



DOI: 10.22363/2618-8163-2026-24-3-350-363

EDN: EJKUCF

Research article

Therapy-speak as a form of Russian language medicalization

Valerii A. Efremov Institute for Linguistic Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, *Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation* valef@mail.ru

Abstract. The relevance of the study is determined by the increasing medicalization in modern Russian society caused by the following factors: the COVID-19 pandemic, the spread of “new ethics” and “new emotionality” concepts, and the growing popularity of psychotherapeutic services. The psychological terms entered everyday speech and communication, which gave rise to the phenomenon of *психояз* ‘therapy-speak’. The study is aimed at analyzing the linguistic nature of therapy-speak as a form of modern Russian language and speech medicalization. The research material includes data from the Russian National Corpus (subcorpus “Social Networks”), the Integrum electronic archive, and the lexicographic resource “New Words in Russian Vocabulary” (ILR RAS). The contexts of the analyzed units were extracted through word and collocation search combined with content analysis elements. The study employs traditional methods of semantic, component, contextual, lexicographic, and partially linguistic-cognitive analysis. The research shows the genesis and evolution of the term *психояз* ‘therapy-speak’ in the Russian language. The historical continuity of the phenomenon is revealed; the first wave of determinologized psychoanalytic lexis occurred in Russian in 1990s (комплекс ‘complex’, либидо ‘libido’, фрустрация ‘frustration’, нарциссизм ‘narcissism’, etc.). Therapy-speak is qualified as a traditional case of specialized lexis determinologization. The distinction between *therapy-speak1* (incorrect use of psychological terms in everyday speech) and *therapy-speak2* (metaphorical transfer of psychological terminology to phenomena unrelated to psychology) is introduced and substantiated for the first time. The author proves that “new ethics” is an important factor for psychological lexis actualization.

Keywords: psychotherapeutic jargon, psychological terms, quasi-terms, determinologization, new ethics, new emotionality

Conflict of interest. The author has no conflict of interest to declare.

Article history: received 25.02.2026; accepted 15.05.2026.

For citation: Efremov, V. A. (2026). Therapy-speak as a form of Russian language medicalization. *Russian Language Studies*, 24(3), 350–363. <http://doi.org/10.22363/2618-8163-2026-24-3-350-363> EDN: EJKUCF



Introduction

Although the contemporary humanities often trace the issue of medicalization back almost to the history of Ancient Greece, it has only become the subject of scientific research as an independent phenomenon linked to the strengthening of medicine's social and political role of medicine in society since the late 1960s (Mikhel, 2011).

Sociology and anthropology define medicalization as “the process when non-medical problems are described in medical terms, with medical language and through medical frameworks or ‘treated’ through medical intervention” (Conrad, 2007: 5). We think that from a linguistic perspective, medicalization manifests itself primarily in the expansion of medical concepts, terms, and ideas into the language and thinking of the average language user without relevant specialized education. The intensified medicalization in contemporary Russian society has many causes: the rapid development of science and medicine, the widespread dissemination of knowledge in the Internet, the promotion of a healthy lifestyle, interest in physical practices and alternative forms of medicine, and many others. Consequently, the medicalization of language can be studied from various perspectives: from the representation of medical knowledge in the media to medical myths in the public consciousness and in 19–20th century fiction. Other linguistic aspects of medicalization are discussed in (Makarova, 2015).

At the same time, the process of medicalization, which intensified particularly during the pandemic of the late 2010s and early 2020s, coincided with the emergence in Russian society of (1) the concept of “new ethics” “whose genesis is directly linked to the development of internet communication and new media as a space for ideas formed from a complex mix of third-wave feminism, issues of new sensibility, cancel culture, political correctness, and others” (Efremov, Matveeva, 2023: 265), and (2) “new emotionality,” which implies a high degree of emotional openness and frankness of the modern person, who places their personal experience, traumatic feelings, and vulnerability to an aggressive world at the center of public attention. Moreover, it seems extremely important that “the subject of the new emotionality discourse is the victim, a person suffering from exhausting relationships with family or colleagues, underestimating their own activities, and worrying about problems at work or at home” (Koshkarova, Yakovleva, 2019: 149). Apologists for the new ethics and new emotionality call for the use of a new language which is both objective and morally sensitive, especially since some of them declare that “the language we are accustomed to is often a language of hostility” (Bobyleva, 2021: 16).

