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The New English [N [N]] Construction in the Slavic Languages, and Why the Baltic Languages Don't Have It

0. Introduction[1]

Since 1990, the Slavic and Baltic languages, as well as the other languages of Central and Eastern Europe, have succumbed to a major influx of English lexical borrowings that continues to grow. The Slavic languages have also undergone a more remarkable phenomenon: the borrowing of an English morphosyntactic *construction*, in which the NP consists of an English quali-fying noun, without adjectival morphemes, followed by a head noun, as in the English phrase 'action hero'. This open compound construction type will be referred to here as '[N[N]]'.

What is particularly interesting about the influx of [N[N]] constructions into the Slavic languages[2] is that they have not just borrowed English [N[N]] phrases, but have individually adopted the construction type itself, to all appearances independently of each other, in exactly the same way. Each of the Slavic languages, with the possible exception of Sorbian, have ad-opted the English [N[N]] construction as what Mossop [2007] has referred to as a 'hybrid borrowing'. That is, in borrowing an English [N[N]] phrase, each of the Slavic languages preserves the English qualifying noun as an indeclinable modifier, without adding the morphologically required Slavic adjectival suffix and agreement marker, and replaces the English head noun with its pre-existing equivalent in the language; e.g. Bulgarian *ekšŭn geroj* 'action hero', Russian *biznes-škola* 'business school', Macedonian *target grupa* 'target group' [Ǵurkova 2008], Polish *tenis nauka* 'tennis lessons' [Chłopicki 2007, 119], Croatian *shopping centar* 'shopping center' (Lidija Cvikić, pers. comm., Nov. 2009), Serbian *float-staklo* 'float glass' (Stephen Dickey, pers. comm., Dec. 1, 2009), Slovene *fitnes pripomočki* 'fitness gear' (Jelena Konickaja, pers. comm., July 25, 2011).The pre-existing head noun

is in most cases an earlier borrowing from a language other than English, usually French or German.

The hybrid-borrowing [N[N]] construction is used productively in Slavic languages to create new NPs, even though it violates fundamental Slavic morphological and morphosyntactic rules. This raises two questions: why the Slavic languages have taken the hybrid borrowing approach instead of borrowing English [N[N]] phrases in their entirety, or adding an adjectival suffix and gender/number/case ending to the English qualifying noun; and why the [N[N]] construction has been accepted into all these languages[3]. This article proposes hypotheses to answer both questions.

1. Motivations for using hybrid [N[N]]'s over full English [N[N]]'s

Clearly the predominant factor behind the adoption of the English [N[N]] construction is the prestige value of English as the international language of the EU, and its association with American culture. This sociolinguistic fact does not, however, explain in itself why speakers have chosen to form hybrid-borrowing [N[N]] constructions rather than simply adopting the original English [N[N]] phrases[4].

An answer likely lies in the fact that most English nouns are treated as grammatically masculine in Slavic languages because they end in a consonant, like Slavic masculine nominative singular nouns, which are bare stems. Indeed, influx of new English borrowings has somewhat affected the ratio of masculine vs. feminine and neuter nouns, particularly with respect to abstract nouns, which are traditionally associated primarily with the neuter and feminine case forms and not the masculine. The substitution of a pre-existing head noun in the language for the English head noun in an [N[N]] construction helps prevent an excess accumulation of borrowing doublets (e.g. *figura* vs. English *figjur*), and in doing so, it also slows down the tidal wave of new masculine-declension borrowings from English. This may well be a major reason behind the adoption into the Slavic languages of the hybrid borrowing construction rather than full English [N[N]]'s like *internet akaunt*, which are much rarer.

A second reason is that the [N[N]] construction is often less unwieldy than attempts to translate the original English phrase, which sometimes require a definition rather than a translation. This is particularly true of [N[N]]'s like attested Bulgarian *bingo maniak* 'bingo mania' or the Bulgarian cosmetic term *piling efekt* 'peeling effect', which do not lend themselves well to adjectival or prepositional phrases in Slavic languages. The formation of a Slavic adjective *bingoen* or *bingovski* for *bingo* would be meaningless in Bulgarian, as the adjective form would imply that the more important information in the phrase is 'maniac', and that a feature of that particular maniac is some-

how bingo (i.e. a bingo maniac rather than some other sort of maniac). Nor does *maniak za bingo* 'a maniac about/for bingo' convey the meaning of the English original, because it does not indicate that the relationship between bingo and the referent of 'maniac' is an agent-object relationship: i.e. the bingo maniac is a fanatical bingo player, not simply a fan of the game. The hybrid-borrowed [N[N]] construction provides a concise way to convey in the speaker's own language the concept behind the original English [N[N]], and it has the advantage of allowing productive use of the English qualifier noun together with other Bulgarian head nouns to form new phrases by analogy, particularly metaphorical ones: an example of this might be Bulgarian *bŭndži maniak* 'bunjee/bunjee-jumping maniac', formed by analogy from attested *bingo maniac.*

Considering these advantages, it is not surprising that use of the construction has been extended to relationships that *can* be conveyed with a derived Slavic adjective: note, for example, the competing Bulgarian doublets *džaz/ džazova pevica* 'jazz singer (fem.)'[5].

