

**RLMSEE-2020**  
**The Russian Language in Modern Scientific and Educational Environment**  
**LANGUAGE CONTACTS AND ELIMINATION OF LEXICAL**  
**AND GRAMMATICAL LACUNAE**

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**Abstract**

The article considers the lacunarity concept, clarifies the specific features of lexical and grammatical lacunae in the aspect of linguistic contactology. The purpose of this study is to investigate the lexical and grammatical lacunae elimination, considering lingual contacts. The following methods: comparative-typological method, comparative method, traditional inductive-deductive method, contextual analysis (including the "broad context of the situation"), system-functional method with elements of transformation and substitution, psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic experiments have been used for the research. Lingual lacunae, understood as a significant absence of an element filled in by various means, are a useful construct that makes it possible to focus on the specifics of language means at all its levels, both within the same language and in comparison to different languages. In the "classification grid" of lacunae, the following types of lacunae – lexical-grammatical, grammatical-stylistic, and grammatical-emotive - can be considered. The presence or absence of a particular grammatical category in the language is based on the peculiarities of the linguistic culture as a whole. Grammatical lacunarity is considered in correlation with such "adjacent" categories as implicitness, "hidden" grammatical categories, non-equivalence and zero signs. Lacuna is opposed to zero sign (zero morpheme) globally: zero sign is in a certain sense identical to the sign in general, but lacuna is the absence of a sign that requires elimination. In Russian, the elimination of intra-lingual lacunae is connected, first of all, with gender lacunae. Since meaning is encoded in grammatical categories, their differences in languages reflect the most significant notions for each society.

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## 1. Introduction

The concept of lacunae, although it does not have terminological accuracy, is widely used in the Humanities, including grammar. The term "lacuna" has a wide semantic range (on the one hand, a lacuna is an absent unit in the system, but implied by this system, on the other it is absence, nonexistence, that is, in fact "lacuna" is the same as "lacunarity"). It is obvious that this concept is modified in relation to the system of one language and in relation to two or more languages. It is possible to define implicitness as an obligatory property of any language system, the manifestation degree of such a systemic categorical characteristic can be different and it depends on the specificity of the linguistic categories' structure (presence / absence of verb aspect category, quantitatively different correlation of generic and numerical forms in synchrony and diachrony, etc.). This property of the language system determines that non-equivalent and quasi-equivalent elements are presented in the language system, naturally leading to the formation of different kinds of lacunae. Non-equivalence is a term widely applied in connection with lexical level. Lacuna is opposed to zero sign (zero morpheme) globally: zero sign defines the sign in general, but lacuna is the absence of a sign that requires elimination.

## 2. Problem Statement

### 2.1. The actual and the potential in the Russian language

The opposition between the potential and the actual goes back to the works of Aristotle. In Aristotel's works the potential in philosophy is interpreted as a hidden, implicit possibility of implementing an action, carried out under certain conditions. In the XXI century, a great spectrum of new lexis is being borrowed into Russian from the American version of English, which is connected with globalization processes. The borrowed units often have the "globalism pragmatics", that excludes their artificial replacement with native variants of the designation (under the influence of globalism opponents and massive penetration of "alien" lingual units into the Russian language).

Nevertheless, the large-scale unilateral acceptor tendencies in the Russian language often causes negative evaluations. The use of anglicisms is considered to be the manifestation of verbal aggression, aggressive influence on the recipient (Petrova & Ratsiburskaya, 2011), a means of manipulating public consciousness, "a way to encrypt emptiness" (Yampolskaya in an interview to the newspaper "South Ural Panorama"). It is interesting that the amendments to the Constitution aimed at protecting the Russian language are also associated with protection from excessive foreign language influence, which was stated by many media persons (poet Larisa Rubalskaya, actor Nikita Vysotsky, etc.).

Yet borrowings from English in the Russian language are more often evaluated as a "symptom of a new worldview" (Zhukova, 2011), as well as a natural process of eliminating semantic and pragmatic lacunae. The essence of language contacts determines the fixing of new conceptual areas that need new borrowings to reflect a different conceptualization of reality (Shalifova & Savickaya, 2015, p. 179). The extension of the idea of lacunarity to lexical borrowings makes it possible to evaluate the processes of language contacts from a new point of view. Terminological borrowings (for example, in the sphere of financial and commercial activity, where they are especially numerous) in this approach are not

considered to be the language clogging and spoilage, but a natural and positive phenomenon. This approach removes the emotional intensity of the problem: the lacunae elimination is carried out to the extent and at the pace determined by the needs of the linguistic and cultural community.

