



PLEONASM IN RUSSIAN: EVOLUTION AND MODERN RESEARCH APPROACHES

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the study of the phenomenon of pleonasm in the Russian language, its history and modern approaches to its analysis. The article considers the evolution of the concept of "pleonasm" from ancient rhetorical treatises to modern linguistic studies. The article analyzes the attitude to pleonasm in Russian rhetorics of the XVIII century, works of linguists of the XIX century (F. I. Buslaev, A. A. Potebni), as well as in modern lexicographic and encyclopedic sources. The author identifies the main types of pleonasm (accumulation of synonyms, paired naming, redundant words) and considers the criteria for its normativity. Special attention is paid to the correlation between pleonasm and tautology, as well as its stylistic and pragmatic functions in modern Russian.

Keywords: Pleonasm, tautology, language redundancy, rhetoric, lexical norm, stylistics, cognitive linguistics, normativity, definition.

Introduction

The term "pleonasm" comes from the ancient Greek *πλεονασμός*, which literally means "excess" or "excess". This concept is traditionally associated with redundancy in the language, which leads to verbosity [13, p.325]. Historical analysis shows that the phenomenon of pleonasm has always caused discussions in rhetoric. Even in antiquity, a prominent place in critical assessments of pleonasm was occupied by such rhetoricians as Quintilian, Donatus, and Diomedes, who perceived it as a stylistic error, making it heavier and weakening the expressiveness of speech. However, Dionysius of Halicarnassus saw



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pleonasm as a means of enriching the text: allegedly redundant elements could give speech expressiveness, rhythm and persuasiveness, which was impossible in laconic forms [9, p. 680]. Despite the past millennia, this duality in the perception of pleonasm persists today. On the one hand, it can be perceived as unnecessary and reduces the effectiveness of the statement. On the other hand, in certain contexts, redundancy becomes a stylistic device that enhances the expressiveness of speech. Thus, the evaluation of pleonasm remains an open question in modern linguistics.

The perception of pleonasm in Russian rhetoric of the XVIII century was formed in the context of the theory of figures of speech, where it was considered as a means of expression, and not solely as a stylistic error. Georgy Danilevsky in his work "Rhetoric" characterizes pleonasm as a "verbal excess" [10, p. 60], which indicates its close connection with the phenomenon of speech redundancy. In the educational materials of this period, such as "Instructions on rhetoric on the examples of Latin authors" (1746) and "A course of lectures on rhetoric given at the Nizhny Novgorod Seminary" (1766), pleonasm is presented as a figure of speech that does not coincide with the figures of thought, and is defined as the process of "adding words" [8, p. 188]. However, despite its status as a rhetorical device, its potential shortcomings were already noted during this period. Redundancy could not so much adorn the statement as overload it, reducing the expressiveness of the text. For this reason, the authors of rhetorical treatises warned against excessive accumulation of synonyms and recommended moderate use of pleonastic constructions [11, p. 34]. Consequently, in the eighteenth century, pleonasm was perceived as a twofold phenomenon: on the one hand, it could enhance the expressiveness of speech, on the other – if poorly applied, it turned into a stylistic flaw.

In the 19th century, the term "pleonasm" was not widely used in the works of Russian linguists. In the works of F. I. Buslaev, there is no direct use of this term, but he classified the combination of synonyms as "a form of tautology, calling it "similarity" [3, p.180]. In turn, A. A. Potebnya understood tautology in a broader context, including stable phrases based on semantic doubling, which is illustrated by examples: "army-strength, honor-praise, honor-glory" [12, p.226]. In his research, he focused not only on lexical duplication, but also on the artistic



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significance of such constructions in texts, especially in folklore. The scientist noted that in folk epics, speech redundancy is not a stylistic vice, but, on the contrary, performs an important expressive function: "He whistled at the top of his whistle..."-such forms enhance expressiveness and create a special rhythmic and melodic structure of the utterance.

Analysis of the works of linguists of the XIX century shows that at that time pleonasm was perceived as a complex and heterogeneous linguistic phenomenon consisting of several levels of redundancy. First of all, the emphasis was placed on combinations of synonyms that generate semantic redundancy, but often increase the expressiveness of speech. The second type was manifested in the form of paired names, such as "path-road" or "sadness-melancholy", which, in addition to their stylistic function, contributed to clarifying or expanding the semantic content of statements. In the light of modern research, it is revealed that these speech constructs not only reflect the evolution of language norms, but also play a key role in the formation of cognitive and communicative strategies, which emphasizes the need for further interdisciplinary study of the phenomenon of pleonasm. The third type of pleonasm included really superfluous words that did not add a new meaning to the utterance. Over time, pleonastic constructions began to include another specific type of redundancy-combinations of words of native and borrowed origin with the same meaning, for example, advance in advance or exhibit sample. These transformational processes in the understanding of pleonasm indicate its complex linguistic nature and the dynamic development of the concept of redundancy in the Russian language

The history of pleonasm in the Russian language is rooted in ancient rhetoric, where this phenomenon has already caused ambiguous assessments: some considered it a stylistic flaw, others-an expressive means. However, the study of pleonasm in Russian linguistics began in the XIX century, but until now this phenomenon remains the subject of discussion. Linguists continue to face a number of unresolved questions regarding its place in the modern language system. One of the key problems is the distinction between pleonasm and tautology: although both phenomena are associated with redundancy, their boundaries remain blurred. The issue of classification of pleonasm also remains relevant, since it manifests itself at different levels of the language - from lexical



to grammatical. In addition, there is a problem of normativity: some pleonastic constructions are fixed in the language and are perceived as natural, while others are considered stylistically unsuccessful or erroneous. In search of solutions to these questions, linguists continue to study the mechanisms of pleonasm functioning in speech, its influence on the expressiveness of the text and its perception by native speakers.