2. Precedents for Slavic hybrid-borrowing [N[N]] constructions

This still leaves the question of how speakers have been able to adopt a construction that violates the structural rules of their native language so fundamentally. Historical precedents, however, do exist across the Slavic languages for the adoption of an indeclinable qualifying noun followed by a head noun. Precedents that have been proposed in the literature are of two types (see, for example, [Grannes 1980, 10]):

(a) apposition phrases: e.g. Rus. *žar-ptica*, *press-centr*, in which the first noun is indeclinable;

(b) borrowed indeclinable nouns and adjectives: e.g. Rus. *kofe* 'coffee', Bulg. *inat* 'stubborn'.

In Bulgarian and Macedonian, English hybrid-borrowing [N[N]]'s also have been preceded for centuries in borrowed Turkish [N[N]] constructions consisting of an unsuffixed qualifying noun followed by a suffixed or unsuffixed head noun: e.g. Bulg. *škembe čorba* (< Turk. *şkembe čorba-sı*) 'tripe soup'(example courtesy of Kjetil Rå Hauge, pers. comm., March 25, 2011; [Grannes 1980, 11]). The Turkish NP containing a possessive suffix on the head noun is known as the Turkish *izafet* construction; however, as shown in the example here, the possessive suffix on the head noun is often dropped in Bulgarian and Macedonian, erasing the distinction in form between the two Turkish construction types[6]. Grannes noted that the number of Turkish [N[N]] borrowings into Macedonian in particular is very high [1980, 15–16].

Bulgarian and Macedonian also, however, have a precedent for hybrid English borrowed [N[N]] constructions in a well-established class of high-frequency constructions that I will refer to as 'partitive category constructions': that is, open noun compounds in which the first of two nouns represents a quantity unit or a qualitative category to which the referent of the second noun belongs. Noun phrases of this type in the other Slavic languages, and in English, require a genitive morpheme (a case inflectional morpheme or, in English, the preposition 'of') in order to mark the relationship between the two nouns, e.g. English 'a cup of coffee', 'a type of party'. In Bulgarian and Macedonian, however, the two nouns appear together in the same configuration as an [N[N]] construction, without any case marker: e.g. Bulg. *čaša kafe* 'cup of coffee' (lit. 'cup coffee'), *ot maj mesec* 'since May' (lit. 'from May month'), *kazusŭt Libija* 'the case of Libya' (lit. 'the case Libya', *Standart* Aug. 23, 2011, p. 12); Mac. *šiše vino* 'bottle of wine' (lit. 'bottle wine'), *tegla ajvar* 'a jar of ajvar' (lit. 'jar ajvar')[7]. Partitive category constructions differ from prototypical [N[N]] constructions in that the relationship between the two nouns is not clearly that of qualifier and head noun. If anything, the first, category noun can be viewed as the head noun, and the second, descriptor noun as a qualifier. Nonetheless, with respect to the parsing task it imposed on speakers, this widespread construction type clearly is the most similar to the hybrid [N[N]] constructions in the parsing demands it imposes on the listener/reader.

Historical precedent in itself still does not account, however, for the reasons why the very first [N[N]]-type constructions that entered into the Slavic languages — including the common partitive category constructions in Bulgarian and Macedonian — were not immediately rejected. For this we must look to the morphological structure of the noun and adjective systems in the Slavic languages.

3. Structural motivations for [N[N]]'s in Bulgarian and Macedonian

It can be argued that the primary reason why Bulgarian and Macedonian have adopted English hybrid-borrowing [N[N]]'s and, in the past, the indeclinable *izafet* constructions and partitive category constructions, is because Bulgarian and Macedonian are the only Slavic languages with an analytical case system, which leaves them with fewer morphological inflectional endings on adjectives and nouns. But Bulgarian and Macedonian nouns and adjectives contain gender/number inflections, and their adjectives contain adjectival suffixes, so an absence of case endings alone does not fully explain the phenomon; nor does it explain why the other Slavic languages, which do have case inflections, have adopted hybrid-borrowing [N[N]]'s. The most

likely reason for the borrowing of the [N[N]] construction into the Slavic lan-
guages can be determined by comparing the noun and adjective paradigms
of the modern standard Slavic languages with those of the modern Baltic
languages, Lithuanian and Latvian.

