

No Brexit For Russia

The Word's Worth

[Michele A. Berdy's The Word's Worth](#)

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Уходя уходи: just leave

In the rumor mill that is modern life, news of a new Russian verb flew around the social media this week. Новый глагол появился: брекзит — я брекжу, он брекзит, они брекжут... — что означает заявить об уходе и потом не уходить (A new verb has appeared – to brexit – I brexit, he brexits, they brexit – which means to announce that you’re leaving and then not leave).

It sounds lovely, but it took me 14 seconds to find the original source — a joke on a forum. Note the future tense: Возможно, в русском языке появится новый глагол – брекзит: он стоит в коридоре и брекзит (Maybe in Russia a new verb will appear – to brexit: he stands in the hallway and brexits).

So sorry, folks. Although I have to say it would be a nice bookend to the one real Russian expression about English people and leaving: уходить/уйти по-английски (to take English leave, that is, to leave without saying good-bye). In one expression, you say you’re leaving and then you don’t; in the other you don’t say anything and just leave. Maybe брекзит will worm its way into Russian...

In the meantime, the real expression about English people and leaving — уходить по-английски — was apparently one of a pair of dueling 18th century French and English expressions: The English called leaving without notice “French leave” and the French called it “filer à l’anglaise.” For some reason, only the one about the English really stuck and is used in almost a dozen languages, including Russian: Он ушёл по-английски, пока Галя принимала душ (He slipped out without saying a word while Galya was in the shower.)

The real more or less opposite expression in Russian is уходя уходи (literally when leaving, leave). This seems to be a translation of Cicero’s *abiens abi* and means “if you’re leaving, leave and don’t come back.” Когда разводишься – уходя, уходи. (When you are divorcing, make a clean break of it.) But it can also be used jokingly at the end of a long and congenial party — you know, when the guests are all dressed in their hats and coats, standing in your

entrance hall and chatting away, with your best friend's hubby launching into the story of his last sailing trip. When you catch the exasperated expression of your friend, say, Ребята! Всё! Уходя, уходи! (That's it, guys! Just leave already!)

While we're on the topic of leaving, another key verb these days is валить. With the perfective form повалить, the primary meaning is to knock something or someone down: Ураган повалил много деревьев. (The hurricane knocked down a lot of trees.) It can also be used when the knocking down is intentional, that is, to mean "to cut down": Мы с братом повалили три сосны на участке (My brother and I cut down three pines in our yard.)

In the animal world, it's what dogs do to show who's top dog: Бульдог повалил моего щенка, но не кусал (The bulldog pinned my puppy to the ground, but he didn't bite her.) In the world of two-legged animals, it's the word you use to pin blame, not puppies: Всю вину за задержку они валили на нас (They pinned all the blame for the delay on us.) It can also be used to mean shoving or piling up something, here with the perfective version of свалить: Я быстро свалила одежду и вещи в чемоданчик и убежала на вокзал (I quickly threw some clothes and things into a little suitcase and then ran to the station.)

And then, for some mysterious reason, in slang it means to go, disappear, get lost, get out of here. You'll hear your older child tell his annoying younger brother: Вали отсюда! (Get lost!). But today mostly you hear it in the phrase Пора валить (Time to get outta here) – that is, it's time to emigrate. There are whole websites and articles dedicated to this: Пора валить – всё об эмиграции (Time to go! All about emigration); Пора валить – как мне свалить из России? (It's time to go – how can I get out of Russia?); Пора валить! Кто и почему уезжает из России (Time to go! Who is leaving Russia and why).

If you don't like those ways of slangy leaving, try укатить (literally to roll, figuratively to head off somewhere). Две сокурсницы укатили в отпуск на Кавказ (Two of my classmates zipped down to the Caucasus on vacation.) Sometimes you just want to go away, and it doesn't matter where: Получу по почте гонорар и укачу куда-нибудь ко всем чертям (When I get my payment in the mail I'll just get out of here and the hell with it all.)

And if you are in a serious "the hell with it all" mood — or in big trouble — the slang смыться might come in handy. This means to slip off somewhere, to disappear: Она смылась (She dropped out of sight.) Often it means that the process of leaving is not visible: Двадцать человек пригласили в кабинет начальника, Виталий сел так, чтоб смыться при первой же возможности (Twenty people were called into the boss' office, and Vitaly sat so that he could slip out at the first opportunity.)

I have an idea — instead of exporting the verb brexit to Russia, maybe Theresa May would like to import the word смыться...

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