

Framing “goodness”: A cross-cultural collocational study of Korean *chakhata* and Russian *dobryj*

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Kim, Selim, Sang-A Lee, and Hyehyun Nam. 2025. Framing “goodness”: A cross-cultural collocational study of Korean *chakhata* and Russian *dobryj*. *Linguistic Research* 42(3): 771-797. This study compares the Korean adjective *chakhata* (“kind, good-natured”) and the Russian adjective *dobryj* (“kind, good”) using collocational and semantic network analyses. Drawing on large-scale web-crawled corpora from Sketch Engine, the study examines how the shared concept of “goodness” is structured in Korean and Russian discourse. The results show clear cross-linguistic differences in collocational distribution and semantic organization. *Chakhata* predominantly collocates with nouns in the [person] category and forms a tightly connected semantic network centered on normative evaluation. In contrast, *dobryj* appears across a broader range of conceptual domains, including [emotion], [communication], [cognition], and [quantity], and exhibits a more radial semantic structure extending into abstract evaluative meanings. These patterns point to different evaluative orientations. *Chakhata* tends to encode norm-based moral judgment focused on socially evaluated persons, whereas *dobryj* more often conveys affective warmth and communal orientation. Both adjectives also allow paradoxical or ironic uses, in which positive evaluation is contextually inverted by culturally specific expectations. The findings show that evaluative adjectives are organized into culturally specific semantic networks, through which shared notions of “goodness” are structured by distinct moral and affective frameworks in Korean and Russian discourse. (Indiana University Bloomington · Yonsei University)

Keywords semantic network, collocation analysis, corpus, cultural linguistics, evaluative adjectives, Korean, Russian

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1. Introduction

In contemporary lexical semantics, word meaning is increasingly perceived not as a fixed dictionary entry but as a dynamic semantic network influenced by speakers' experiences, cognitive structures, and cultural value systems. Wierzbicka (1997: 4) contends that language reflects the existence and perspective of a specific speech community, and consequently, even lexemes deemed equivalent in dictionaries across languages seldom align completely in meaning. Particularly, cultural linguistics and semantic network analysis have shown interest in adjectives that evaluate human character, behavior, or social relations as key lexical items that reflect each speech community's ethical norms and affective sensibilities.

Within this framework, this study compares the Korean adjective *chakhata* and the Russian adjective *dobryj*, both denoting “kind” or “good-natured,” to examine how these seemingly equivalent words reveal culturally distinct conceptualizations of moral goodness.¹ These two languages are grounded in distinct cultural traditions, with Korea shaped by Confucian ethics and social norms and Russia shaped by Orthodox traditions and collective emotional ties. These traditions appear to influence how each culture conceptualizes “goodness.” This assumption will be empirically examined through corpus-based analysis below. As a cultural background, Hofstede et al. (2010) report that both Korea and Russia show low levels of individualism and high uncertainty avoidance, with Korea scoring 18 in individualism and 85 in uncertainty avoidance and Russia scoring 39 and 95, respectively. This pattern suggests a shared tendency to prioritize conformity to norms.

At the same time, the contrast is clear: Korea's extremely low individualism reflects an institutionalized collectivism grounded in Confucian role ethics, whereas Russia's high uncertainty avoidance and power distance (93) underscore the stabilizing influence of Orthodox values, traditions, and emotional solidarity. The GLOBE study (House et al. 2004) further reinforces this distinction: Korea scores higher on institutional collectivism and norm adherence, whereas Russia scores higher on in-group collectivism and human orientation, reflecting the cultural centrality of family bonds and interpersonal warmth. As discussed below, these cultural differences manifest in the lexicon: *chakhata* retains the core meaning of “a person who fulfills

1 All Russian in this paper is transliterated using the ISO 9 scientific transliteration system.

their role and conforms to norms,” whereas *dobryj* extends from moral virtue to meanings associated with warmth, benevolence, and positive social relations.

