



The semantic range  
of russian lexical  
borrowings in  
korean language

## THE SEMANTIC RANGE OF RUSSIAN LEXICAL BORROWINGS IN KOREAN LANGUAGE

### EL RANGO SEMÁNTICO DE LOS PRÉSTAMOS LÉXICOS RUSOS EN EL IDIOMA COREANO

#### ABSTRACT

Due to Korean-Russian mutual development there is more interest to Korean and Russian languages from both countries. This leads to the problem of reading authentic texts and translating them. The biggest question is group of non-equivalent vocabulary which has to be translated adequately and accurately. But first semantic analysis of this group must be given. In this article we will observe semantic range of Russian lexical borrowings which has already come to Korean language. Most of them are culture-oriented or sociopolitical words. Lots of words connected with Soviet period appear even in texts about modern Russia. While making this investigation a lot of attention was paid to National Corpus of Korean Language and Big Dictionary of Standard Korean. Also comparative and descriptive methods were used. The necessity of non-equivalent vocabulary dictionaries is purely obvious due to lack of explanation of Russian borrowings in Korean text. Most of them are given without additional description or they are given with appropriate Korean word. This in sum gives feeling of reduplication or tautologies.

**KEY WORDS:** non-equivalent vocabulary, Korean language, Russian language, Korean studies, semantics, corpus studies.

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#### RESUMEN

Debido al desarrollo mutuo entre Corea y Rusia, hay más interés por los idiomas coreano y ruso de ambos países. Esto lleva al problema de leer textos auténticos y traducirlos. La pregunta más importante es el grupo de vocabulario no equivalente que debe traducirse de manera adecuada y precisa. Pero primero debe darse el análisis semántico de este grupo. En este artículo observaremos el rango semántico de los préstamos léxicos rusos que ya han llegado al idioma coreano. La mayoría de ellos son palabras culturales o sociopolíticas. Muchas palabras relacionadas con el período soviético aparecen incluso en textos sobre la Rusia moderna. Al realizar esta investigación, se prestó mucha atención al Corpus Nacional de la Lengua Coreana y al Gran Diccionario de Coreano Estándar. También se usaron métodos comparativos y descriptivos. La necesidad de diccionarios de vocabulario no equivalentes es puramente obvia debido a la falta de explicación de los préstamos rusos en el texto coreano. La mayoría de ellos se brindan sin una descripción adicional o se dan con la palabra coreana correspondiente. Esto en suma da una sensación de reduplicación o tautologías.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** vocabulario no equivalente, idioma coreano, idioma ruso, estudios coreanos, semántica, estudios de corpus.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Despite the fact that relations between Russia and South Korea are progressing, Koreans are still do not know much about Russia, it's social, political and economic spheres. A very small amount of literature about Russia exists in South Korea, but still even these books and translations of the greatest Russian masterpieces show that some of Russian words were borrowed due to absence of some typical Russian realis in Korean society. These borrowings are not used by Koreans in everyday life but this does not rule out that they do exist in Korean language. Proofs to this also can be found in National Corpus of Korean Language.

The main aim of this article is to show semantical range of Russian lexical borrowings in Korean language. Examples for article were taken from Korean Russia oriented books: "Aspects and Prospectives of Contemporary Russian Mass Culture" ('현대 러시아 대중문화의 양상과 전망'), "Russia travelers' club" ('러시아 여행자 클럽'); Korean Language National Corpus (KLNC) and modern Korean online dictionaries like Naver and Big Dictionary of Standard Korean (BDSK). (Salavati-Niasari et al., 2015) Problem of void words in Korean and Russian languages is still not much investigated. Thou it is believed that necessity of Russian and Korean dictionaries of non-equivalent vocabulary will arouse due to developing of Korea-Russia relations. Korean language learners in Russia already feel this lack of non-equivalent dictionaries as the number Korean language learner has grown dramatically in the past few years and is still growing. The same is happening in South Korea, thou not so fast, but the situation might change any time and Russian language learners in Korea would pay more and more attention to this problem.

## 2. METHODS

While making this investigation comparative, corpus-based, descriptive methods and componential analysis were used. Books mentioned above were scanned with the aim to find Russian borrowings. Each borrowing's occurrence was checked in KLNC and after that its semantic meaning and specific features of using it in Korean language were explained.

## 3. RESULTS

In order to present results all borrowings were put according to classification of realis on geographical, ethnographic and socio-political realis.

Geographical realis were not found among target texts as now specific Russian realis have already disappeared and modern ones can be fully translated in other languages.

