes

it topical to review the different approaches to hybridization across related and unrelated disciplines, both natural and humanitarian. An interdisciplinary study of hybridization, on the one hand, helps to elaborate the most effective approach to it and enables mutual enrichment of the different disciplines involved and, on the other hand, goes in line with the complex, multifaceted character of the phenomenon under consideration.

The current research seeks to reveal and substantiate the interdisciplinary character of linguistic hybridization. To this end, an account is given of what is understood by “hybridization” in three disciplines, both distant from each other and adjacent (Tarasova, 2022) – biology, philosophy and linguistics.

It is worth mentioning that there are also sociocultural and culturological bases that are not considered within the scope of the current research, particular emphasis being laid on biological, logico-philosophical and proper linguistic bases.

The practical value of the research is that it expands the interdisciplinary theoretical framework essential to understanding linguistic hybridization and thereby helps to work out the most effective ways to implement it.

Theoretical background: The roots of hybridization

Hybridization as an object of biological study goes back to Carolus Linnaeus’ experiments on plant breeding in the XVIII c. In the course of his extensive work on plant classification and especially after his encounter with the new *Peloria* genus Linnaeus assumed that the biodiversity resulted from interbreeding of the limited number of species initially created by God.

Charles Darwin in his fundamental work “On the Origin of Species” (1859) dismissed hybridization as a way of producing an intermediate between two very distinct parents, but later he attributed more significance to hybridization in producing new breeds.

Both Linnaeus and Darwin acknowledged the role of hybridization in the evolution of species, which was quite innovative for their times since up to the XX c. it had been widely believed that God made hybrids sterile to keep species immutable.

Today the biological perspective on hybridization is mainly represented in genetics, “the branch of biology concerned with the study of heredity and variation” that began to actively develop in 1900 when

Hugo de Vries, Karl Correns and Erich von Tschermak independently rediscovered Gregor Mendel's findings on inheritance in garden peas (Hine, 2019). It is Gregor Mendel who is credited with laying the foundation for classical genetics with his theory of heredity, now known as "Mendelism", which he proposed in 1865 after a series of pea-plant experiments conducted between 1856 and 1863.

Gregor Mendel set out the main conditions and mechanisms of hybridization in his report "Experiments in Plant Hybridization" in 1865, published a year later. It is stated that the main success factors of hybridization are universal for most experiments, i.e. "the fitness of the material to the purpose" and the way the experiment is conducted (Mendel, 1902, p. 42). The experimental plants should be carefully selected and meet the following requirements: "possess constant differentiating characters" and "the hybrids of such plants must, during the flowering period, be protected from the influence of all foreign pollen, or be easily capable of such protection" (Ibid.). The division and arrangement of the experiments are predetermined by Mendel's observation that the common characters are transmitted to the hybrids unchanged and each pair of differentiating characters, on the contrary, unite in the hybrid to form a new character. This new character is a factor of the so-called hybrid vigour (heterosis) which is increased viability of the hybrid organism as compared to its parents. Thus, hybridization holds the potential to improve the survivability of species.

Material and methods

The research material includes over 500 English-language texts of Twitter posts ("tweets") published between 2010 and 2022 by British, American, and Canadian politicians and political organizations on twitter.com (access to Twitter has been limited in Russia since 4 March 2022). The texts were selected by the method of continuous sampling and analyzed for the retro-component with the help of a combination of methods of linguistic, text and discourse analysis such as linguocultural, linguostylistic and linguopragmatic analysis, methods of intertextual, contextual, and definitional analysis.

Political media discourse was chosen as the research material because it appears to be a vivid example of hybrid discourse, bringing together political and media discourses. The constitutive features (Karasik, 1999) of the discourses determining political media discourse together serve the aim and content of political communication – to fight for power and

publicly discuss “issues of power” (Sheigal, 2000, p. 34). One of the constitutive features demonstrating the impact of hybridization is the chronotope as represented by a mix of several temporal strata.