In this regard, it is important to mention an interesting collaborative study involving psychologists, anthropologists, sociologists, philosophers, journalists, and publicists (Complex Feelings, 2021)*. This book was created within the conceptual framework of the new ethics and analyzes, among other things, the new psychological realities and transformations of the modern Russian language from the perspective of representing new emotions (subtitle: “A Phrase Book of the New Reality: From Abuse to Toxicity”). Most of the words described in this study are elements of psychological jargon: *abuse, gaslighting, personal growth, personal boundaries, narcissism, devaluation, resource, toxicity, harassment*, etc.

In addition, cyber ethics is becoming a specific field of studying online human behavior and gaining increasing significance with the development of new media (Shomova, 2016). Modern media and internet communication are becoming increasingly conflict prone. Today, almost any word that somehow characterizes a person or their feelings has the potential to offend someone and instantly become the subject of ethical debates and investigations, while the internet user who used it will be morally destroyed and almost inevitably branded “an aggressor” of any of the types, from traditional *misogynist, homophobe, xenophobe, and racist* to new terms like *abuser, harasser, gas lighter, ageist, and lookist*, etc.)” (Efremov, Matveeva, 2023: 266).

Thus, the rapid development of internet communication, ideas of a new ethics and the discourse of a new emotionality, as well as the latest phase of the medicalization of public consciousness associated with the pandemic and the growth of psychotherapeutic services, led to the widespread prevalence of the so-called **therapy-speak** in the Russian-speaking communicative space of the 2010s–2020s. Researchers note that the popularity of therapy-speak is growing worldwide and is linked to at least two social causes: (1) the decline, primarily in the West, of the role of religion, which traditionally helped the believer by offering various ways to navigate difficult life situations, and (2) the growth of mental health services, driven in part by the COVID-19 pandemic.

And while this term originally referred to the improper and/or incorrect use of terms and quasi-terms related to psychology, psychotherapy, and mental health in everyday, colloquial speech (*therapy-speak1*), this lexeme has recently acquired a second meaning ‘the use of psychological terminology to describe phenomena unrelated to the field of psychology’ (*therapy-speak2*).

It is important to note that not all units of therapy-speak are former terms; it also includes quasi-terms associated with various para-psychological or even

* Of the 20 participants who took part in this project, three people (G. Yudin, I. Budraitskis, G. Gu-seinov) have been recognized as foreign agents in the Russian Federation.

occult practices that pursue diverse forms of (pseudo)spiritual seeking. An interesting analysis of such quasi-terms is provided in the work (Demin, 2023), which examines the “Pangai Explanatory Dictionary”¹.

The analysis of the rapid penetration of psychological terminology into modern Russian has just begun; apart from isolated studies on the functioning of specific linguistic units (such as *bullying*, *burnout*, *toxic*, *trigger*, etc.) in the modern language, the works on this topic include three articles devoted to the analysis of pop-psychology terms in the online environment (Zdrikovskaya, Mokhova, 2022; Belova, Zemlyakova, 2024) and on television (Pavlova, Gryaznova, 2025) and a doctoral thesis devoted to the linguo-axiological aspects of online discourse in popular psychology (Istomina, 2025).

The aim of the study is to analyze the linguistic nature of therapy speak as a form of medicalization of contemporary Russian language and speech.

Methods and Materials

The study used the following sources: (1) the Russian National Corpus² (the “Social Networks” subcorpus), (2) “Integrum,” an electronic collection of Russian-language periodicals from Russia and CIS countries³, (3) the information-search lexicographic resource of the Institute for Linguistic Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences “New Entries in Russian Lexicon”⁴. Contexts of usage for the units under study were extracted using a search for words and collocations combined with elements of content analysis. In addition, traditional methods of semantic, component, contextual, lexicographic, and, to some extent, linguistic-cognitive analysis were employed.

The methodology for analyzing the linguistic material was aimed at examining the semantic transformations of lexical units derived from terms in psychoanalysis, psychology, psychiatry, and units of quasi-psychological discourse.

Results

The study established the genesis and semantic evolution in the Russian language of the lexeme “*therapy-speak*,” which currently functions as a word-formation calque of the English “*therapy-speak*,” under the influence of the semantics of the earlier quasi-term “*psychobabble*.”

