

From East-Asian Cultures to Russian Via English

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Today English is used as a lingua franca between languages with different writing systems. Chinese, Japanese, and Korean cultures became better known to Russian people due to English, though understanding Romanized Asian loan words is sometimes not an easy task. The presenter will discuss the idea and structure of a bilingual (English-Russian) dictionary of East Asian contact culture words designed to facilitate intercultural communication.

現在現在、英語は世界の共通語として使われています。中国、日本、そして韓国の文化は、英語によって、時に分りにくい外来語も含めて、ロシアの人々によりよく知られるようになりました。発表者は、東アジアコンタクトカルチャー用語の英語ロシア語2カ国語辞書についての案と構成について論考します。この辞書は異文化のコミュニケーションをより簡単にします。

It has been admitted that language and culture are inseparable, interdependent, and mutually supportive. When studying a foreign language, we come to know two cultures besides our native culture, we familiarize ourselves with a foreign culture related to the language we are studying. In second or foreign language acquisition, a student always compares his/her native culture with the one under study. The

more languages we know, the more culture-educated we are. But is it true that the only way to learn an ethnic culture is by learning the ethnic language? No, I believe there is another way to acquire a third, fourth or other culture. It is with the help of a lingua franca verbalizing other cultures and used for intercultural, international communication.

Nowadays this role of global language, or world lingua franca, belongs to English, which has spread all over the world. Opening vistas of other cultures, English facilitates cross-cultural understanding and the exchange of ideas. As such it brings Western culture to the Asian world, on the one hand - which sometimes leads to the accusation of “linguistic imperialism” (Phillipson, 1992) - and, on the other hand, Asian cultures to the Western world, thus enriching itself with lexical innovations expressing new culture phenomena.

In this respect, it might be useful to differentiate between the terms of International English and World English(es). International English (EIL), as defined by Quirk (1982), is a nuclear English common to all regional versions. It is somewhat simplified in structure, has neutral lexis and is employed in international institutions. World English (WE) is the total of all regional versions, regional Englishes, enriched by their culture-loaded elements. Therefore, WE is culturally richer than EIL.

Following Kachru (1986, 1992), Crystal (1995,

1997), Smith (1997, 1998) and other linguists, we believe that English has become not only a European but also an Asian language as it is used as a lingua franca for expressing Asian cultures as well as Russian and other ethnic cultures of the world.

Bilingual Dictionary of Culture Contacts: Why?

By means of English, Russian people come to know more and more about their East Asian neighbors and their cultures. English texts about Asia (encyclopedias, guidebooks, newspapers, magazines, fiction) contain Romanized culture-loaded Asian words. Some of these words are very difficult to understand and sometimes even to read, for they may have letter combinations which are non-typical for English (Ch. *qigong*, *Szechwan*, Jap. *itzebu* “a silver coin”, *heikyoku* “reciting accompanied by *biwa*”) as well as sound and letter correlations (Ch. *Xianggang*, *guoyu*). Moreover, there exist several systems of Romanization almost in every Asian country, which results in a number of spelling variants of one and the same word borrowed into English (*qigong*, *chikung*). What aggravates the situation for Russians reading English texts about Asia is the fact that there is no regular sound and letter interlanguage equivalence - regular English spellings and Romanizations of Asian words are not always equivalent to Cyrillic transliterations (cf. *Churchill* –

[ˈcherchil], Japanese *chanoyu* – [tyano`yu], Chinese (Wade-Giles) *chi kung* – [tsi`gun].)

In this context, it is evident that the need for a bilingual (English-Russian) cultural dictionary has become an urgent issue. It will facilitate cross-cultural communication between Japanese, Chinese, Korean and Russian people via the English language.

Bilingual Dictionary of Culture Contacts: What?

A bilingual English-Russian dictionary of Far Eastern culture contacts will include:

- old (long-term) loans from Chinese, Japanese and Korean naturalized in English (*tea, silk; samurai, ikebana; kimchi, taekwondo*);
- new exotic transplanted words (*bai bai*, Chinese: a ritual obeisance; *agemono*, Japanese: fried foods; *aboji*, Korean: father, type of address to an elderly man);
- calque (loan) translations (*capsule hotel*, a cheap Japanese hotel with very small rooms; *Christmas cake* – Japanese: an unmarried woman over 25 - Christmas cakes drop sharply in value after December 25; calques from Chinese *bean-curd; brainwash*; Korean and Chinese *Four Gentlemen*,

plum, orchid, chrysanthemum and bamboo, symbolizing moral integrity and often depicted in arts; Chinese *running dog, capitalist-roader*);

- words (“home-made” in East Asia) created from English elements (Jap. *camcorder* < *camera* + *recorder, home stay, salaryman, Walkman, nighter* = night baseball game);
- Borrowing is a two-way street. English words are notorious for inundating other languages. After nativization, they can return to English with a new meaning resulting in so-called “returned” words, i.e. reborrowed items, or those borrowed from English into an East-Asian language and then returned to English in a new form and meaning (Japanese *anime, apato*; Chinese *pidgin*);
- slang pidginized words that have lost their original phonetic and semantic forms and have been used mostly in American English where they were brought by traders and military men (*hunky-dory* from Yokohama’s *Huncho-dori Street* in Japan, a street with a number of entertaining establishments, and since the street happily led directly down to the docks, the sailors had no trouble in finding the way back to their ships (Morris 1971);