Similar processes were observed in the XVIII-XIX centuries, for Russian linguoculture marked by the influence of French and (to a lesser extent) other European languages (Sdobnikov, 2019). All the vocabulary thematic groups got a huge influx of borrowings. This is how integration into European culture has been carried out. And in fact, first of all it was the elimination of conceptual lacunae.

The literature on linguistics is full of information about the mismatched connotations of lexemes and - more broadly- the role of some nominations (and their denotations) in linguoculture, but the same information about the grammatical level is extremely rare. Some verb tense forms in English, in addition to a purely grammatical function, have additional emotive functionality: The Present Continuous Tense in modern practice grammar can add a negative emotional characteristic, expressing irritation or annoyance. It can be stated that English temporal categories have wide connotation application in comparison with the Russian language where grammatical forms are unemotional.

The borrowing of lexemes and phraseological units-sovietisms from Russian to the languages of the countries of people's democracy after World War II became the conceptual lacunae elimination.

### **3. Research Questions**

Modern linguistics is characterized by strong interest in solving the problems caused by the intercultural communication spheres' expansion, and as a result, the change in the essence of language contacts. This change is determined by the simultaneous strengthening of two trends: towards globalization and the preservation of ethnic identity. Both trends are reflected in the Russian language system. On the one hand, language contacts with European languages are becoming closer, for example, English (Monakhov, 2020), which has got the function of a global language, has an impact on the grammatical system of the Russian language, gradually increasing the analyticism manifestations in it. On the other hand, the very specificity of the Russian grammatical system is manifested in the various kinds of lacunae, including lexical and grammatical gaps.

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to consider the problem of lexical and grammatical lacunae elimination, taking into consideration language contacts.

### **5. Research Methods**

The optimal method for studying grammatical lacunae (the least studied part of lacunology) is a comparative typological method used to detect and investigate the inter-lingual correspondences (similarities and differences in equivalent categorical characteristics of language systems). The choice of the comparative method is determined by the necessity to describe the grammatical specifics of the language, taking into consideration the dynamic aspect. Traditionally, the comparative method is mainly an applied method, that, however, does not reduce its significance for solving theoretical problems. In

addition, the traditional inductive-deductive method, contextual analysis (including the "broad context of the situation"), and the system-functional method with the elements of transformation and substitution, as well as psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic experiments were used in this study.

## 6. Findings

The use of the above-mentioned methods makes it possible to confirm the significance of the lacunarity theory for detecting various types of lacunae as an obligatory element of the language system, determining its specificity and allowing to solve theoretically significant problems both of a separate language system and of the various language systems' interaction as a result of changing the essence of language contacts. It is a well-known fact in linguistic contactology, that the concepts "language substratum", "language superstratum", and "language adstratum", reflecting the specifics of lingual contacts are defined. The concepts "language instrat" and "language perstrat" can be used instead, they give more accurate description not only of the lingual contact type, but also interaction degree of languages in a certain communicative sphere. To study the category of lacunarity and the variety of lacunae it seems necessary to appeal to these concepts. If we can speak about the traditional use of the concept "perstrate" in relation to the characteristics of modern lingual contacts of the Russian and English languages, then it is the description of lacunae that makes it possible to refer to all the above-mentioned comparable concepts used in linguistic contactology. Regularities determining the occurrence of a certain type of lacunae in the contacting lingual systems (semantic, lexical, lexico-grammatical, proper grammar, etc.) are supposed to be detected in any language discourse, the typology of which is based on the correlation with the concepts "linguistic substratum" and other. At the same time, this approach makes it possible to identify the type correlations of the lingual situation, lingual contact and the probability degree of lacunae formation. Such correlations appear to provide taking into consideration the type of text / discourse, presenting the lacunae that are formed or fixed in the language system. In our opinion, it is acceptable to consider the mediated language contact as a special type, reflected in specific secondary translation texts/discourses. Consideration of lingual contacts in the aspect of lacunarity makes it possible to determine the typical ways to overcome this characteristic of a language system. The analysis of representative empirical material makes it possible to conclude that there are two main methods: lacunae elimination and lacunae assimilation. Each of the highlighted methods has several varieties, which is determined, as it seems, by the variety of lacunae. Existing typologies and classifications of lacunae quite clearly distinguish semantic, lexical and grammatical lacunae, taking into account their more specific varieties, but it seems necessary to consider lexico-grammatical lacunae as a special type of lacunae, since such lacunae are connected with the absence at the same time of both lexical and grammatical parameters in the contacting language systems. As a rule, lexical and grammatical lacunae are correlated with the concepts of the lexical and grammatical category or functional class for the linguistic units.