Ethnographic realis can be divided them into several groups.

a) Food, drinks and etc.

In "Russia travelers' club" there is wide range of Russian food name, like 보드카 [러시아 여행자 클럽, 미래의창, 2015] (vodka), 샤슬릭 [러시아 여행자 클럽, 미래의창, 2015] (shashlik), 보르쉬 [러시아 여행자 클럽, 미래의창, 2015] (borsch), 펠미네 [러시아 여행자 클럽, 미래의창, 2015] (Russian ravioli), 크바스 [러시아 여행자 클럽, 미래의창, 2015] (kvas), etc.

'당장 무무에 데려와 샤슬릭과 보르쉬, 펠메니를 먹여보고 싶다.' [러시아 여행자 클럽, 미래의창, 2015] (Ling et al., 2016) 'He took us strictly to café Moo-moo and wanted us to taste shashlik, borsch and meat dumplings'.

Some of this words were found in KLNC, for example word 보드카 has 80 dropouts and 크바스 has 11 search results. Moreover they appear in BDSK. Thou some word were misspelt, like 보르쉬, which should be spelled like 보르시. This word do exists in corpus (3 dropouts) and has its explanation in BDSK.

Naver dictionary and BDSK gives explanation to these terms naming them part of Russian traditional food. In "Russia travelers' club" only words like 크바스, 모르스 and 샤슬릭 are explained to readers. The word 모르스

is explained as a fruit drink. And word 사슬릭 was explained by the description of cooking method.

‘모스르’라는 과일 주스까지...’ [러시아 여행자 클럽, 미래의창, 2015] ‘Fruit-drink named “mors”...’

‘양고기나 쇠고기를 큼직하게 썰어 길쭉한 쇠꼬챙이에 꽂으면 준비는 끝.’ [러시아 여행자 클럽, 미래의창, 2015] ‘Lamb meat or beef is chopped coarsely and placed on long skewer, here is all preparing’.

Other words are either meant to be acquainted or already known to reader.

b) Housing, furniture, decoration components.

Words denoting these phenomena again can be found in “Russia travelers’ club”. Word like 크렘린 (Kremlin) can be put in this group as it denotes fortress which was used as housing for Russian kings and army. This word finds its place in KLNC and in BDSK. BDSK explains it as ‘fortress that was built in Russian church and state period’ [Naver dictionary. Available from <http://dic.naver.com/> (Accessed 21/11/2017)]. Thus, even Korean dictionary regard it as Russian word denoting Russian reality. No descriptive explanation of this word is used in text, however author uses additional word 궁정 (royal court), which somehow helps to understand its meaning of a palace for Russian kings and emperors. Moreover KLNC gives about 127 dropouts of this word.

Another word appeared in this text is 마트료시카 [러시아 여행자 클럽, 미래의창, 2015] (Matryoshka doll). Again book does not give any explanation, but as it is travelers’ book it has lots of pictures and photos. Instead of any description or denotation of this word, author makes a mark under the photo of Matryoshka.

‘시내 기념품점 어디에서든 만날 수 있는 것까지 모양의마트료시카.’ [러시아 여행자 클럽, 미래의창, 2015.] ‘Matryoshka which can be found in any souvenir shop’.

Even if Matryoshka may be known to Korean readers, this word has not been found in KLNC or BDSK. Naver dictionary also gives

only other foreign language translation and no Korean explanation.

Some words connected with Russian art were expected to be found in this books as Russia is very famous for its plays, ballet and others arts, but authors do not use any borrowings. In “Aspects and Prospectives of Contemporary Russian Mass Culture” author uses lots of transliterated words, like ‘노바야 드라마’(modern play), ‘므하트 고리키’ (Moscow Academic Art Theatre), ‘렌콤’ (Lencom theatre), ‘소브레멘닉’(theatre ‘The Contemporary’), ‘테아트르.doc’ (theatre.doc, name of play) etc. These transliterations denote theatres’ names or words connected with thespians art. Moreover a whole chapter of this book is dedicated to Russian contemporary theatre.

c) Money.

Lexical borrowings denoting money are realis which were borrowed by almost all languages. Russian ruble (kor. 루블) is no exception. This borrowing appears several times in “Russia travelers’ club”. It can be found in BDSK, and KLNC gives 129 dropouts.

Next huge group of borrowings is group denoting sociopolitical realis. Russia was always a center of attention due to its land, its culture and art and its history. Word group connected with Soviet period is the most numerous one. North Korea still considers Russia as its ‘elder brother’ as well as China. Russian Federation still has close relations with former Soviet countries. Thus, Soviet terms came into many languages even on other continents.

a) Power structures.