¹ Panganskiy tolkovyy slovar' [Pangani Explanatory Dictionary]. *Phangan.ru*. Retrieved 1 April 2026, from <https://phangan.ru/blog/slovar>

² Russian National Corpus. (n.d.). Retrieved 1 April 2026, from <https://ruscorpora.ru/>

³ Integrum. (n.d.). Retrieved 1 April 2026, from <https://aclient.integrum.ru/?si=wZCMqV2R&qu=0>

⁴ New Entries in Russian Lexicon. (n.d.). Retrieved 1 April 2026, from <https://neolex.iling.spb.ru/>

Contrary to the idea of “therapy-speak” as an exclusively modern phenomenon, the study demonstrates that the determinologization of psychological, primarily psychoanalytic, vocabulary had already taken place in the Russian language in the late 1980s and early 1990s. At that time, terms such as *repression*, *complex*, *frustration*, *narcissism* entered everyday speech; some of them were already recorded in explanatory dictionaries in a derived sense, for example, *narcissism* as ‘self-love’.

Psycho-speak is a classic case of the despecialization and determinologization of highly specialized vocabulary. On the example of the term “*sublimation*”, the study demonstrates how a psychoanalytic concept ‘a defensive mechanism of the psyche’ acquires the colloquial meaning of “redirecting energy toward another type of activity.”

This study for the first time introduces and justifies the distinction of the terms *therapy-speak1* and *therapy-speak2*, which are in chronological and semantic succession. *Therapy-speak1* refers to the incorrect and unprofessional use of psychological terms and quasi-terms in everyday speech, especially in conversations about mental health and interpersonal relationships. *Therapy-speak2* denotes the metaphorical use of psychological terminology to describe phenomena of the surrounding reality that have no relation to psychology. The widespread use and metaphorization of *therapy-speak1* created *therapy-speak2* with the new directions for reality conceptualizing.

Both the specifically Russian concept of a new ethics and the global phenomenon of “new emotionality” are important factors for “psychological” vocabulary actualization.

Discussion

History of the Word

In the Russian language of the 2020s, the word “*therapy-speak*” is the result of a calque of the English term “*therapy-speak*,” which became widespread among English-speaking people following the essay by journalist and cultural critic Katie Waldman in *The New Yorker* on March 26, 2021⁵. In Russian, there are other calques of English origin created using the same model: “*novoyaz*” (*newspeak*) goes back to George Orwell’s “*newspeak*,” and “*koronoyaz*” (*corona-speak*) to “*corona-speak*” (Maher, 2024). However, the Russian language also produces its own unique lexical units using the word-formation

⁵ Waldman, K. (2021). The rise of therapy-speak. *The New Yorker*. Retrieved 1 April 2026, from <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/the-rise-of-therapy-speak>

model of a compound noun with the second root *-iaz* (*from language*), for example *lurkoiaz* (2008) and *nekroiaz* (2022).

Honestly speaking, the English term “*therapy-speak*” used to describe the unjustified use of psychological, psychoanalytic, and psychiatric terms in everyday life was not the first of its kind in English-speaking culture. In 1975, the article “Psychobabble: The New Language of Candor,” by the American writer, critic, and journalist Richard Dean Rosen coined the word “psychobabble,” formed by combining the terms “psychological” and “babble” ‘chatter’ to denote “a set of repetitive verbal formalities that destroys the very spontaneity, sincerity, and understanding it promotes. It is jargon that reduces psychological insight to a set of standardized observations and offers a rigid lexicon for dealing with an infinite variety of problems” (as cited in (Robert, 1990: 480)). Rosen cites words such as *codependent*, *denial*, *narcissism*, and similar terms as examples of psychobabble.

In the Russian-language internet, the word “*psychobabble*” appears in 2010 in A.A. Samoilenko’s science fiction novella “In This Endless, Tiny Universe...,” where the author’s metalinguistic reflection contains the remark: “— *She’s lost her mind!*... — *moaned the doctor. For reference: ‘she’s lost her mind’ is a professional **therapy-speak** and a universal diagnosis among our psychiatrists*”⁶. Here, the word *therapy-speak* is used to mean ‘professional slang of psychiatrists’.

The second, clearly occasional, authorial, use of the word “therapy-speak” dates back to 2015. On the “Stihi.ru” portal, responding the praise for her poem “Anti-Heroine,” poet Nadezhda Revazova mentions a certain book, describing it as follows: “*There’s this little book called ‘Inter-Local Smuggling. ‘Therapy-speak, flashy and easily burdensome’*”⁷. The book in question, published without indicating the author, year, or place of publication (“Inter-Local Smuggling” was written by A. Mikhailov, a representative of Tyumen unofficial culture, in 1997), is an example of underground verbal culture, a collection of microtexts from one to several sentences, having no relation to (pseudo)psychological discourse. The unprepared reader may understand this book as a kind of psychedelic experience, which probably prompted N. Revazova to use the word “*therapy-speak*” in the sense of ‘language that is excessively complex to comprehend’ to describe it.