- words made up by English-speaking people and used to denote and connote phenomena related to East-Asian immigrants (*ABCs*, American born Chinese; *Gooks* (*pejorative*), Koreans; *banana*, an American East-Asian person: yellow outside, white inside), word symbols: *to butterfly* = to run after, to court, to pursue a girl (in the East the butterfly is a symbol of infidelity).
- Some East-Asian words have acquired new meanings when set in Western (mostly American) context (*futon*);
- English words denoting things whose origin is East Asia (*Canton crepe*, *Chinese boxes*, *tara vine* (*Actinidia arguta*), *Japanese cherry*);
- non-English words denoting objects typical of Far Eastern cultures: *pagoda* < Portuguese *pagode* “temple” < Persian *butkada* (*but* ‘idol’ + *kada* ‘temple, dwelling’). Or *amah* a child’s nurse < Portuguese *ama* < Lat. *amma* “breast nurse” < prob., Lat. *mamma* ‘breast’.

For a specialist in cross-cultural communication this material may become a source for further investigation and comparison.

Bilingual Dictionary of Culture Contacts: Where From?

The material selected for the dictionary of culture contacts is taken from both lexicographic and textual sources. Lexicographic sources are dictionaries of various types (from English-English dictionaries like Oxford and Webster to bilingual dictionaries for specific purposes, like botany, geology, etc). About 90 dictionaries have been used, and over 150 textual sources, among which are encyclopedias, guide books, magazines, and newspapers, as well as fiction. The corpus of the vocabulary amounts to about 8,000 words. The words in consideration are borrowed from Chinese, Japanese and Korean cultures adjacent to the Russian Far East.

Dictionary Entry: How?

A dictionary entry will give the following information:

1. A Romanized word and its spelling variants.
2. Phonetic transcription variants for reading in English (in the symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet) – since a great many words are new to the English language, their pronunciation is not fixed and this can imply a number of variants. This is even true for words that have been known in English for a long time, like (Jap.) *harakiri* [hxrq`kIrI; -`kIqrI; ,hRrq`kIrI] (Jones, 1997).

3. Grammar information. Most of the words are nouns, which is typical of borrowings. Some of them have the plural ending *s*, while others do not.
4. Etymology: the country of origin, and if known, the period of being fixed by dictionaries and the inner form, i.e. translation of the components: e.g., *kowtow* [18; . *ketou* (- *k'out'ou*) < *ke* “strike” + *tou* “head”].
5. Russian transliteration of the English borrowing. There may also be some variants, depending on the way the word has entered the Russian language – directly from scholars (Sinologists, Japanologist and specialists in Korea) who have developed the so called Oriental tradition, or through English, i.e. indirect, intermediary translation. Thus, if we take the Japanese word *sushi*, it has two Russian forms – [*susi*] (direct translation from Japanese) and [*sushi*] (indirect translation from English). Or the Chinese *tai-qi quan*, *tai-chi ch'uan* when translated by Sinologists, it has the form [*taitzi tsyuan*], but when taken from English (which happens more and more often), it acquires the form [*taichi chuan*], [*taidzhi*], [*taidzi*]. In Russia, we are witnessing a surge of interest in Asian culture. More and more people learn culture-loaded words from English texts rather than those written in Chinese, Japanese and Korean. So the influence of English spelling is dominant.
6. Stylistic or semantic note restricting the usage of the word by register, connotation, thematic field (some dictionaries are apt to give only neutral equivalents for emotionally colored words, especially if the latter are of negative connotation. This is not fair. The dictionary of culture contacts should mirror the complicated attitude of ethnic groups to each other as it developed in history).
7. Explanation of the meaning (in the target language, i.e. in Russian).
8. For some words it is possible to find an etymological parallelism to Russian borrowings, which are commonly slangish words used in the Russian Far East, like: *chow fan* [*CaV,fxn*] *n* [.] (.) , , (fried rice); cf. Russian Far Eastern slang . Or *Kampai!* [*kRmpaI*; *ˈkxmpaI*] *interj* [.] ! ! (toast); . *kan pei!* *kanpai!* *kan-pei!* *Ganbei!*; . (.) () (“to arrange a kampai party”).

9. Illustrative context: a sentence from an English text where the Asian word is used. These contexts have two functions: on the one hand, they prove that the East Asian word has been used in English speech; on the other hand, they add to the meaning of the word.
10. Translation of the illustrative context into Russian. It is required in a bilingual dictionary.

We hope that the linguo-cultural information contained in the dictionary will be useful for a great number of Russians who have contact with East Asian countries via English.

Comparing Asian cultures

Besides having a reference function, the dictionary will serve as a source for comparing Chinese, Japanese and Korean cultures. It will cover the most typical fields of Asian life that are new and seem peculiar to a Westerner, such as martial arts, cuisine, East-Asian art, philosophy,

religion, and everyday life (clothes, housing, etc.).

At the same time, this dictionary will throw light on Westerners' preferences and interests in particular Asian cultures. Through English as an intermediary language (*lingua franca*) we can clearly see what fields are specific to this or that Asian culture. Evidently, the more loans have been made from a specific thematic field, the more attractive this sphere is to English speakers.

I have classified all the loans into thematic groups and compared them as to the number of words and their origin. Though most of the thematic fields are common to Chinese, Japanese and Korean loans, Chinese loans are dominant over other languages in the number of cuisine terms; Japanese in sport, especially martial arts; whereas Korean borrowings represent mostly elements of everyday culture.

Thus we may say that the dictionary of language contacts mirrors culture contacts, both historical and current, and reflects elements of cultures most essential to neighboring peoples.

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