We believe that hybridization of temporal strata is best exemplified by the retro-component, retro being understood as “a linguocultureme, evoking images of the past by uniting in a single socio-cultural context phenomena, objects and processes of the past, present and the future with the aim of arousing the recipient’s nostalgia and representing a qualitatively new culturally significant item” (Murashova, 2020, p. 118, from here onwards translated from Russian by E. Murashova). As follows from the definition, retro is a hybrid in its own right. In the research material the retro-component is singled out to illustrate, or visualize, the interdisciplinary nature of hybridization. Since hybridization was transferred to linguistics via metaphorization, we proceed from the assumption that to this or that extent the bases of hybridization formulated in different disciplines are manifested in the retro-component.

Results and discussion

The biological basis of hybridization

As a result of his fundamental work on pea-plant breeding Gregor Mendel formulated three main principles of inheritance now referred to as “Mendel’s laws” (Mendel, 1902; Hine, 2019).

As follows from them, hybridization is facilitated by the presence of discrete organisms with independent, indivisible genetic features (Vavilov, 1935, p. 10; Flyaksberger, 1935, p. 18). Back in Mendel’s day the approach to inheritance tended to be rather mechanistic: the property of discreteness got absolutized, and an organism was, via exaggeration, most frequently studied as a “mosaic of features” (Vavilov, 1935, p. 10). At the beginning of the XX c. geneticists and cytologists came to understand the hereditary substance as both, discrete and non-discrete since chromosomes have a discontinuous structure but at the same time form a whole organic system in which the continuity, connectedness and interdependence of genes are brought to the fore. Hence the mechanistic approach was replaced by the holistic one, a “dialectical understanding of inheritance as a process” (Ibid.).

Discreteness of species along with gradualness of change is one of the key properties of biological evolution determining the conditions for hybridization (Markov, 2014, p. 337). Discreteness of species means that

“between species there are noticeable gaps (hiatuses) in both, genomic sequences and visible features” (Ibid.: 338). It is mainly discretion that makes biodiversity structured and researchable. Gradualness of change means that transition between species is inconspicuous until the final stages of change get compared.

German-born American evolutionary biologist Ernest Mayr is credited with developing the biological species concept that defines species as “groups of actually or potentially interbreeding natural populations, which are reproductively isolated from other such groups” (Mayr, 1942, p. 120). In Mayr’s concept reproductive isolation aims to prevent hybridization that would most likely lead to a “breakdown” and “production of disharmonious types”, thus ensuring discretion of species (Mayr, 1963, p. 109). Reproductive isolation is realized through a set of isolating mechanisms like temporal, behavioural and morphological barriers, geographical isolation, hybrid infertility and inviability (Ibid.).

To sum up, the main facilitators of hybridization in biology are **discretion of organisms** and **absence of reproductive constraints**. Both must have found their way into language through metaphorization (Murashova, 2021).

Without discretion of its components hybridization becomes unfeasible since it is the identifiability of “parents” that imparts an organized and systemic character to the process, making it different from simple mixing or eclectization. In language borrowed elements do not necessarily come from the “parents”, so in case the parental sources are unidentifiable, the mere presence of hybridization should be questioned. Discretion in the retro-component manifests itself in the stadiality of temporal representation, which means that each temporal stratum is discernible and tends to be introduced sequentially.

In political media discourse, history, as a rule, is represented as a chain of events that is, on the one hand, discontinuous in that it consists of discrete stages, and on the other hand, forms a spatial and temporal continuity (Kozlovskaya, Rastyagaev & Slozhenikina, 2020). The principle of objectifying history in political media discourse resembles the one behind the structure of a chromosome in a biological cell. The retro-component in the research material serves as a shifter between the temporal planes of the past, the present and the future, ensuring their interconnectedness and uniting them in a single observable hence researchable whole (Murashova, 2021, p. 233).