Modern research confirms that pleonasm can perform important artistic functions, especially in a poetic and artistic text. E. A. Yashina considers pleonasm as a means of creating an alogism, while its appearance is often associated with tautology [17, p. 101]. R.N. Yusubova focuses on the fact that in poetic speech pleonasm contributes to the strengthening of alogism. emotional and expressive effect, helping the author to move from a simple image to a figurative expression of thought [16, p. 176]. The researcher emphasizes that the use of redundant constructions does not create ambiguity, but, on the contrary, makes the meaning of the utterance more distinct, increasing its expressiveness. Thus, in artistic speech, pleonasm is not perceived as a stylistic error, but becomes a tool for transmitting complex meanings, emotional color, and depth of imaginative thinking.

The question of the semantic nature of pleonasm is considered by Er.I. Khan-Pira, who distinguishes two types of this phenomenon — true and imaginary pleonasms. According to the researcher, imaginary pleonasms, such as *writing clerk* or *government official*, have lost their redundancy over time. This is due to changes in the semantics of their components and the influence of extralinguistic factors, which led to their consolidation in the language as normative expressions. In contrast, true pleonasms, such as *folk folklore* or *illegal gangs*, retain their redundancy, since the semantic components in their composition duplicate each other [15, p. 45]. Thus, the analysis of pleonasm from the point of view of its semantic features requires taking into account not only the structural characteristics of the expression, but also the historical evolution of its meanings, as well as changes in language norms in connection with social and cultural processes.

The pragmatic aspect of studying pleonasm is especially relevant in the study of its influence on speech perception. Thus, E. G. Soboleva considers



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"*hyperpleonasticity* as a specific characteristic of advertising texts that helps to increase the impact on the audience" [14, pp. 72-77]. In this context, speech redundancy becomes not a disadvantage, but a tool for manipulating attention, emphasizing key aspects of the advertising message. In turn, T. G. Zueva analyzes the use of pleonasm in TV and radio journalism, identifying the reasons for its prevalence in media texts [6, p. 42]. Mass media often use redundant constructions to enhance expressiveness, attract the attention of viewers and listeners, as well as to create intonation and rhythmic structure of speech. Thus, in pragmatic terms, pleonasm is no longer perceived solely as a stylistic error, but is considered as a deliberate technique that plays a significant role in mass communication.

The cognitive approach to the study of pleonasm allows us to consider it not only as a structural redundancy, but also as a means of semantic deployment of information. O. A. Zaits defines pleonasms as "*explicative combinations* in which the meaning of one part partially duplicates the meaning of another" [5, p.25]. The author of the dissertation conducts a comprehensive study of the semantic and pragmatic properties of pleonasm and tautology, coming to the conclusion that these phenomena can perform many *illocutionary functions* in speech. Pleonasm can serve as a tool for euphemization, evaluation, creating quasi-communicative constructions, expressing politeness, as well as simplifying the perception of information to save the cognitive resources of the speaker and listener [5, p.149-150]. According to the approach of cognitive linguistics, pleonasm is considered not as an elementary stylistic device, but as a complex mechanism for transmitting meaning, allowing you to adapt information to specific communication goals.

In her work, Isabella Kozera suggests distributional analysis as the most effective methodological tool for studying pleonasm in the Russian language. In her opinion, many pleonastic constructions lose their negative assessment of redundancy, since their semantic function is determined by a specific context and the nature of lexical compatibility [7, p. 167]. This means that pleonastic constructions can have a stable use due to the regularities of word distribution in speech structures. Therefore, distributional analysis allows us not only to identify



the systemic features of pleonasm, but also to explain their normativity or stylistic justification in specific contexts.

The psycholinguistic aspect of studying pleonasm is considered in the works of A. N. Burukhin, who comes to the conclusion that pleonasm in the individual lexicon performs the same function as any other word, acting as a mediator between language units and the cognitive picture of the human world [2, p.18]. This means that redundant constructs can not only affect the perception of information, but also play a role in organizing thinking and conceptualizing reality.

In addition, modern linguistics is actively developing applied research on pleonasm. In particular, N. A. Belova studies the ways of their translation, analyzing the mechanisms of transferring redundant constructions in other languages [1, pp. 127-132]. In turn, M. N. Esakova examines the trends in the use of pleonasm in modern Russian, emphasizing their significance for the training of translators [4, p. 24]. Thus, pleonasm becomes not only an object of theoretical analysis, but also an important element of applied linguistics, which is important for interlingual communication and cognitive processes.

The analysis of existing approaches to the study of pleonasm in Russian linguistics allows us to identify several key conclusions. First, the study of this phenomenon goes back to ancient rhetoric, where pleonasm was interpreted as a stylistic figure that causes ambiguous assessments. Second, in the 19th century, Russian linguists, such as F. I. Buslaev, considered pleonasm as a kind of tautology, using the term *podobologie* to denote a combination of synonyms. Subsequently, in a number of studies, there is a confusion of the concepts of tautology and pleonasm, which is due to the lack of clear criteria for their differentiation.

The third important aspect is the duality of evaluating pleonasm: it is perceived as a manifestation of linguistic redundancy, but at the same time it can perform an expressive function. Modern studies of pleonasm are conducted in various linguistic areas—from structural-semantic and pragmatic to cognitive and psycholinguistic. However, there are still no comprehensive studies covering all aspects of this phenomenon in the Russian language. However, despite the active study of pleonasm by Russian linguists, no unified approach to its classification



and definition has been developed. This indicates the need for further in-depth analysis, taking into account both the historical evolution of pleonasm and its current functioning in various styles and discourses.

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