

A Look at the Word of the Year

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The Russian language has a word for a selfie taken in an elevator — лифтолок. **via liftoluk**

Православнутый: pseudo-Orthodox fanatic

Make some popcorn, pull out a six-pack, put on your team scarves and settle in for the exciting countdown to the competition. That's right, it's time for the annual Слово Года 2013 (Word of the Year, 2013) contest.

Well, I'm excited. It's always a good opportunity to learn some new words and check out the Russian linguistic zeitgeist.

While Russia is still voting for its word of the year, the Oxford dictionary has already announced its winner: selfie, a photo taken of oneself and posted on a social network. This was widely reported in the Russian media, where I learned that in Russian, a selfie is лук. This was presumably from the English word "look" and not the native Russian word for an onion.

Russian also has the sub-category of лифтолок — a photo of oneself taken in an elevator, preferably with lots of mirrors. One advocate of the лифтолок explains helpfully: Чем еще заниматься в лифте, оставшись наедине с собой? Можно, конечно, просто накрасить губы или смотреть в потолок, слушая музыку, но гораздо же веселее сделать лифтолок (What else are you going to do in an elevator by yourself? Of course, you could put on lipstick or look at the ceiling while you listen to music, but it's much more fun to take a selfie).

While I continue to ponder how much this woman can accomplish in an elevator, I've been following the voting for one website's Russian word of the year. As usual, the country's political life is heavily represented in the nominated words. For example, among the nominations is the verb размандатить, which means to strip a deputy in the State Duma of his seat — to "un-deputize" him, as it were. This verb even has an adjectival form: Размандаченный депутат Гудков может стать помощником Миронова (Gudkov, who was expelled from the Duma, might become an aide to Mironov).

The list of nominated words also reflects the political and social mudslinging in 2013 and offers new ways to insult your opponents. The right wing coined the word креакл from the first letters of the phrase креативный класс (creative class), the phrase most commonly used to describe the white-collar, progressive middle class. But креакл is decidedly pejorative and became downright insulting after a blogger described креакл in the style of the Animal Kingdom: Из интернета креаклы выползают редко (The 'kreakl' rarely crawls out of its Internet burrow).

The creative class retaliated, in a way, with the insult православнутый, a term that describes fanatical Orthodox Christians whose religious zeal far exceeds their actual knowledge of Orthodox dogma or history. The suffix –утый is associated with other words like тронутый (touched in the head) or чокнутый (nutty). О репрессиях, которым Сталин подвергал верующих, православнутые предпочитают не знать (Pseudo-Orthodox fanatics prefer not to know about the Stalinist repression of churchgoers).

Another adjective with the same ending, майданутый, has made a roaring comeback from its initial appearance in 2004. It's from майдан (square) and means democratic, pro-Western Ukrainian demonstrators who came out of the square during the Orange Revolution. As far as I can tell, connotation depends on the speaker.

My reaction to all this is another nominated word of the year — печалька, which describes a minor cause for dismay, often with humor. Я не успела проголосовать за слово года. Какая печалька! (I didn't get a chance to vote for the word of the year. Bummer!)

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