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Russian Translators Denounce Use of 'Unpatriotic' Onomatopoeia in Comics

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The use of words such as "bang," "crash" and "wow" in Russian comic books is unpatriotic and should be avoided, Russian translators said.

Russian newspaper Izvestia reported on Monday that a group of translators of Russian comics penned a letter addressed to the Vinogradov Russian Language Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences suggesting that all onomatopoeic words be replaced with indigenous versions.

"In comic books you can often encounter words imitating sounds," the translators were quoted as saying. "How can one express the sound of a phone ringing, of a creaky door, or a soda can being popped open, or the crinkle of an ice cream wrapper, or the sound of a motorcyclist's foot rubbing against the ground?" the letter said, according to Izvestia. "Often translators simply transliterate the English words."

The translators proposed a list of words borrowed from the official languages of the Russian

Federation that could replace the "unpatriotic" options, the newspaper said. According to the suggestions, words derived from Lezgian — a language spoken in southern Dagestan and northern Azerbaijan — such as "chorkh" and "khurt-khurt" could be used to express scratching and water swallowing respectively.

Izvestia, which says it has the letter in its possession, attributed the initiative to translators from the Center of Comics and Visual Culture. But the center subsequently dismissed the claim in a Facebook post, stating that translators working with the annual KomMissiya comics, graphic novels and manga festival were responsible. "The Center of Comics and Visual Culture is in no way related to this," the post said. "In our department there are basically no translators."

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