In the text of “Aspects and Prospectives of Contemporary Russian Mass Culture” there can be found rare pure-Russian word 오프리치나 [현대 러시아 대중문화의 양상과 전만. 2010] (oprichnina). This is political and administrative apparatus established by Ivan the Terrible. Even thou this word was neither found in BDSK and KLNC, neither in Naver dictionary. Nevertheless it does appear in book about Russia in Korean language, and Internet search gives a lot of results on articles about oprichnik.

### b) Sociopolitical phenomena.

“Aspects and Prospectives of Contemporary Russian Mass Culture” gives a lot of material like this. Words like 소비에트 [현대 러시아 대중문화의 양상과 전망. 2010.] (Soviet), 포스트소비에트 [현대 러시아 대중문화의 양상과 전망. 2010.] (Post-Soviet), 페레스트로이카 [현대 러시아 대중문화의 양상과 전망. 2010] (perestroika – reformation period) and 프롤레트쿨트 [현대 러시아 대중문화의 양상과 전망. 2010.] (Proletariat cult) can be found in this book.

No explanation to words like 소비에트 (Soviet), 포스트소비에트 (Post-Soviet), 페레스트로이카 (perestroika) is given. With the course of time and due to historical needs these words become widely known among all over the world. They are obviously pure-Russian phenomenon and cannot be considered as terms because they can be applied only for Soviet/Russian reality. Thus, authors give no explanation or description of these borrowings.

Originally word Proletariat is Latin word, but all examples which were found in Korean sources consider it only with Soviet reality and this word obviously came to Korean from Russian language. This is an example of originally European word, which is meant to be pure-Russian due to historical and sociopolitical reasons, entered Asian language as Russian borrowing, not Latin. Even thou it was first used in German language, and theory of Proletariat was developed by Marks and Engels.

We consider word 스푸트니크 [러시아 여행자 클럽, 미래의창, 2015.] (Sputnik) as part of this word group as it is closely connected with Soviet period and may be regarded as Soviet period phenomenon or product. In “Russia travelers’ club” it appears in translated variant: 세계 최초의 인공위성 (the first satellite). And then in brackets Russian borrowing is given. However 스푸트니크 appears in BDSK and KLNC (10 dropouts).

### c) Military terms.

Most world widely known military terms came from European language: Latin, Greek, English and Dutch. However some words can only be found in Russian language. The word 파르티잔 [러시아 여행자 클럽, 미래의창, 2015.] (partisan) appears in “Russia travelers’

club”. It is given in pair with word 용사 [러시아 여행자 클럽, 미래의창, 2015.] (soldier) to concretize its meaning. Also 파르티잔 appears in BDSK and KLNC (12 dropouts).

## 4. DISCUSSION

The problem of non-equivalent vocabulary in Korean language is still not much aroused. As history shows Korean easily adopt foreign words which can be seen by huge amount of English words and so-called ‘Konglish’. This phenomenon is an issue for lots of Korean scholars who advocate pureness of Korean language. But still words with no equivalents have nothing to do with pureness of languages. They have to be borrowed and adopted by recipient language.

## 5. SUMMARY

It is common for most of realis that they can be divided in 3 huge groups: geographic, ethnographic and sociopolitical realis. Russian language is no exception, but due to historical reasons most numerous Russian non-equivalent words are words connected with Soviet realis.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

As has been shown above Russian borrowings are not that common in Korean language as English ones, even thou it is said that Russian borrowings are fifth largest borrowed words group [국립국어원 표준국어대사전 Available from: <http://stdweb2.korean.go.kr/main.jsp> (Accessed 21.11.2017)]. Most of these words are ones denoting cultural elements and sociopolitical realis.

Cultural elements are borrowed due to its unique component. The same is done with many other borrowed words in languages all over the world. Especially it considers dishes, housing and money.

Next group, which is no less than ethnographic realis, is one appeared in course of time as Soviet Union was gaining power through XX century and the whole world kept looking for Soviet policy, growing power, sociopolitical changes, etc. But not only Soviet realis appeared in Korean text but also word like

oprchnina which means that not only Soviet period history is being known as most attractive to scholars and people interested in Russia.

Growing interest of Koreans to Russia is the first mark that soon Russian borrowings dictionaries creation will be of a high importance for further popularization of Russian history and culture in Asian countries, especially those which relations are progressing faster than others.

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