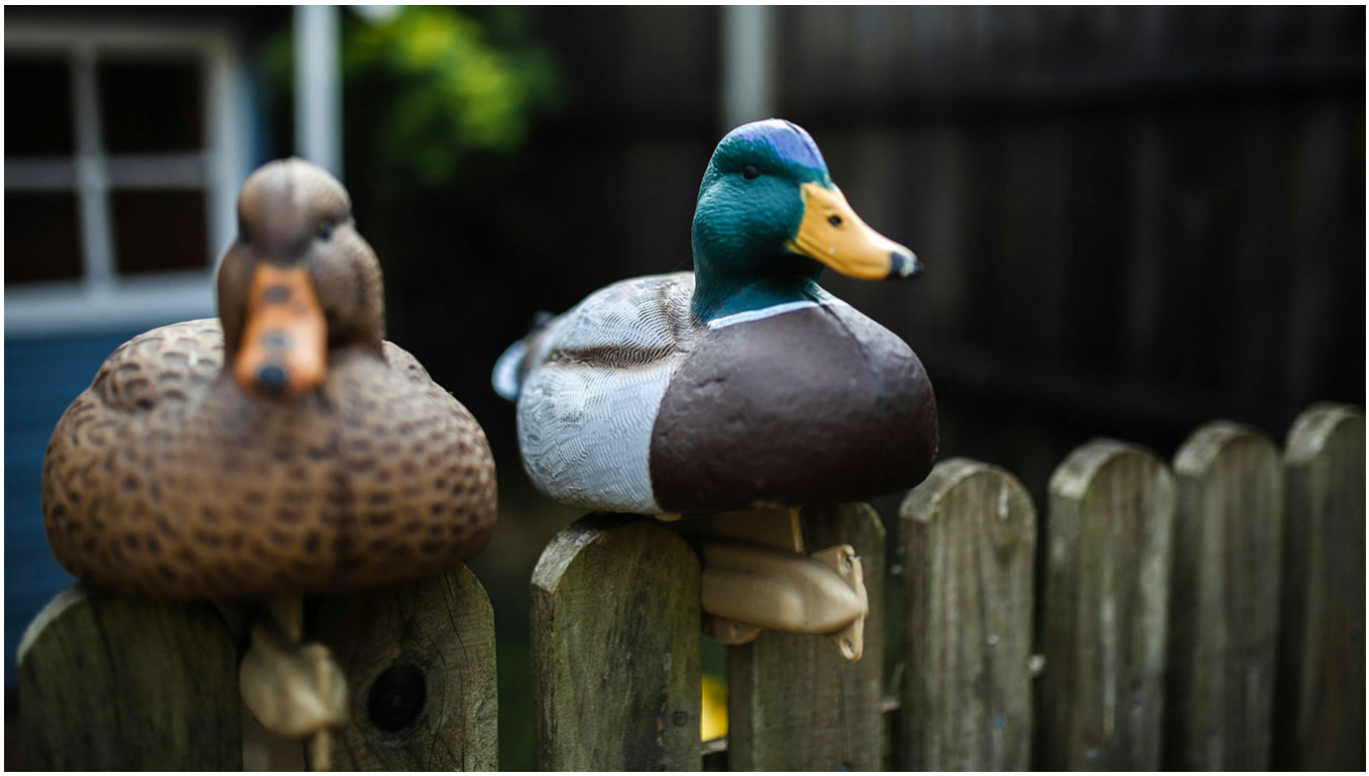
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Fake News and Other Fallacies

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Газетная утки: a canard, a newspaper hoax **Phil Hearing / unsplash**

Фейк: fake

I have been remiss. Although I have mentioned the "Russian" word фейк in many columns, I've never really focused on it. I suppose it's because, well, what's there to say? Фейк is the standard Russian insult for anything purported to be false, particularly factual information from non-Russian sources. There are plenty of official definitions of it to be found in national and local news services and on government sites. Что такое фейк? Абсолютно ложное сообщение (What is a fake? It's a totally false statement). Это действие или заявление, направленное на введение в заблуждение; преднамеренная ложь; новости, которые включают дезинформацию (It is an act or statement intended to deceive; a deliberate lie; news that includes disinformation).

Sometimes Russian writers use an adjectival form — фейковый — or sometimes they stick close to English: Сегодня отдельные голоса всё чаще говорят о законодательном регулировании борьбы против фейк ньюс (Today, some individuals are increasingly

talking about legally regulating the battle against fake news).

It is ironic, of course, that they use a fake Russian word to castigate fakes, frauds and forgeries. As usual, there is no need. Russia has its own native experience and rich vocabulary of all the "f-words."