Despite these differences in contemporary usage, their etymological origins indicate a common trajectory of semantic development. *chakhata* appears in seventeenth-century sources as *chakhata* (착한다), carrying meanings such as “excellent,” “strong,” “strict,” and “admirable,” referring to physical excellence or propriety (Kolyetay Hankwuketaysacen [Korea University Korean Dictionary]).² This suggests that the adjective originally indexed qualities of orderliness and propriety. Similarly, *dobryj* derives from Proto-Slavic *dobrъ*, which can be traced back to Proto-Indo-European *dhabh-* (“to fit, to be suitable”) (Škvará 2021).³ In its earliest attestations, it signified “appropriate” or “fitting,” reflecting a positive evaluation of material attributes, before extending to meanings such as “morally good,” “warm-hearted” (Ozhegov and Shvedova 1999). Therefore, both adjectives share an etymological basis in positive qualitative evaluation.

This study investigates how *chakhata* and *dobryj* function in contemporary Korean and Russian by analyzing large-scale corpus data, focusing on their collocational patterns. Ultimately, comparing the semantic networks formed by the two adjectives provides empirical evidence of how the two speech communities—each shaped by different cultural value systems—conceptualize “goodness” within distinct semantic domains and relational frameworks.

2. Previous studies and theoretical background

2.1 Studies on the meanings of *chakhata* and *dobryj*

Research on *chakhata* and *dobryj* has primarily examined their processes of semantic extension and the development of polysemy. Studies of *chakhata* have increasingly adopted corpus-based methodologies to identify shifts in meaning and discourse function. Kim (2015) contended that *chakhata*, derived from Manchu *cak*

2 *Chak* is not an independent lexical item but rather a borrowed element from the Manchu expressions *cak sere* or *cak seme* (‘neatly, strictly’) (Kim 2015)

3 From this root was derived Old Slavic *doba* meaning “period, time,” thereby producing words such as *sdobnyj* (“well-made, tasty”) and *udobnyj* (“convenient, timely”).

in the seventeenth century, initially meant a “clear disposition.” Influenced by Confucianism, it evolved to denote children’s behavior aligning with adult expectations, subsequently expanding to describe personal traits such as “pleasing others.” He observed that the semantic looseness of *chak* facilitated diverse extensions.

Lim (2014) dated the acceleration of this expansion to the mid-1990s, with rapid growth occurring post-2000. Although dictionaries restrict *chakhata* to “a person whose temperament or behavior is good and gentle,” actual usage extends to inanimate nouns, as in *chakhan nolay* (“kind song”), *chakhan wusum* (“kind smile”), or *chakhan yenghwa* (“kind film”). He described this as a radial structure emanating from a core meaning. Kim (2009) demonstrated that *chakha-* shifted from associating exclusively with [+human] nouns to encompassing [+object] nouns with positive connotations. Kim (2012) showed that collocations with *chakhan* evolved from [PERSON], [ACT], [ATTRIBUTE] to [COMMUNICATION], [GROUP], [COGNITION], frequently generating semantic tension while also facilitating metaphorical extension. Cheon (2019) further observed the emergence of sociocultural functions in media discourse, where phrases such as *chakhan sangphwum* (“ethical product”) and *chakhan kiep* (“ethical enterprise”) serve as strategies for positive branding.

Studies of Russian *dobryj* have focused on its broader sets of synonyms. Romanovskâ (2016) analyzed its etymology and idioms, demonstrating how *dobryj* evolved from “fitting, comfortable” to a positive evaluation of persons, actions, emotions, will, and even time, reflecting collective religious values. Cui (2018) contrasted Russian and Chinese adjectives of human goodness, identifying *dobryj* as a central member of a category that links moral, emotional, and interpersonal traits. Zhang (2022) compared *dobryj* with its synonyms, highlighting a shared connotation of “benevolent, sympathetic”; *dobryj* itself encompasses meanings from kindness and helpfulness to, in certain contexts, “weakness” or “ineffectuality.”

Overall, research indicates that *chakhata* and *dobryj* have historically focused on moral positivity but are now exhibiting significant semantic expansion. However, most studies remain confined to single languages. Few studies have conducted cross-cultural comparisons or systematically explained how a shared semantic core diverges into distinct paths of extension. The following section reviews theories of semantic extension and cultural linguistics as a framework for this comparison.