If the fact that nowadays the contacts of the Russian and English languages are significantly related to the influence on the language system, and the English language acts predominantly in one of the most popular communicative variants then the so-called American English into consideration, then the mapping system characteristics of these languages gives a reason to speak about formation and fixation of primarily lexical-grammatical lacunae.

These types of lacunae include the units carrying semantics not only of grammatical gender, but also the generic features, for example, in the field of professional employment, as well as the related units of depicting various fields of activity, usually represented by the structurally complex units. In this case, one or both parts can be characterized by the feature of non-declinability specific for the Russian language, and, consequently, can be not only lexical-grammatical lacunae, but also determine the predominant direction of compensatory and assimilative tendencies in the Russian language of the modern communicative situation. The concept, according to which strengthening language contacts lead to an increase in borrowings in one of the language systems, the system of the language-receiver on a certain sociolinguistic principle in some degree inferior to the system of a language-sender is traditional. Most researchers tend to view the closely related Russian language and the American version of English in the communicative situation of the XXI century, on the grounds that the English language as a whole and its version possess the function of global languages. It seems to us that it is necessary to take into consideration not only the process of borrowing, but the process of forming, fixing and preserving lacunae in the contacting language systems opposite to it, since the lacunae is not a negative characteristic of a language system, but reflects one of the most important trends in the development of any language system, for example Russian – the preservation of ethnic identity, that is its linguocultural, functional, structural and semantic peculiarities.

The voids' elimination in one language has creative potential, which nevertheless can be omitted or missed when translating these eliminations into another language. Participles can be actively involved into this process: *to toast – the toasted*, that is not usual for the Russian grammar, but highlights the creativity, and this deviation can be comprehended correctly. This form presents that the Russian grammatical system has a great potential and that ordinary native speakers feel these opportunities and use them. This example clearly illustrates the difference between regular eliminations and unproductive deviated formations, only indicating a blurring of normative thresholds and a general decline in literacy and speech culture (Khazagerov, 2018). Regular elimination of lacunae is a growth point of new phenomena, a system-forming factor, under the influence of which the boundaries of the system itself expand.

For the European languages with the category of grammatical gender, gender asymmetry is typical, it is reflected in the privative generic opposition of anthroponyms and partly zoonyms (except epicenes). Intra-lingual lacunarity (the absence of casual and normative pair correlates of the feminine gender) is in those cases when the general idea of the class as a whole is important and there is no need to overcome standard, averageness or depersonalization. Languages with a developed gender category differ significantly in terms of their ability to form correlative suffix pairs. The profession and occupation of a person are implemented in the sphere of nominations mainly in grammatical forms of the masculine gender, while the quantitative characteristics of women's employment in a particular field of activity do not necessarily determine the presence or possibility of the generic correlate existence fixed in the language system (Zhao, 2018).

In recent decades, the Russian language system has fixed a significant number of mostly borrowed units of professional categories (jobber, manager, realtor, etc.) (Brusenskaya & Kulikova, 2018; Mackenzie, 2018). Such categories defined both new areas of activity and represent a generalized

nomination for professional employment. The growth of such categories, in our opinion, is determined not only by the general trends of borrowing, but also by the closer language contacts (Gambier, 2019; Guinda, 2018; Locher & Larina, 2019; Tzanne & Sifianou, 2019). The qualitative and quantitative characteristics of such categories do not directly affect the generic correlates' formation in the language system. Overcoming gender-oriented lexical and grammatical lacunarity in this area often occurs under the influence of ideas of political correctness (compare: elimination of the so-called sexist lexis from dictionaries) (Cavaliere, 2018; Duskaeva, 2020; Kulikova et al., 2019; Latifi & Nematzadeh, 2019; Mavrigiannaki, 2020; Mugford, 2020).

The problem of intra-lingual lacunarity is related to a large-scale problem that concerns the position of the Russian language in the modern world. At the present stage world lingual sphere changes itself, in particular, in terms of the various languages' status, including Russian (Shaklein & Mamontov, 2019), and this is not only due to mass borrowings into Russian (Alyunina & Nagel, 2020) from the American version of English.

