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KARAMZIN AS THE CREATOR OF A FRENCH CULTURE OF SENSIBILITY IN THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the language of intimate sentiment in Russian, which endowed the language with expressiveness and psychological depth. The vocabulary of intimacy and personal experience is associated with N. M. Karamzin, the founder of Russian sentimentalism. Karamzin's work and that of his followers contributed to a substantial renewal of the literary language, an expansion of its expressive potential, and the formation of new principles governing the linguistic organization of literary texts.

KEYWORDS: *Classicism, Sentimentalism, Gallicisms, Gallomania, Russian Language, Russian Literature.*

INTRODUCTION

Classicism and sentimentalism indicate the assimilation of the French literary tradition. While classicism borrowed primarily a system of concepts related to art and state ideology, late-eighteenth-century sentimentalism introduced an entirely different lexical domain – the vocabulary of feelings and emotions. It developed under the influence of J.-J. Rousseau's ideas, set out in *Julie, or the New Heloise* and *Émile*, in which the value of individuality and the human inner world came to the fore (Rousseau, 1969, p. 270).

Thus, while the classicist tradition shaped the language of "high" art and state rhetoric, sentimentalism created a vocabulary of intimacy and personal experience. These two stages of French influence did not exclude but complemented each other: the first provided terminological precision and systematicity, while the second contributed expressiveness and psychological depth. Together, they prepared the ground for Pushkin's synthetic model, in which strict clarity was combined with emotional intensity.

Eighteenth-century Russian classicism became the first literary movement to assimilate French terminology systematically. The theoretical principles set out by Nicolas Boileau in *The Art of Poetry* required a precise conceptual apparatus, prompting the active borrowing of French vocabulary. M. V. Lomonosov's *Rhetoric* (1748) and other works already contain the terms *«элегия»* (élégie), *«идиллия»* (idylle), *«эклога»* (églogue), and *«эпиграмма»* (épigramme) (Lomonosov, 1748, p. 60). At the same time, Lomonosov sought to give these terms stylistic elevation while retaining their Latinized forms (tragedy, comedy, satire), in keeping with the spirit of classicist aesthetics.

N. M. Karamzin was not merely a continuator of the Gallomanic tendencies of the reign of Catherine II; he was the true creator of a new literary movement – Russian sentimentalism – based on French aesthetic principles and linguistic models. Whereas the classicism of A. P. Sumarokov and M. V. Lomonosov borrowed mainly elevated rhetorical and philosophical-political vocabulary from French, Karamzin transplanted into Russian the language of intimate feelings, psychological experience, and subtle emotional nuances.

Karamzin's innovation was expressed above all in the creation of a new type of prose: light, refined, and emotionally rich. His novella *Poor Liza* (1792; *Бедная Лиза*) became a manifesto of Russian sentimentalism and a model of a new literary style. The distinctive features of Karamzin's style, characterized by Gallicisms and new emotional vocabulary, are apparent from the very beginning of the novella.

The aim of this study is to demonstrate Karamzin's role in creating, within the Russian language, a language of intimate sentiment, psychological experience, and subtle emotional nuances.

The object of the study is eighteenth-century Russian literary language, a period characterized by the intensive influx of European loanwords and the formation of a new linguistic norm.

The subject of the study is the use of Gallicisms in eighteenth-century Russian to convey intimate feelings, psychological experiences, and subtle emotional nuances.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study employed the following methods: the descriptive method, used to systematize and classify the linguistic material; contextual analysis, used to investigate how Gallicisms function in Karamzin's literary texts; and stylistic analysis, used to assess the role of French borrowings in the formation of the new literary style of Karamzin's prose.

In his work *Essays on the History of the Russian Literary Language of the Earlier Period*, S. P. Obnorsky, a professor at Moscow University, writes: "Karamzin synthesized Russian emotionality and French refinement. His language is an attempt to express the Russian soul through French means without losing its national specificity" (Obnorsky, 1946, p. 140).

N. M. Karamzin established this tradition in Russia. In the novella *Poor Liza* (1792), he used the words *«сентимент»*,

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«меланхолия», and *«натура»*, while in his correspondence he introduced established French expressions such as *«âme sensible»* (a sensitive soul) and *«cœur tendre»* (a tender heart) (Karamzin, 1984, p. 30). Karamzin's vocabulary did not merely record emotions; it conveyed the French culture of sensibility into Russian.

Thus, while the classicist tradition shaped the language of "high" art and state rhetoric, sentimentalism created a vocabulary of intimacy and personal experience. These two stages of French influence did not exclude but complemented each other: the first provided terminological precision and systematicity, while the second contributed expressiveness and psychological depth. Together, they prepared the ground for Pushkin's synthetic model, in which strict clarity was combined with emotional intensity.

RESULTS

Karamzin systematically introduced French vocabulary related to feelings and emotions into Russian. According to Yu. M. Lotman, Karamzin created a Russian language of intimate sentiment. Before him, Russian literature lacked words capable of expressing subtle movements of the soul. Karamzin borrowed this vocabulary from French not mechanically, but by creatively adapting it to Russian usage.

In *Poor Liza*, we encounter an entire stratum of new emotional vocabulary: *«чувствительность»* (French *sensibilité*), *«нежность»* (French *tendresse*), *«меланхолия»* (French *mélancolie*), *«томление»*, *«восхищение»* (French *ravissement*), and *«восторг»* (French *extase*). These words were not merely borrowings: they helped shape a new type of emotionality and a new culture of feeling. Karamzin did not coin Gallicisms; rather, he incorporated them into the literary norm and established their legitimacy, as in the case of *«Очарование»* (French *charme*, *enchantement*).