⁶ Integrum. (n.d.). Retrieved 1 April 2026, from <https://aafnet.integrum.ru/artefact3/ia/ia5.aspx?lv=6&si=wZCMqV2R&qu=221&st=0&bi=7516&xi=&nd=1&tnd=7&srt=3&f=0>

⁷ Revazova, N. (2015). Antigeroynya [Anti-heroine]. *Stihi.ru*. Retrieved 1 April 2026, from <https://stihi.ru/2015/04/05/7399>

The term “*therapy-speak*” was first used in the sense that interests us on the Russian internet by a LiveJournal blogger under the username *mikhail_bar* on March 11, 2020, in the following context:

“Therapy-speak.

It’s time to compile a dictionary of ‘therapy-speak’.

Popular psychological terms used to describe a certain new reality of self-awareness and self-description.

Abuse, aggression, bullying, gaslighting, depression, narcissism, violence, misogyny, devaluation, sexism, codependency, resource, toxicity, etc. <...>

A kind of potential blend of advertising, fashion, ideology, psychology, psychotherapy, and philosophy.

It promises insight and redeeming clarity.

It affects the body no less than a virus. And is there a vaccine against it?”⁸.

Thus, at least in the spring of 2020, the lexeme “*therapy-speak*” appeared in the Russian-language internet, meaning ‘psychological and psychotherapeutic terms used in everyday, colloquial speech not in their terminological meaning.

Since the mid-2020s, psychologists themselves began discussing therapy-speak as a specific problem of mutual understanding and even “communication breakdown”⁹.

Therapy-speak1 as the determinologization of specialized vocabulary

From a linguistic perspective, “therapy-” is a classic case of the despecialization and subsequent determinologization of highly specialized vocabulary. As we know, determinologization is a common linguistic process when a terminological unit loses its strict lexical meaning and transits into common vocabulary. “Among psychological terms, this process takes on high significance, as it is linked to the spread of psychological concepts and their adaptation to everyday communicative needs” (Yusenko, 2025: 1820). The axiological nature of the determinologization of psychological vocabulary and the very nature of the psychological discourse is emphasized by most researchers: (Zdrikovskaya, Mokhova, 2022; Pavlova, Gryaznova, 2025; Istomina, 2025).

Russian society and the Russian language experienced something similar to the current trend toward psychological terminology in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when, during the Perestroika, a many diverse humanitarian concepts arrived from the West and, in particular, there was a renewed reception of

⁸ Mikhail-Bar. (2020). Psychoyaz [Psycho-language]. *LiveJournal*. Retrieved 1 April 2026, from <https://mikhail-bar.livejournal.com/108565.html>

⁹ Kudryashova, N. A. (n.d.). Beware of therapy-speak! Who are we when labels disappear? *B17 (Psychologists’ Website No. 1)*. Retrieved 1 April 2026, from <https://www.b17.ru/article/831618/>

psychoanalysis following the first quarter of the 20th century, which ended abruptly for political reasons. It was then that the first wave of “psychobabble” largely corresponding to its American version swept into the Russian language: terms (concepts) of psychoanalytic theory, such as *repression*, *defensive mechanism*, *complex*, *libido*, *psychological defence*, *fixation*, *frustration*, and many others, flooded into everyday speech. Moreover, some of the words that already existed by that time in Russian scientific or quasi-scientific discourse, such as *the unconscious*, *narcissism*, *the subconscious*, *fetishism*, had become firmly associated in the linguistic consciousness of most native speakers precisely with the theory of Freud and his followers, rather than with other humanities, as might be the case, for example, with *fetishism*, which is also relevant to the history of religion.

It is important that after the first wave of the establishment of psychological and psychoanalytic terminology not all these terms were recorded in fundamental explanatory dictionaries. For example, the “Large Explanatory Dictionary of the Russian Language” edited by S.A. Kuznetsov (LEDRL) contains only two entries from the list above and even with different subject headings: *fetishism* (*Med.*) and *frustration* (*Psychol.*)¹⁰. At the same time, the LEDRL records the complete determinologization of historically psychoanalytic terms, for example: “**Narcissism.** Self-love, self-admiration.”