2.2 From semantic extension to cultural conceptualization

Semantic networks typically radiate from a prototypical meaning into peripheral senses that maintain structural relations. Cho (1993: 268–270) critiqued linear dictionary entries for failing to capture the hierarchical structure of semantic networks and proposed three alternative models: (1) the radial model, in which each derived sense is directly connected to the central meaning; (2) the chain model, in which each sense is linked only to its immediate predecessor in a sequential progression; and (3) the radial chain model, which integrates the structural principles of both. Heine et al. (1991: 55) contended that meanings typically transition from concrete to abstract in the sequence [PERSON] > [OBJECT] > [PROCESS] > [SPACE] > [TIME] > [QUALITY], a progression that follows metaphorical mapping. This hierarchy illustrates the systematic directionality of semantic extension from central to peripheral domains. In this framework, [PERSON] represents the most central and concrete domain, whereas [QUALITY] occupies the most peripheral and abstract position.

However, semantic extension also reflects cultural context. Seong (2004: 140–141) identified six influential factors: cultural reflectivity, culture-driven linguistic development, intercultural contact, sociocultural dynamics, and historical and psychological influences. He emphasized that linguistic expressions mirror the conceptual framework of each speech community. This demonstrates that semantic extension operates not only at the cognitive level but also at the cultural level, revealing that it is not merely a cognitive process but a linguistic mechanism through which a community’s moral and emotional orientations are realized.

The notion that language embodies the speaker’s worldview constitutes a central principle of cultural linguistics. Tracing back to Humboldt (1999 [1836]), Cultural linguistics views linguistic diversity as a manifestation of each culture’s ethos and worldview, as well as a repository of its conceptualizations. The field, further advanced by Boas, Sapir, and Whorf, now examines the cultural significance embedded in language and provides a theoretical framework for elucidating the processes of semantic extension.

Within cultural linguistics, two main paths have been identified (Karasik 2002: 76). The first is contrastive analysis, which compares equivalents across languages to reveal worldviews and values. The second is intra-linguistic analysis, which examines

how words are connected to cultural practices and norms. Both approaches are based on the view that language is conceptualized as a cultural–cognitive system where cultural experience and cognitive structures intersect. This study adopts the former approach, recognizing that cross-linguistic comparison extends beyond lexical equivalence to reveal how linguistic systems encode and presuppose distinct cultural conceptualizations. Evaluative adjectives that encode judgments about socially approved or disapproved traits are particularly sensitive to cultural influences. Such adjectives encapsulate a community’s ethical and emotional standards, revealing how moral norms and affective values are conceptualized within that culture.

The theoretical discussions reviewed above provide the foundation for understanding semantic extension and cultural conceptualization. Building on this framework, the present study analyzes the semantic networks of the adjectives *chakhata* and *dobryj* and interprets their pathways of semantic extension in relation to each language community’s system of values, thereby identifying the ethical and emotional norms embedded within them. The next section outlines the methodological framework of the study.

2.3 Lexical semantic studies based on co-occurrence relations

Advances in corpus tools have underscored the significance of data-driven methodologies in semantic research. Among these methods, co-occurrence analysis has become central because it examines how words pattern with others in authentic usage. This approach is grounded in Firth’s (1957: 11) well-known statement, “You shall know a word by the company it keeps,” which conceptualizes meaning as recurrent associations in actual linguistic contexts (ibid: 8).

Two main directions have emerged. First, intra-linguistic studies compare the collocational patterns of near-synonyms within a single language, clarifying subtle distinctions and semantic network structure. Yin and Lee (2025), for instance, evidenced that *talta* (“sweet”) and *ssuta* (“bitter”) extend from taste-related meanings to sensory and emotional domains, whereas Choi (2024) demonstrated that corpus-based analysis of frequency and collocates more effectively reveals usage contrasts among Korean synonyms of *sata* (“to buy”) than dictionary definitions. Second, cross-linguistic studies contrast equivalents across languages to reveal

divergences obscured by superficial similarities. Kang (2012) compared Korean *ttatushata* (“warm”) and *ttukepta* (“hot”) with English *warm/hot* and German *warm/heiß*, illustrating how their collocational structures motivate metaphorical and metonymic extensions, whereas Jung (2019) analyzed *kkayta* (“break, wake”) versus *break* by constructing polysemous networks to show structural contrasts.

