

Shame That Is Cringeworthy

Understanding teenagers is a struggle that makes you cringe.

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Патрики: Patriki, slang for the Patriarch Ponds neighborhood in Moscow

I've gotten way behind in my youth slang. In my recent reading, I was stumped by the word *падик*. The phrase was about some people *в падике* (in the [mysterious] *padik*) so I knew it was a place or a structure. For a while, I wondered if it was a weird transliteration of *paddock* — there are lots of weird transliterations out there — but the action was taking place in a city and no horses were involved. Finally, I gave up inventing a definition and looked it up (always a good idea, right?). It is not in any standard dictionaries, but I found it in an article on new youth slang. And then I double-checked with some images. Any guesses on what it means?

(Pause for serious thought and head-scratching)

No? Well, it's slang for *подъезд*, a word that has a multitude of meanings: the drive up to a house (*подъезжать* means to drive up to or approach something); the entry hall or lobby of an apartment building; the communal areas of an apartment building; the stairwell (the

section of a multi-entrance apartment house served by one stairwell); and a landing (also called лестничная площадка). Which part the speaker or writer means is determined by context. For example, уборка и дезинфекция в подъездах means “cleaning and disinfecting the communal areas” of apartment buildings, which I know because it makes sense (don’t stop with the lobby) and because I saw them do it during the first weeks of Covid (visuals explain almost everything).

In youth slang, it seems to refer to the landing and stairwell rather than the entryway, simply because в падике выпивают (they’re drinking) and teenagers are more likely to drink in a secluded landing between floors than in an entrance lobby. Why it is падик and not подик eludes me, and I don’t have a good teenager around to ask. But I did listen to a song about it, which includes some nice slangy rhymes: Я по району на Адиках/А ты где-то на Патриках (I’m walking around the ‘hood in my Adidas/And you’re somewhere near Patriarch Ponds). Note that the Moscow Patriarch Ponds neighborhood is almost always called Патрики, even among oldsters.

After strolling and half-falling in love with a girl the singer sees on the street, he feels connected to a gang because: В падике плачет братва (The gang cries in stairwells).

Definitely not the driveway or lobby.

Another word that threw me off was варик, which is slightly easier to figure out from contexts such as: Предлагаю ещё один варик, куда поехать на выходные (I suggest one more option for where to go on the weekend). Варик is short for вариант (variant, version, option). You might come across Не варик! said in dark tones: Видеться с ним после вчерашнего – не варик (Get together with him after what happened last night? Not an option). Ждать её ещё час – вообще не варик (Wait another hour for her? That’s not going to happen).

Another word used by the youth of Russia and apparently at least part of Ukraine (perhaps before the war) is лыганить, a word that means to drink, usually to excess, and is considered regional slang from Kharkiv. Вася — ты что, тогда лыганил, когда кольцо потерял? (Vasya, you mean that you were drinking when you lost the ring?)

Of course, he was. No need to wait for the answer.

Another word that's easy to figure out but sometimes hard to use is кринж — easily sounded out as cringe. It has two main definitions in Russian: to feel embarrassed for someone else’s actions or the action/cause of that feeling. But even though the word comes from English, you need to fiddle with it for the back-translation. For the first case: Посмотрите интервью Киселёва– такого кринжа вы ещё не испытывали во всей своей жизни, гарантирую (Watch the interview with Kiselyov. It will make you cringe like you’ve never cringed before, I guarantee it). For the second: Олимпийская чемпионка по фигурному катанию заявила, что у неё эвакуировали автомобиль в Москве. “Ситуация — кринж” (An Olympic figure skating champion had her car towed in Moscow. “The situation made me cringe.”)

Sometimes it’s turned into a verb: Я кринжую при виде этого чудака (I cringe whenever I see that dude).

Sometimes кринж is defined as испанский стыд (Spanish shame). Spanish shame, we are told, is the English translation of the Spanish phrase vergüenza ajena, which I think means something like “third-person or vicarious shame”: when you feel shame or embarrassment for someone else’s behavior or words. The story is that Russian picked up not the original Spanish phrase, but the English translation. Человек чувствует испанский стыд, когда вынужден наблюдать за некультурным, позорным, неэтичным поведением (Someone feels “Spanish shame” when they have to see uncultured, shameful, and unethical behavior).

Here is another good example: Есть элемент утрирования национальных клише, от которых любой нормальный мексиканец испытает испанский стыд, как если бы Disney вдруг сняла мультфильм про Россию с медведями и балалайкой (The national clichés are somewhat exaggerated, which would make any Mexican feel Spanish shame, like if Disney suddenly made a cartoon about Russia with bears and a balalaika).

Lovely, isn’t it? The only problem is that I have never heard the supposed English expression “Spanish shame,” and neither has anyone I’ve asked.

Have I somehow missed this? Maybe I need to spend more time with very sensitive native English speakers — not to mention more teenagers.

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