Similarly, the LEDRL presents a determinologized meaning as an additional meaning. The dictionary entry: “**Complex. 4.** In psychology: a group of heterogeneous mental elements and processes united into a single whole. *Guilt complex. Inferiority complex* (a painful awareness of one’s shortcomings, one’s inferiority). *Oedipus complex* (a hostile attitude of a son toward his father arising in infancy). || *Colloquial.* A feeling of one’s own vulnerability, social insecurity; an inferiority complex. *Complexes need to be overcome. She clearly has a complex. A person without complexes.*”

Thus, the first wave of terminologized psychological, primarily psychoanalytic, vocabulary swept into the Russian language as early as the late 20th century, influencing both language and thought.

However, as early as the late 2000s, Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences and Doctor of Psychological Sciences A.V. Yurevich, reflecting on the popularization of psychological knowledge in his time, could note that “both psychological knowledge and interpretations of psychological

¹⁰ Hereinafter: Kuznetsov, S. A. (Ed.). (2000). *Bolshoy tolkovyy slovar russkogo yazyka* [Comprehensive Dictionary of the Russian Language]. Gramota.ru. Retrieved 1 April 2026, from <https://gramota.ru/biblioteka/slovari/bolshoj-tolkovyj-slovar>

states, as well as practical recommendations, are formulated in pop-psychological texts in terms of everyday language, rather than in terms of practical psychology such as ‘compensation,’ ‘sublimation,’ ‘catharsis,’ ‘autism,’ and others, which are largely incomprehensible to common people” (Yurevich, 2008: 60). Now, nearly 20 years later, everything has changed radically. The medicalization of language, speech, and consciousness has led to the fact that most of the terms mentioned have entered the psychological lexicon and are actively used not only within (or around) psychological discourse, but also far beyond its boundaries. Here are some uses of the word “*sublimation*”, mentioned in the expert’s quote above, from the “Social Networks” subcorpus of the RNC¹¹:

*Besides, why do people smash dishes, bang on furniture, kick tires, and slam doors? It’s a **sublimation** of pent-up energy. In other words, a hysterical outburst*) [Rats: Chat Room (2006–2017)].

*I don’t even eat them now; over the summer I tried half of one, honestly offered as a treat; I had to throw the other half away, since the tomato clearly made me feel sick, even though it was quite homegrown, ripe, and not sour. Hmm... I haven’t noticed any kleptomania in myself either. Rather, it’s some kind of **sublimation** of Plushkin’s desire to stock up on everything, even the unnecessary, because — yes, I’ve become pathetic and greedy, almost like him.* [Nickname alfare. Lifestyle blog (2020)].

*It’s great that you know about **sublimation** in the form of sports, reading books, and exhaustion at work* [Elena Dyachkova. KEDs (July 30, 2021)].

As the examples show, the term “*sublimation*” of psychoanalytic origin has completely lost its technical meaning in these contexts (“a defensive mechanism of the psyche through which a person’s inner drives are transformed into socially acceptable actions to achieve partial or complete satisfaction of these drives”¹²) and became a completely colloquial word meaning ‘the redirection of forces and energy toward another type of activity’.

To be fair, in some cases, therapy-speak can play an important psychotherapeutic role. For example, some people use psychological terminology (*burnout, personal boundaries, toxicity, trigger*) to conceptualize and rationalize a psychologically or emotionally extremely difficult situation and make it predictable and safe. Thus, rationalization through terminology sometimes can help cope with overwhelming emotions.

At the same time, we must remember the flip side of this coin: “The use of psychological terms outside of psychological discourse constructs a specific

¹¹ Russian National Corpus. (n.d.). “Social Networks” Subcorpus. Retrieved 1 April 2026, from <https://clck.ru/3TFE6G>

¹² B17.ru. (n.d.). *Psychologists’ Website No. 1*. Retrieved 1 April 2026, from <https://clck.ru/3TFD8h>

psychological reality with a modern emotional culture of human vulnerability to life's problems and one's verbally declared victimhood" (Plotnikova, 2021: 51).

Furthermore, the danger of "therapy-speak" lies in the fact that it blurs the precise meanings of psychotherapeutic terms and pathologizes certain situations in a specific way. Thus, from a scientific perspective, *bulimia*, *burnout*, *depression*, and many others are serious conditions requiring the subtle and precise intervention of a specialist. Self-diagnosis or the use of such words as trendy labels can lead to serious problems. Furthermore, the use of therapy-speak in communication with family and friends replaces ordinary, traditional participation, support, and care with pseudo-intellectual distancing, sometimes accompanied by a display of broad (pseudo)knowledge from relevant fields of psychology or even psychiatry.

