

Let's Just Speak English

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Запрет: ban

Scene: an office in Moscow, some time in the future when the law banning use of foreign words in Russian has finally passed. An expat manager is preparing a speech to the city Duma with the help of a Russian coworker. It is not going well.

Expat (E): Окей, речь начинается (Okay, the speech begins.)

Russian Coworker (RC): Стоп! Никаких океев! Забыть про окей! Скажи "ладно," или "итак ..." (Stop! No okays. Forget "okay!" Say: "All right," or "and so ...")

E (frowning, frustrated): Дамы и господа! (Ladies and gentlemen!)

RC: Стоп! Дамы — это конечно с французского ... и вообще не нужно. "Господа" означает и женщины и мужчины. (Stop! The word дама is of course from the French ...)

and it's not needed anyway. Господа means both men and women.)

E (taking a long, calming breath): Уважаемые господа, депутаты ... (Esteemed ladies and gentlemen, deputies ...)

RC: Подожди. (Wait a sec.) Депутат от позднелатинского *deputatus*, означает "уполномоченный." (Deputy is from the late Latin *deputatus*, which means a "representative.")

Muttering, the Russian coworker suddenly dashes from the room. The Expat looks out the window and wonders if it's too late to request a transfer to Prague. After a few minutes, the coworker rushes back in, brandishing an old edition of Dal's colossal dictionary.

RC (triumphantly): Гласные! Они называются гласными! (Гласные! They're called гласные!)

The Expat knows only one meaning of the word гласный.

E (snorting with laughter): Ты спятил, что ли? "Уважаемые гласные и согласные! Любимые глаголы! Друзья-существительные! (Have you lost your mind? "Esteemed vowels and consonants! Beloved verbs! Our dear noun friends!")

RC (exasperated): Не смешно! Гласный — это старое русское слово. Означает член городской Думы. (That's not funny! Гласный is an old Russian word that means a member of the city Duma.)

E: А кроме тебя, кто-нибудь знает это слово? (Other than you, does anyone know that word?)

RC (seeing the point, but reluctant to give in): Ну да. Кто-нибудь. Наверняка. Я так думаю. (Well, yeah. Someone. For sure. I think so.)

E: Но смысл закона таков: Говорить понятным всем языком. Никто не поймёт, что такое гласные. Еще обидятся! (But the point of the law is this — to speak in a language everyone understands. No one will understand what a гласный is. In fact, they'll be offended!)

RC: Мы еще подумаем. Дальше? (We'll think about it. What comes next?)

E: Наша фирма ... нет. Наша компания ... нет. Наше предприятие! Наше предприятие работает на российском рынке уже семь лет, предоставляя российским бизнесам — нет! Предприятиям ... (Our firm ... no. Our company ... no. Our enterprise! Our enterprise has been working on the Russian market for seven years, providing Russian businesses — no! enterprises with ...)

The Expat and Russian Coworker look at their company brochure: консалтинг (consulting), технологический аудит ИТ-инфраструктуры (technical audits of IT-infrastructure), видеоконференцсвязи (teleconferencing), аутсорсинг контакт-центра (outsourcing of contact centers), стартапы (startups).

E (in a small voice): А если нет русского аналога? То есть, эквивалента. То есть, подходящего русского слова? (But if there isn't a Russian analog? I mean, equivalent? I mean, a suitable Russian word?)

RC (deflated): Давай выступай по-английски. Все поймут, законов не нарушаем. (Why don't you speak in English? Everyone will understand and we won't break any laws.)

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