In the empirical material under research stadiality is marked by nouns like *chapter* (5), *day*, *decade*, *epoch*, *era*, *history* (2), (6), (13), *moment* (12), *period*, *stage* (1), precedent names (9), (10), adverbial modifiers of time (3), (7), (8), (11) and attributes (4) denoting historical periods, e.g.:

*At every **stage** (1) of its illustrious **history** (2), the RAF has been at the cutting edge of defensive technology.*

*Great to be at @RAFConingsby **today** (3), seeing how #GlobalCombatAir will keep this country safe for generations **to come** (4). (@RishiSunak, 09.12.2022)*

*@JoeBiden and I are ready to write the next **chapter** (5) in our nation's **history** (6). **On day one** (7), we're going to get to work building an economy that works for working families. (@KamalaHarris, 10.11.2020)*

***75 years ago** (8), Canadians began one of their most grueling but effective campaigns of the **Second World War** (9) - **the Italian Campaign** (10).*

***Today** (11), we arrived in Italy to commemorate this pivotal **moment** (12) in Canadian military **history** (13). (@L_MacAulay, 31.05.2019)*

The main constraint on hybridization in the retro-component of political media discourse is the absence of this or that event in the collective memory of the now-living people, so for an event to fall under the category of retro it is to be relatively recent and “rememberable”. For example, the precedent name *the Second World War* can be regarded as a retro-component because the event it denotes was witnessed by some of today’s contemporaries, whereas *the Hundred Years’ War* cannot be seen as such because there are no longer any living witnesses to the series of armed conflicts between England and France in the XIV – XV cc. that it refers to, so the latter event is a matter of historical rather than collective memory and hence pertains to history rather than retro.

The logico-philosophical basis of hybridization

In philosophy hybridization is studied within postmodernism, the philosophical movement of the second half of the XX c. – the beginning of the XXI c. that focuses on a special cultural condition of society called postmodernity (Harvey, 1989).

Postmodernism, as follows from its name, arose as a response to modernism, being both its continuation and an opposition to it.

One of the main works that is believed to have introduced the term “postmodernism” to the terminological apparatus of philosophy and laid

the foundation for the development of postmodernism as a movement is “The Postmodern Condition” of 1979 by the French philosopher, sociologist, and literary theorist Jean-François Lyotard. In “The Postmodern Condition” Lyotard formulates the characteristic of the postmodern era as “incredulity toward metanarratives” and builds upon Ludwig Wittgenstein’s language game theory to propose a possible solution to the “metanarrative” crisis (Lyotard, 1984, Introduction: xxiv). In Lyotard’s opinion, language games, a “heterogeneity of elements” (Ibid.), are a method of breaking down metanarratives characterized by sameness, unity, and totality into a multiplicity of discourses which demonstrate the contrasting features of difference, diversity and fractionality.

Another fundamental work elaborating the framework for postmodernism is “Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism” by the American philosopher Fredric Jameson which was published in 1991 but some of its parts had appeared earlier (1984 – 1990). In his book Jameson sets out several constitutive features of the postmodern (Jameson, 1984, p. 58) and works out a postmodern concept of **pastiche** which is a new method of text organization that came to replace parody after the collapse of value and semantic guidelines in society. Just like parody, pastiche is an imitation of a certain style, but, unlike parody, it is “devoid of laughter” and in this way represents “a neutral practice of such mimicry” (Ibid.: 65).

Having lost its referent, culture turns to the past for styles, masks, and voices “stored up in the imaginary museum of a now global culture” (Ibid.). Jameson emphasizes that pastiche is a ubiquitous and mass phenomenon in modern culture which he characterizes as “the culture of the simulacrum” because the simulacrum becomes an end in itself and the world gets filled with “sheer images of itself”, “pseudo-events” and “spectacles” that are nothing more than imitations of history (Ibid.: 66).

The French sociologist, philosopher, and poet Jean Baudrillard in the late 1970s and early 1980s suggested a social theory accounting for proliferation of simulacra in today’s postmodern “cybernetized” society (Baudrillard, 1994). According to his definition, simulacrum is a simulation of the “real”, the final phase of the development of an image: “it is the reflection of a profound reality; it masks and denatures a profound reality; it masks the absence of a profound reality; it has no

relation to any reality whatsoever; it is its own pure simulacrum” (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 6).