It is important that contemporary researchers directly point out the harm of therapy-speak as a tool of manipulation and even aggression: "With regard to ethical issues, therapy-speak can be used to discredit individuals, evade responsibility, and even demonstrate social status by adopting a supposedly objective position" (Isern-Mas, Almagro, 2025: 465).

Therapy-speak2 as the metaphorization of determinologized vocabulary

However, therapy-speak as a form of language and thought medicalization does not stop at the determinologization of psychoanalytic, psychological, and psychiatric vocabulary and its use in a common sense to describe the human mental and emotional spheres. From sociological and anthropological perspectives, medicalization manifests itself, among other things, in the transfer of medical terms and concepts to spheres of social and human life unrelated to medicine. Something similar is happening with therapy-speak. "Today, discussions in the media about *toxic relationships in society*, *collective trauma*, and *gaslighting* are becoming increasingly common; this leads to the idea that a specific 'therapy-speak' is forming in political discourse as part of medical language" (Shmeleva, 2024: 594).

Indeed, a productive type of metaphorization is forming in modern Russian; it can be defined as *therapy-speak2*, the use of psychological terminology to describe phenomena that have no connection to the field of psychology.

For example, we are witnessing a reinterpretation of the relatively recently adopted word of psychological origin *abuse* ('cruel and humiliating treatment of someone, violence against someone aimed at forcing them into submission, suppressing their will and, etc.'¹³), as well as its numerous and relevant

¹³ *New entries in Russian lexicon*. (n.d.). Retrieved 1 April 2026, from https://neolex.iling.spb.ru/simple-search?title_op=contains&title=абыюз

derivatives. It defines and conceptualizes phenomena that have no connection to the sphere of interpersonal communication.

Thus, the lexicographic database “New Entries in Russian Lexicon” lists two interesting entries:

“Abuse² Professional. In the field of information technology, a violation of the rules for using internet resources, services, etc. — *When playing in a squad in the game, theoretically you can stack a block of cards; well, that turns out to be a kind of abuse (actually, that’s the design of this feature *laughs*).* Overclockers.ru 08/26/2008. *Despite the fact that many subdomain providers maintain WhoIs records and respond promptly to complaints, there is still plenty of abuse in this space, and blocking a phishing site is a major problem. For example, over 40% of the fake sites detected during the reporting period were linked to the .co.cc domain zone, even though the corresponding Korean service responds very quickly to abuse reports.* SecurityLab.Ru 05/04/2017.”¹⁴

This meaning of the Russian word “*abuse*” is derived from a similar lexical-semantic variant of the English “*abuse*” (‘the use of something in a harmful or immoral way’)¹⁵, but the two-word term registered in 2025 is undoubtedly a Russian linguistic innovation.

“Bank Abuser. About those who hunt for favorable interest rates at different banks and move money from one deposit account to another. *Russian banks have begun massively raising their introductory deposit rates and created a new type of customer, the professional arbitrageur, or ‘bank abuser.’* Russian Reporter [rusrep.ru] April 23, 2025. *Due to banks’ widespread increase in welcome rates, a new type of customer has emerged in Russian deposit market, bank ‘abusers.’ This is stated in a study by the analytical and consulting firm Frank RG. After a bank reduces its welcome bonuses, these ‘benefit hunters’ transfer their savings to another bank. In this way, they can ‘shuffle’ up to 30 million roubles between different financial institutions and secure the most favourable interest rate on the market for a deposit or savings account.* t-j.ru 04/24/2025”.¹⁶

The illustrations in this dictionary entry show that the concept of “*abuse*” in the semantics of this term lies entirely outside the realm of psychology. And even if we assume that the English phrase “*financial abuse*” (defined as

¹⁴ *New entries in Russian lexicon.* (n.d.). Retrieved 1 April 2026, from https://neolex.iling.spb.ru/simple-search?title_op=contains&title=абыюз

¹⁵ Cambridge Dictionary. (n.d.). Abuse. In *Cambridge Dictionary*. Retrieved 1 April 2026, from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/abuse>

¹⁶ *New entries in Russian lexicon* (n.d.). Retrieved 1 April 2026, from https://neolex.iling.spb.ru/simple-search?title_op=contains&title=банковский

“depriving a victim of access to financial resources and the ability to make financial decisions”) seems to influence the Russian non-verbal designation “*bank abuser*,” there is still no equivalent in the English-speaking world for this Russian innovation”. It is important to emphasize that for any modern Russian native speaker, this term is inevitably associated with the idea of abuse as psychological violence, since both the word itself and its derivatives have been actively used in the media and online for over two decades. In fact, this is how the mechanisms of reinterpreting psychoterms are realized, creating the conditions for therapy-speak functioning and development.