4. Baltic vs. Slavic

Neither modern Lithuanian nor modern Latvian permits hybrid-borrowed
[N[N]]'s: none is attested in either language. Instead, the English qualify-
ing noun is transformed into adjectives through the right-attachment of a
native Baltic adjectival suffix (e.g. -*in*-), followed by a gender/number/case
inflectional suffix that agrees with the head noun, as Lithuanian fem. nom.
sg. *internet-in-ė parduotuvė* 'Internet store'[8]. Moreover, as in English, Lithu-
anian and Latvian can alternatively use a qualifying noun in the genitive case
form instead of an adjective form derived from the noun, e.g. Lith. *internet-o
adresas*, Latv. *internet-a adrese* 'Internet address'.

Indeed, with the exception of borrowed nouns and adjectives that end
in *a*, which is the form of one of the feminine nominative singular declen-
sional endings, and those that end in another vowel, which are treated as
indeclinables, *all* borrowed nouns, whether qualifying or head nouns, receive
the masculine nominative singular ending (Lithuanian -*as*, Latvian -*s*) and
its counterparts in the language's case paradigm. Thus it can be said that
the two modern Baltic languages are much more inflection-driven than the
Slavic languages, and the motivation behind this drive provides the answer
to why the modern Slavic languages accept and even productively create new
[N[N]]'s, but the modern Baltic languages do not.

The key lies in the fact that the Lithuanian and Latvian noun and adjective
paradigms contain *no bare-stem forms*[9], with the exception of the vocative
singular in Latvian and a very few borrowed nouns and adjectives in both
languages that end in a vowel other than *a*. As in Latin, Greek, and Proto-
Indoeuropean ('PIE'), among other languages, the masculine nominative sin-
gular form in the Baltic languages is a suffix, not a zero-ending as in modern
Slavic languages[10].

Hence English-borrowed nouns ending in a consonant, as most of them
do, are interpreted as *bare-stem* masculines in Slavic: they receive no inflec-
tional suffix in the nominative case because modern Slavic masculine sin-
gular noun forms have no suffix. Thus the appearance of a noun without an
inflectional suffix even in qualifying position is less jarring to native Slavic
speakers than it is to native Baltic speakers, whose grammar does not include
the concept of a bare-stem noun.

Here is where the analytic case system likely is influential in the adoption of hybrid-borrowed [N[N]] constructions into Bulgarian and Macedonian as unhyphenated open compounds[11]. The influence is not in the analytic case paradigm *per se*, but in the fact that bare-stem masculine singular noun forms occur much more frequently in Bulgarian and Macedonian than in any of the other Slavic languages because bare-stem forms are the *only* forms in which indefinite masculine singular nouns occur, whereas they occur in bare-stem form in the other Slavic languages only in the nominative case. Moreover, Bulgarian and Macedonian, like Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian and Slovene, also have bare-stem masculine singular attributive adjectives[12], and there too, because Bulgarian and Macedonian do not add case inflections to adjectives, the indefinite masculine singular adjective form is usually found as a bare stem. Since almost all English noun borrowings are perceived as bare-stem masculine singulars, the proliferation of masculine singular bare-stem adjective and noun forms in Bulgarian and Macedonian should make it easier for native speakers to accept English nouns in adjective position as true qualifiers, even in the absence of an adjectival suffix, and even in syntactic environments where an overt case inflection is required in other Slavic languages.

5. Conclusion

In summary, the adoption into the Slavic languages of the English-borrowed [N[N]] construction in hybrid-borrowed form can be explained by a combination of factors. Syntactically, the construction allows for a concise conveyance of the semantico-syntactic relationship represented in the original English [N[N]] construction, and because it is not a frozen English phrase, it can be used productively with a variety of head nouns to create new metaphors and terms within the adopting language. The construction's violation of Slavic inflectional morphology rules is mitigated by historical precedents of similar constructions in the Slavic languages (appositions, blends, and earlier foreign borrowings). And, most importantly, the indeclinable English qualifying noun in the [N[N]] is acceptable to speakers on a cognitive level because it is interpreted morphologically as a bare-stem masculine singular noun, which is the dictionary form of the vast majority of masculine singular nouns in all the Slavic languages, as well as the dictionary form of most masculine singular indefinite adjectives in Bulgarian and Macedonian.