The need for simulacra arises once referents get lost, which is quite typical of the postmodern era called by Baudrillard “irreferential” (Baudrillard, 1994). According to Aristotle, *nature abhors a vacuum*, so when referents disappear, the gaps get filled with simulacra which, in their turn, mass spawn new imaginary referents. A relevant example is that people tend to prefer social media over live communication. The past which is meant to serve as a source of simulacra, cannot be treated as “real” either since it consists of simulacra itself. As Baudrillard puts it, “history is our lost referential, that is to say our myth” (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 43).

Paradoxical as it might seem, the only place where “real” referents, including historical ones, can still be found is human memory. It is memory that appears to connect the “real” past to the simulacra of the past. If the referent is lost, a simulacrum that arises to replace it is, as a rule, based on what society remembers about it, be it a natural memory or an artificially instilled one.

To sum up, the text-forming principle and the dominant aesthetics of the postmodern era is pastiche. Pastiche accounts for the intertextuality of postmodern culture and gets realized through the mechanism of hybridization. For hybridization to take place, two main conditions are to be met: first, there should be **referential gaps in culture**; second, there should be **a memory of the lost “real” referent**. Hybridization in postmodernism, thus, is a way to reconstruct knowledge of the world with the help of human memory.

In political media discourse referential gaps are most often realized through parallelization of temporal planes with the obligatory involvement of the plane of the past. As a rule, politicians draw upon history to fill in gaps in knowledge of the present or the future. Memories of past events are usually evoked with the help of memory-related words like *flashback*, *forget*, *memory*, *recall*, *remember*, etc.

In the following tweet by the UK’s former Prime Minister Boris Johnson memories of two historical events are evoked to form a negative attitude to the special military operation of Russia in Ukraine: Victory in Europe Day and the Second World War.

On VE Day, as we remember those who sacrificed their lives in WW2, we also think of those who've died and suffered in Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine. <...> (@BorisJohnson, 08.05.2022)

The precedent names *VE Day*, *WW2* are used to build on the negative emotional background associated with the corresponding tragic pages of history. Apart from the choice of the precedent events the use of negatively coloured emotion-laden vocabulary helps to emotionalize the message (*sacrificed, died, suffered, illegal invasion*). The memory-related word *remember* serves to introduce the retrospect and ensure a connection between the temporal planes of the past and the present.

Linguistic basis of hybridization

In linguistics hybridization is most often studied as a cognitive mechanism of linguistic creativity in discourse, especially within the theory of nomination (Zykova, 2021; Iriskhanova, 2005; Jones, 2016; Tendahl, 2009, Malyuga, Poliakova & Tomalin, 2019). Other aspects of hybridization under linguistic study are dialogism and polyphony, genre mixing, multimodality, intertextuality and interdiscursivity, and conceptual integration.

The first scientist to apply the term “hybridization” to linguistic phenomena was the Russian philosopher and literary theorist Mikhail M. Bakhtin in his works devoted to polyphony in novels. Bakhtin defines hybridization as “mixing of two social languages within one utterance, an encounter in the arena of this utterance of two different, separated by an epoch or social differentiation (or both) linguistic consciousnesses” (Bakhtin, 1975, p. 170). In Bakhtin’s concept, hybridization is a category of techniques employed to create an “artistic image” of language along with dialogized interaction of languages and “pure” dialogues (Ibid.). Linguistic hybridization comes in two forms – conscious hybridization and unconscious hybridization (Bakhtin, 1975, p. 171). As follows from the terms, the former is used intentionally to create an “artistic image”, whereas the latter is to be treated as a mode of the historical evolution of language to be implemented in an uncontrolled and unintended way. The corresponding products of the two forms of hybridization are language hybrids – the “image of language” and the “historical organic hybrid” (Ibid.). Both types of hybrids are not always predictable and programmable as hinted by the term component “unconscious”, which cannot but speak in favour of the non-compositionality of hybrids (Sanchez-Stockhammer, 2012, p. 135).

In institutional discourse linguistic hybridization is likely to be realized through “voices” which represent different interacting social agents, or, more accurately, “identities set up for those involved” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 5). Since the research material is interdiscursive, let alone intertextual, one can expect it to be polyphonic, i.e. revealing several voices, and dialogical, i.e. involving some relationship set up between them. Given the hybrid character of political media discourse, one can expect it to bring together at least two voices – the voice of the politician and that of the media (Malyuga & Madinyan, 2021).