But first, another borrowed f-word, or rather family of f-words: Фальшивка (a fake); фальшивый (faked); фальсификация (falsification) фальсифицированный (falsified); фальсификат (adulterated food, counterfeit product) and фальшь (false, fake, insincere, out of tune).

These are usually easy to understand: Почему не наказаны лица, выдававшие фальсифицированные документы? (Why haven't they punished the individuals responsible for falsifiying documents?) Нашумевшая статья, утверждавшая о связи между вакцинацией и аутизмом, содержит фальсифицированные данные (The sensational article that claimed a connection between vaccination and autism contains falsified data).

But one word might not be immediately understood — the lovely word фальшь, beautiful not only for its rare possession of two soft signs in a one-syllable word, but for its recognition of how audible falsity is. It's the word you use when the orchestra didn't tune up properly (or sat under hot lights too long): Я отлично слышу фальшь в пении или в музыкальных исполнении (I hear very clearly when someone is singing or playing out of tune). Or to describe bad actors not playing their part convincingly: Малейшая фальшь в интонации убьёт весь эффект от реплики (The actor's line is destroyed by even the most subtle insincerity). Or that feeling you get when someone isn't being straight with you: Была в нём какая-то фальшь, неприятная какая-то нотка (There was some kind of falsity in him, he just didn't ring true.) Or when you know someone is lying: Он чувствовал фальшь Сталина, и от этого некуда было деться (He sensed Stalin's hypocrisy; there was no way to get around it).

In down-to-earth fakery, we have another set of borrowed words: контрафакция (forgery); контрафакт (a forgery); контрафактный (forged). These all generally refer to things that are forged or faked, often medicines: Эксперт убежден, что система позволит вытеснить с рынка контрафактные и фальсифицированные лекарства (The expert is certain that the system will let them rid the market of counterfeit and fake medicines.) But it can refer to any kind of counterfeit objects — usually for sale. На остальных сайтах продавались контрафактные товары (Other sites were selling counterfeit merchandise).

In the purely Russian lexicon of fakery and falsity we have the set подделывание (counterfeiting); подделанный (counterfeit, adjective); подделка (counterfeit, noun). These words are easy to understand: they refer to things that are made (делать) под (under, in place of, like). As you might design a room to be a study (отвести комнату под кабинет), so you might make a sculpture to be a real Rodin. Or you might try. Это явный обман, вопиющая подделка (This is obviously a fake, a blatant forgery).

However easy the above words are to understand, they are equally easy to mix up with a word that means the opposite. Note that all the above words for forgeries have two letters "д". Bang that into your brain. Now meet the the one-д поделка. Подделка-поделка are easy to

misunderstand because they are used in the same contexts, only the one-д поделка is not a fake, but an original piece of handicraft.

You might not get confused with it comes to children's crafts: Очень простая поделка, которую можно сделать с малышами (This is a very simple project you can make with little children). But in other contexts, pay close attention: Брошь была поделка из кости с изображением рогов (The brooch was handcrafted from bone and depicted antlers). Put in another "д" and it's a "counterfeit brooch."

Back in the world of fakes, you might also use the noun подлог (fake, forgery, substitution), from the verb подложить (to foist on, plant, slip something under) — that is, when you slip something fake in for something real. This tends to be used largely for forged documents, figures and statistics, and it gets you sent to jail: Подлог был совершен помощником финансиста, который незаконно присвоил наличные (The forgery was committed by the financier's assistant who misappropriated cash). Пять лет за мошенничество, подлог, вымогательство (Five years for fraud, forgery and extortion).

Now if you aren't a police investigator or lawyer, there are two less formal words you might use to describe all this fakery. One is лажа, which has a number of slangy meanings having to do with things badly done, poorly made, faked or somehow not the real thing. В кино бьют так, что человек потом встаёт несколько раз — бах, бах, но всё это лажа. На самом деле реальная драка — это некрасиво, она мерзкая, она страшная (In the movies a guy gets hit and then gets up several times — pow, pow — but that's fake. A real fight is ugly, nasty and terrifying).

Another slangy word for a fake is липа: Вся твоя лаборатория липа, прям как ты (Your whole lab is fake, just like you). Документов нет, а имена, которые я смогла найти — липа. (The paperwork is missing and the names that I could find are fake).

What's charming about the word липа is that it also means a linden tree. What a wonderful world of confusion opens up. You might say, "Липа оказалась липой," which could either mean "the linden tree turned out to be, in fact, a linden tree" or "the linden turned out to be fake."

True, it's hard to imagine an occasion to say that, but one can dream.

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