It is much more dramatic that the Russian language ceases to form new units based on its own root formants and prefers to borrow them even with preserving its own ways of word formation and fixing the derivatives. It is important to explore everything that contributes to the new words' emergence, to stimulate new word-making, form-making, and language creativity. We believe that the study of lacunarity as a systemic phenomenon can also contribute to this national task. The representative empirical material collected by us and based on the literary and media texts' analysis was used in the psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic experiments. Based on the developed questionnaire and a set of traditional methods for such experiments, for example, the analysis of the response to a specific stimulus, not only the presence of grammatical lacunae, but also the perception regularities of such units as lacunarity by the native speakers have been detected, taking into account their belonging to a specific society, in particular, generational or generic one. The units similar to those indicated above were chosen as stimulus (*the toasted, the toasted drinks to the bottom* and so on), as well as systemic and asystemic grammatical deviations. In the experiment, at each stage, the students of the Rostov State University of Economics were involved as the respondents, and master's students were involved as a control group of the respondents to verify the results. This choice corresponds to the principles of the experiment, as this choice makes it possible to accurately rank the groups by age, but at the same time ensures the groups' uniformity, since students are the representatives of the same society. In contrast to many authors (Savickij, 2013; Savickaya, 2014; Savickaya, 2015), we believe that it is correct to isolate two types of lacunae – intra-lingual and inter-lingual lacunae, which are not opposed essentially, but differ only in detection way. Relativity is their unifying ontological feature. During the investigation, the following "classification grid" was clarified: the opposition of lexical-grammatical, grammatical-stylistic, and grammatical-emotive lacunae is the most relevant.

Lexical and grammatical lacunae are significant for considering the determinative relations between language and consciousness. The presence or absence of a particular grammatical category in the language is based on the peculiarities of the linguistic culture as a whole. The reasons for the inter-lingual grammatical lacunae formation are related to the fact that, for example, the presence or absence of the *pluralia tantum* category is explained by the different types of plurals (elliptical or amplifying ones) in

the formation of the number category; many types of grammatical lacunae were formed as a result of a large-scale process of analyzation of the languages in the European standard. As for intra-lingual lacunae, many of them (for example, related to the categories of gender, tense) are due to social reasons. The introduction of the concepts "lexical-grammatical lacuna", "lacuna elimination", "lacuna assimilation" in the aspect of the lingual contacts theory makes it possible to clarify the status of intra-lingual lacunae, taking into consideration the correlation with the concepts of implicitness, non-equivalence and a zero sign. The term "non-equivalence" is traditionally used only in the sphere of lexis and phraseology, but it can be used quite successfully in the field of grammar, since it makes it possible to distinguish between the concepts of "lacuna" and "zero sign": a lacuna implies the absence of any sign, that is, the formally embodied non-equivalence, and the concept of a zero sign is integrated in the semiotic system oppositely, a correlation "zero sign - any sign" is formed.

## 7. Conclusion

Lacunarity investigation at the text level (Belyak, 2018) makes it possible to determine the specifics of lexical and grammatical borrowings in the modern communicative situation, connected with the change of the lingual contacts' essence. Lexical and grammatical lacunae act as special markers of specific linguocultural concepts, which, however, can be interpreted and accepted by a particular linguistic culture due to increased language contacts, determined by the globalization trend.

Thus, the strengthening of language contacts naturally needs the elimination of intra-lingual lacunae in general, and lexical and grammatical ones in particular. A significant part of lexical and grammatical lacunae is gender-oriented. The gender asymmetry typical for the European languages is represented in the forms opposed by gender, while the intra-lingual lacunarity, that is, the non-equivalence of the generic form, taking into consideration the common use and normative use, is fixed and preserved by the language system if there is no need to overcome the standard or implement the principle of language creativity. Since grammatical categories are encoded with meaning, their differences in languages (i.e., lexical and grammatical lacunarity) reflect the most significant notions for each society. It is promising to use the results of the research in lexicographic practice, for example, in forming a new generation of a dictionary - a dictionary of lexical, lexical-grammatical and grammatical lacunae. The dictionary of a new generation should consider and reflect not only the narrow aspects of a language, but also describe the linguocultural features of one or two or more interacting linguistic cultures.

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