At this point, a little more than 20 years after the introduction of hybrid-borrowed [N[N]]'s into the Slavic languages, it is too early to predict whether the construction will continue to be productive, or whether it is a historical flash in the pan that will die out eventually together with a loss of cachet associated with English. Even if it proves to be a short-lived phenomenon, how-

ever, the case of the hybrid-borrowed [N[N]] in Slavic languages provides a valuable precedent for cognitive study of the motivations and processes behind the adoption, and productivity, of foreign grammatical constructions that violate the basic structural rules of the adopting language.

Notes

[1] This short article summarizes two sections that I have written for a more extensive and comprehensive co-authored article on new hybrid-borrowing [N[N]] constructions in Bulgarian and Russian [Vakareliyska and Kapatsinski]. The larger article contains many more examples of [N[N]] constructions in both languages, and covers additional cognitive linguistics issues involving the productivity of [N[N]]'s in the Slavic languages.

[2.] For example, the new Bulgarian dictionary of neologisms [Perniška et al. 2010] lists c. 580 attested [N[N]] constructions.

[3.] Some 'wholesale' borrowings of English [N[N]] phrases do occur in Slavic languages (e.g. Bulgarian *feŭrplej* 'fair play'), but they are greatly outnumbered by hybridborrowing [N[N]] constructions. Many English modifier nouns coexist in morphologically correct Slavic counterparts, for example Bulgarian *medija/medien plejŭr* 'media player', *rouming uslugite* 'the roaming services'/*roumingovi mobilni uslugi* 'roaming mobile services' [Perniška et al. 2010], and some English modifier nouns exist only in Slavic adjectival form: e.g. *kabelna televizija* 'cable television' *kabelen operator* 'cable operator' (ibid.). For discussion of the pattern behind the distribution of indeclinable English-borrowed modifier nouns and their Slavicized adjective counterparts, see [Vakareliyska and Kapatsinski].

[4] Full English [N[N]] phrases have been adopted into the Slavic languages, particularly technical terms, but these are far less frequent than hybrid-borrowing [N[N]]'s. For examples of full English [N[N]] borrowings, see [Vakareliyska and Kapatsinski].

[5] Slavic adjectival forms of new English qualifying nouns are still being created in all the Slavic languages, and some English qualifying nouns are attested so far only in Slavicized adjectival forms (e.g. Bulgarian adjective *esemes-en*, derived from the English abbreviation SMS, which currently is attested only as an independent noun in Bulgarian), while others have doublets (e.g. Bulgarian *džendŭr/džendŭr-n-i izsledvanija* 'gender studies').

[6] For a fuller discussion of the two Turkish construction types, and of the range of historical precedents in Bulgarian and Russian, see [Vakareliyska and Kapatsinski].

[7] I am grateful to Aleksandra Ǵurkova for the Macedonian examples (pers. comm., Oct. 27, 2011).

[8] I am indebted to an anonymous reviewer for this example and the two examples in the following sentence.

[9] Lithuanian also has no bare-stem verb forms.

[10] For a sociolinguistic explanation of why Bulgarian appears to outstrip Macedonian in the number of attested [N[N]]'s, see [Vakareliyska and Kapatsinski].

[11] The adjectival suffix *-sk-* in these languages does require a masculine singular marker (*-i*), but the more common adjectival suffix *-n* does not have an overt inflectional marker for the masculine singular form.

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Новая английская конструкция типа [N [N]] в славянских языках и причины ее отсутсвия в балтийских языках

Наряду с потоком английских лексических заимствований, хлынувшим в славянские языки после 1990 г., в них появилось не свойственное славянским языкам явление — атрибутивные словосочетания, в которых определяемому имени существительному предшествует определяющее имя существительное, подобное английской конструкции типа [N [N]], ср. *jazz singer* и *action figure*. В этой конструкции, заимствованной независимо друг от друга всеми славянскими языками, определяемое имя представляет собой субстантив — заимствование, вошедшее в язык ранее и, как правило, не через английский язык, а определяющим существительным является английский субстантив в нетрансформированной английской морфологической форме, без суффикса, переводящего субстантив в прилагательное, и без окончания, напр.: болг. *джаз певец* или *екшън фигура*. Такие определительные конструкции довольно частотны и продуктивны, несмотря на то, что отсутствие прилагательного и флексии в определительной конструкции со вторым определяемым словом представляет собой значительное нарушение основных славянских морфологических и морфосинтаксических правил. В статье предлагаются объяснения (с учетом исторической перспективы) того факта, что болгарский (и, вероятно, македонский) язык опережает другие славянские языки по частотности и продуктивности рассматриваемой конструкции, а также когнитивные основания, по которым славянские языки эту конструкцию допускают, несмотря на трудности усвоения. Обращается внимание на отличие в этом отношении родственных современных балтийских языков.