Conclusion

Throughout human history, language and thought medicalization has occurred repeatedly and in various ways. In the modern world, it is mostly associated with the growing importance of medicine, issues of access to medical care and the high technologies, bioethics and state medical control, as well as numerous epidemics and the COVID-19 pandemic. In modern Russian, therapy-speak serves as an example of medicalization, denoting two ways of using medical vocabulary, determinologization and metaphorization.

The research prospects are linked to a wide range of further investigations. Among the theoretical directions, one can distinguish diachronic (analysis of the functioning of psychological terms in the history of language), linguo-cognitive (medicalization as a means of conceptualizing reality; the role of metaphor in the determinologization of units in various sciences), and linguo-axiological (comparison of the composition, mechanisms of creation, and reception of psychological terms in different languages and cultures). Practical tasks include the compilation of a contemporary dictionary of psycholinguistic terminology.

References

- Aronson, M. & others (Eds.). (2021). *Complex feelings. Phrasebook of new reality: from abuse to toxicity*. Moscow: Common Place. (In Russ.).*
- Belova, E. V., & Zemlyakova, K. V. (2024). Use of psychological terms in the Internet as a sign of virtualization of young people’s mindset. *Sociohumanitarnye Kommunikacii*, (4), 128–143. (In Russ.). EDN: GEIHCT
- Bobyleva, M. S. (2021). *This is how we speak: Toxic words and how to avoid them*. Moscow: AST Publ. (In Russ.).
- Conrad, P. (2007). *The medicalization of society: On the transformation of human conditions into treatable disorders*. The John Hopkins University Press.

* Of the 20 participants who took part in this project, three people (G. Yudin, I. Budraitiskis, G. Guseinov) have been recognized as foreign agents in the Russian Federation.

- Demina, A. E. (2023). On the vocabulary of modern (pseudo)spiritual search. In *Neologiya. Neografiya. 2022: sbornik nauchnih statei*. (pp. 74–88). Saint Petersburg: Institute for Linguistic Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences. (In Russ.). EDN: EYXVJN
- Efremov, V. A., & Matveeva, S. U. (2023). Language and gender in the aspect of new ethics. *Izvestia: Herzen University Journal of Humanities & Sciences*, (210), 265–274. (In Russ.). <https://doi.org/10.33910/1992-6464-2023-210-265-274> EDN: FDKYDI
- Isern-Mas, C., & Almagro, M. (2025). Unmasking therapy-speak. *Theoretical Medicine and Bioethics*, 46(6), 465–489. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11017-025-09730-5> EDN: SOTGEQ
- Istomina, E. M. (2025). *Linguoaxiological and ideographic description of the Internet discourse of popular psychology*. (Candidate dissertation, Chelyabinsk). (In Russ.).
- Koshkarova, N. N., & Yakovleva, E. M. (2019). Discourse of new emotionality: Communicative practices of digital reality. *Political Linguistics*, (5), 147–152. (In Russ.). <https://doi.org/10.26170/pl19-05-15> EDN: BOSSNZ
- Maher, J. C. (2024). *The world of Coronaspeak: Mockdown, PCR and surgeon's finger*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Makarova, O. S. (2015). Linguistic aspect of medicalization: Problem statement. *Memoirs of NovSU*, (2), 10. (In Russ.). EDN: UMNOR
- Mikhel, D. V. (2011). Medicalization as a social phenomenon. *Scientific and Technical Journal Vestnik of Saratov State Technical University*, 4(2), 256–263. (In Russ.). EDN: OZFKCN
- Pavlova, A. I., & Gryaznova, V. M. (2025). The process of determinologization of terms from the field of psychology in the language of modern entertainment TV shows. *Humanities and Law Research*, 12(2), 327–332. (In Russ.). <https://doi.org/10.37493/2409-1030.2025.2.20> EDN: FWHPMQ
- Plotnikova, A. M. (2021). Cognitive dissonance, depression, pattern break, and other psychological terms outside psychological discourse. *Cognitive Neuroscience – 2020: Proceedings of the international forum, Ekaterinburg, December 11–12, 2020* (pp. 49–51). Ekaterinburg: UrFU Publ. (In Russ.). EDN: WFRPFS
- Robert, E. (1990). *The concise Columbia dictionary of quotations*. New York, NY: Avon Books.
- Shmeleva, T. V. (2024). Linguistic research of the field ‘health/illness’: Methodological foundations. *Memoirs of NovSU*, (4), 590–598. (In Russ.). [https://doi.org/10.34680/2411-7951.2024.4\(55\).590-598](https://doi.org/10.34680/2411-7951.2024.4(55).590-598) EDN: LXPHKW
- Shomova, S. A. (2016). New media and ‘new ethics’: Towards value transformations of the journalism profession. *Medi@lmanah*, (4), 12–20. (In Russ.). EDN: WYHYPH
- Yurevich, A. V. (2008). Pop-psychology. *Priroda*, (5), 57–60. (In Russ.). EDN: OUIAGB
- Yusenko, P. V. (2025). Determinologization of the latest psychological terms in contemporary discourse. In *Language and Culture: View of the Young: Proceedings of the International Scientific and Practical Conference within the V Kostomarov Forum* (pp. 1820–1824). Moscow: Pushkin State Russian Language Institute. (In Russ.). EDN: HWXZYP
- Zdrikovskaya, T. A., & Mokhova, Y. A. (2022). Functioning of psychotherapeutic terms in the Russian internet discourse. *Philology. Theory and Practice*, 15(5), 1548–1553. (In Russ.). <https://doi.org/10.30853/phil20220284> EDN: MBZKAE