In Russian, *«очарование»* retained its association with magic: *очаровать* meant to cast a spell or bewitch. Karamzin introduced a semantic shift: the magical meaning was reinterpreted metaphorically, and *«очарование»* came to denote the aesthetic and emotional impact of beauty. The word moved from the sphere of folk beliefs into the sphere of aesthetics. This is an example of semantic metaphorization, in which magical influence becomes a metaphor for aesthetic influence. Syntactically, the shift made possible new collocations, such as *«очарование природы»*, *«очарование музыки»*, and *«очарование взгляда»*.

«Нежность» (French *tendresse*). The French word *tendresse* denoted softness and warmth in relationships, especially romantic ones. The Russian word *«нежность»* already existed, but was used primarily to denote physical softness: *нежность кожи*, *нежность плода*, and *нежность ткани*. Karamzin reinterpreted its meaning: *«нежность»* came to denote a particular kind of love – not passionate, not carnal, and not sinful (as in the Church Slavonic tradition), but spiritualized, delicate, and compassionate. This was a fundamental semantic shift: the word moved from the domain of tactile sensations to that of psychological relationships. Moreover, the phrase *«нежная скорбь»* in *Poor Liza* creates a semantic oxymoron: *скорбь* denotes pain and suffering, whereas *нежная* conveys softness and pleasantness. The shift involves semantic expansion and aestheticization, from the physical to the psychological and from the neutral to the aesthetically valued. Syntactically, Karamzin's use of *«нежность»* allows it to combine with a wider range of nouns that had not previously been used in this way, including *«нежность чувства»*, *«нежность воспоминания»*, and *«нежность привязанности»*.

«Томление». This word is not a direct borrowing, but it semantically calques the French *langueur*—a languorous longing for the unattainable, languor, or lyrical sadness without a definite cause. In Russian, *«томление»* had previously referred mainly to physical exhaustion: *томление от жары*, *от жажды*, or *от долгого ожидания*. Karamzin shifted its meaning so that *«томление»* came to denote a particular state of mind: an undefined desire, longing for an ideal, or sweet melancholy. This represents a shift from a concrete physical meaning to an abstract psychological one, and from an unequivocally negative connotation (suffering caused by the lack of something) to an ambivalent one (suffering and pleasure experienced simultaneously). Syntactically, this development is reflected in new collocations such as *«томный взгляд»* and *«томное ожидание»*. In Karamzin's usage, the adjective *«томный»* acquires an aesthetically appealing, poetic meaning.

«Восторг» (French *extase*, *ravissement*). In the Church Slavonic tradition, *«восторг»* (from *«восторгать»*, "to tear away" or "to seize") denoted spiritual ecstasy, a state of mystical union with God and transcendence of ordinary consciousness. In Karamzin's usage, *«восторг»* loses its religious connotation and comes to denote an intense aesthetic and emotional exaltation prompted by the beauty of nature, art, or a human being.

Thus, a range of words belonging to the semantic domain of the sacred and the religious moves into the secular sphere, losing religious connotations and acquiring aesthetic ones.

Karamzin actively created semantic calques – words that are Russian in form but reproduce French models in their semantic structure. These calques did not merely introduce new words; they introduced new semantic models and new ways of conceptualizing reality.

«Впечатление» is a calque of the French *impression* (from *imprimer*, "to print" or "to imprint"). The French word literally meant *«отпечаток»* and, figuratively, the effect of the external world on the soul. Karamzin introduced this figurative meaning into Russian through the word *«впечатление»*. The semantic shift is metaphorical: the external world is *«впечатывается»* into the human soul in the same way that a seal is pressed into wax. This metaphor was new to Russian in a fundamental sense: it presupposes that the soul is a receptive surface, passive yet capable of retaining traces of external influence. Syntactically, *«впечатление»* makes possible new constructions such as *«произвести впечатление»*, *«получить впечатление»*, and *«живое впечатление»*, which reproduce the French syntactic patterns *faire impression* and *recevoir une impression*.

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«Трогательный» is a calque of the French *touchant* (from *toucher*, "to touch"). Karamzin created an adjective that fully reproduces the French semantic model of transfer: physical contact (touching) – emotional impact (arousing tenderness). This is an example of semantic transfer based on contiguity, from tactile sensation to psychological effect. As a result, Russian acquired a word with dual semantics: physical (*касаться*) and psychological (*умилять*). Over time, the physical meaning weakened, and *«трогательный»* moved entirely into the psychological domain, a process of semantic specialization.

«Развитие» is a calque of the French *développement* (from *développer*, "to unfold"). Before Karamzin, the word in Russian had only a physical meaning: *развить нитку*, *развить клубок*, and *развить парус*. Karamzin endowed it with an abstract meaning: gradual unfolding, increasing complexity, and movement from the simple to the complex. Its semantics expanded from the concrete to the abstract through the metaphor of unfolding: a character *«разворачивается»*, a feeling *«разворачивается»*, and a plot *«разворачивается»*. Syntactically, the word made possible new constructions—*«развитие характера»*, *«развитие чувства»*, and *«развитие сюжета»*—that would have been inconceivable in pre-Karamzinian prose.

CONCLUSION

Classicism and sentimentalism served as mediators of cultural interaction: the former introduced aesthetic and rhetorical terminology into Russian, while the latter contributed the vocabulary of feelings and emotional states.

French influence in the eighteenth century paved the way for linguistic reforms and the formation of a new type of national literature. Many Gallicisms became firmly established in Russian, while the assimilated cultural forms shaped the distinctive features of nineteenth-century Russian literature.

Karamzin systematically introduced French vocabulary denoting emotions and psychological states into Russian literary usage, creating a language of intimate sentiment that had not previously existed in Russian prose. Borrowed words were creatively adapted, acquiring Russian grammatical forms and integrating organically with native Russian vocabulary.

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