

FROM THE EDITOR

We entered March 2023 with a new federal law “On Amendments to the Federal Law ‘On the State Language of the Russian Federation’”. It states that the use of foreign words is inadmissible, with the exception of those with no commonly used analogues in Russian, a list of which is contained in normative dictionaries. The Explanatory note to the project states that “Adoption of the federal law will increase the general level of literacy of citizens, correct use of the state language of the Russian Federation, ensure control over the quality of the ‘uniform set’ of grammars, dictionaries, reference books, as well as the compliance of all officials with norms and rules of the modern Russian literary language”. Naturally, now we will all speak Russian correctly and beautifully, everyone will begin to use numerals correctly. People will stop making mistakes in advertisements. Everyone will study grammar, dictionaries, and reference books, all of which will be downloaded into “smartphones” (it is still unclear what they will be called) and will be published in huge quantities, so that everyone will be able to check themselves on every second word, to ensure whether they said something correctly or not. It is easy to imagine a consumer shopping for a device or a perfume, stammering before each word and frantically looking up the appropriately “Russian” term in the dictionary.

The fact that the law is emphasizing the necessity to accurately use the native language is a great thing. However, the implementation is highly questionable. Almost 18 years ago, the Federal Law on the State Language of the Russian Federation (adopted by the Duma on May 20, 2005, Article 1, clause 6) stated the following rule: “When Russian is used as the state language of the Russian Federation, the use of words and expressions that do not correspond to the norms of modern literary Russian (including swear words), except for foreign words that do not have their common Russian equivalents, is not permitted”.

Has the use of swear words stopped during those 18 years? On the contrary, there has been a noticeable increase, even among women (swearing among women was exceedingly rare not too long ago). Have there been fewer foreign words and expressions over the years? I think that we should not start with banning foreign words, but rather return to teaching proper Russian in school, and by reading Russian literature not from summaries, but in the original format. Teachers should cultivate a taste for the language. Language will digest individual foreign words and make them its own, as has happened more than once in history. English consists of more than 50 % French... So what?