Bio note:

Valerii A. Efremov, Doctor of Philology, Leading researcher, Department of Lexicography of Modern Russian Language, Institute for Linguistic Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, 9 Tuchkov Lane, St. Petersburg, 199004, Russian Federation. *Research interests*: neology and neography, lexicology and lexicography, modern Russian language, speech culture, juridical linguistics. ORCID: 0000-0002-0247-706X. AuthorID: 320329. SPIN-code: 3233-2138. ResearcherID: M-6351-2016. Scopus ID: 57192025216. E-mail: valef@mail.ru

DOI: 10.22363/2618-8163-2026-24-3-350-363

EDN: EJKUCF

Научная статья

Психояз как форма медиализации русского языка

В.А. Ефремов 

Институт лингвистических исследований РАН, Санкт-Петербург, Российская Федерация
✉ valef@mail.ru

Аннотация. Актуальность исследования обусловлена ростом медиализации в современном российском обществе, связанном с рядом факторов: пандемия COVID-19, распространение концепций «новой этики» и «новой эмоциональности», популярность психотерапевтических услуг. В результате широкой экспансии психологической терминологии в быденные речь и коммуникацию в 2020-е гг. в русском языке возникает феномен «психояза». Цель исследования — анализ лингвистической природы психояза как одной из форм медиализации современного русского языка и речи. Материалом исследования послужили данные Национального корпуса русского языка, электронного архива русскоязычных СМИ «Интегрум», а также лексикографического ресурса «Новое в русской лексике» (ИЛИ РАН). Контексты употребления исследуемых единиц извлекали методом поиска слов и коллокаций с элементами контент-анализа. Использованы традиционные методы семантического, компонентного, контекстуального, лексикографического и лингвокогнитивного анализа. Установлены генезис и эволюция термина и понятия *психояз*. Выявлена хронология этого явления: первый этап детерминологизации психоаналитической лексики в русском языке приходится еще на 1990-е гг. (*комплекс, либидо, фрустрация, нарциссизм* и др.). Психояз квалифицирован как классический случай детерминологизации специальной лексики. Впервые в науку введено и обосновано различие двух терминов: *психояз1* (некорректное использование психологических терминов в быденной речи) и *психояз2* (использование психологической терминологии для описания явлений, не имеющих отношения к сфере психологии). Показано, что важным фактором актуализации психологической лексики выступают «новая этика» и «новая эмоциональность». В заключении намечаются дальнейшие перспективы исследования: от лингвокогнитивных и лингвоаксиологических до лексикографических.

Ключевые слова: психотерапевтический жаргон, психологические термины, квазитермины, детерминологизация, новая этика, новая эмоциональность

Конфликт интересов. Автор заявляет об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

История статьи: поступила в редакцию 25.02.2026; принята к печати 15.05.2026.

Для цитирования: Ефремов В.А. Психояз как форма медиализации русского языка // Русистика. 2026. Т. 24. № 3. С. 350–363. <http://doi.org/10.22363/2618-8163-2026-24-3-350-363> EDN: EJKUCF