From the above, it follows that the prerequisites for hybridization as understood by Bakhtin are the presence of **an utterance**, meaning a minimal communicative context, and linguistically marked (hence discernable) **interacting identities**.

In the following tweet the Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau uses the everyday genre of gratitude and wishes to pay respect to the retiring Canadian journalist Pierre Bruneau. Informal vocabulary (*grilled, thanks*) and address (*Pierre*), simple syntax (*It’s the end of an era. <...> Thanks for all of your work, Pierre.*), the use of the second-person singular pronoun (*you, your*) and the tag referring to the TV network where Pierre Bruneau has been working (*@TVANouvelles*) set up an informal relationship between the politician and the journalist, imitating a real-life conversation between old friends:

*It’s the end of an era. For more than four decades, Pierre Bruneau has kept Quebecers informed and up to date from behind the @TVANouvelles desk – and he’s **grilled** me a time or two, as well. **Thanks** for all of **your** work, **Pierre**. I’m wishing **you** nothing but the best in retirement. (@JustinTrudeau, 25.03.2022)*

Another distinctive feature of linguistic hybridization is its ability to be realized at **different language levels**: phonetic, lexical, syntactic, textual, and discursive. The “parents” undergoing hybridization are to belong to one language level, which follows from the biological principle of reproductive compatibility (see the mechanisms of reproductive isolation). For example, in the above cited tweet hybridization covers the lexical level (neutral and informal vocabulary), the syntactic (simple and complex syntax) and the textual one (the genre of a political tweet and retirement gratitude and wishes) (Iriskhanova & Ivashko, 2011; Sanchez-Stockhammer, 2012, p. 135). This kind of classification is only

possible when the “parents” have at least one feature which serves as a basis for comparison, e.g. explicitness – implicitness.

Conclusion

The present article aimed to prove and visualize the interdisciplinary character of linguistic hybridization. Having analyzed a bulk of theoretical data in disciplines both distant and adjacent (biology, philosophy, and linguistics), we provided empirical material represented by hybrid political media texts to illustrate, or visualize, the interdisciplinary basis of hybridization found in language. We managed to arrive at several conclusions regarding the integral components of hybridization as a complex process taken in its most general form, i.e. plausible in any science.

To begin with, there are some facilitators that are common to all the three sciences since they have resulted from metaphorical rethinking of the biological process of hybridization.

First, the sources, or “parents” share certain features but at the same time are discrete in that they possess constant differentiating characters. Most importantly, the “parents” are not isolated from each other hence can freely interact with each other. Their differentiating characteristics should be compatible and comparable so that grounded conclusions about the change in the hybrid can be made.

Second, the process of hybridization is, paradoxically, hybrid because the concept itself does not fit the existing taxonomies and blurs demarcation lines between them. Hybridization is preconditioned by the need for a hybrid, the most obvious being adaptation to a new context. In addition, the “parents” themselves can be clearly hybrid or demonstrate elements of hybridity.

Third, the hybrid inherits the features of its parents, but necessarily has new ones which make it better in some way, e.g. more functional or resilient. The appearance of a new property constitutes the so-called synergetic effect of hybridization. It is worth mentioning that the hybrid, though it shares some of its characteristics with its “parents” is by no means compositional. Moreover, the results of hybridization are not always intentional and predictable, hence the term “unconscious hybridization”.

Linguistic hybridization generally follows all the aforementioned rules but has specific characteristics determined by the distinctive features of language as a system. Hybridization in language is realized

within an utterance and brings together several interacting identities. The effects of linguistic hybridization can be manifested at different language levels, hence are systemic in character.

It is noteworthy that hybridization appears to be even more understudied in linguistics than in biology or philosophy as it often gets overshadowed by adjacent interrelated phenomena such as multimodality, intertextuality, and interdiscursivity. A relevant and promising line of research in this connection could be disambiguation of all the possible linguistic terms involving different varieties of mixing and heterogeneity and placing hybridization within the corresponding terminological nomenclature.

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