Collectively, these studies confirm the methodological value of co-occurrence analysis, as they highlight statistically significant patterns, thereby reducing subjectivity and enabling systematic cross-linguistic comparison. Building on these findings, the present study considers *chakhata* and *dobryj* as node words, examining their adjective–noun co-occurrence networks to compare their polysemy.

3. Analytical framework for semantic network comparison

This chapter outlines the framework and procedures used to compare the semantic networks of the adjectives *chakhata* and *dobryj*. First, it examines dictionary definitions of the two adjectives. Second, it introduces semantic categories (S1–S6) and the criteria for classifying collocates, which serve as the basis for constructing the co-occurrence-based semantic network. Third, it describes the corpus data and the analytical procedures adopted for the study.

3.1 Dictionary definitions of the target adjectives

Analyzing lexical semantic structures requires the initial identification of the primary meanings of each adjective. This section reviews dictionary definitions to determine the semantic cores and ranges of *chakhata* and *dobryj*. The analysis of Korean draws on the Phyocwunkwuketaysacen (Standard Korean Dictionary) and the Kolyetay Hankwuketaysacen (Korea University Korean Dictionary). The analysis of Russian draws on the Dictionary of the Contemporary Russian Literary Language (Černyšëv 1950) and the Explanatory Dictionary of the Russian Language (Ozhegov and Shvedova 1999).

In Korean, *chakhata* is a prototypical evaluative adjective pertaining to human character and behavior. The Standard Korean Language Dictionary defines it as “having speech, behavior, or disposition that is gentle, upright, and kind,” highlighting

moral qualities that do not harm others and are based on goodwill. Similarly, the Korea University Korean Dictionary defines its primary meaning as “(of a person or one’s mind) virtuous and kind.” In this context, “virtuous” evokes traditional ethical ideals, positing that the adjective conveys an image of ideal character within the community. Both dictionaries unequivocally identify the semantic core of *chakhata* in moral disposition, citing synonyms such as *senlyanghata* (“good-natured”) and *senhata* (“virtuous”). Notably, the Korea University Dictionary encompasses a secondary sense: “(of a price) inexpensive relative to quality or performance.” Expressions such as *chakhan kakyek* (“fair price”) or *chakhan siktang* (“affordable restaurant”) illustrate how the adjective, previously confined to moral evaluation of persons, has recently expanded to encompass inanimate objects, reflecting value from a consumer perspective. This usage, which occurs frequently in day-to-day discourse, advertising, and product descriptions, exemplifies an ongoing semantic shift.

In contrast, *dobryj* in Russian is a polysemous evaluative adjective used for moral assessment of human character as well as for emotions, relationships, material qualities, time, and quantity. Both Černyšev (1950) and Ozhegov and Shvedova (1999) confirm its extensive semantic expansion across conceptual domains.

Table 1. Definitions of “*dobryj*” in Černyšev (1950)

1	Referring to people with goodwill, imbued with sympathy for them; responsive (opposed to <i>zloj</i> “evil”) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Noble, humane (about actions, feelings, etc.); 2) Based on the desire for good, goodwill toward a person or people.
2	Close, devoted (about a person); good, respectable.
3	Unblemished; impeccable, flawless (about reputation, name, etc.).
4	Favorable, joyful (about a period of time, news, etc.).
5	(colloquial) Possessing certain positive qualities; good, excellent; of good quality, solid.
6	Whole, complete, in full measure.

Table 2. Definitions of “*dobryj*” in Ozhegov and Shvedova (1999)

1	Doing good to others, being responsive, and expressing these qualities.
2	Bringing benefit, good, well-being.
3	Good, moral.
4	Friendly, close, dear.
5	Good, excellent.
6	Impeccable, honest.
7	(colloquial) Truly as large as, or not less than, what is indicated by the noun or numeral

Tables 1 and 2 show that both dictionaries primarily define *dobryj* as embodying the traits of a kind and sympathetic person. The adjective also denotes intimacy in interpersonal relations: this is reflected as the second sense in Černyšev (1950) and the fourth sense in Ozhegov and Shvedova (1999). Černyšev (1950) further specifies the sub-meaning “good, respectable people,” indicating that *dobryj* pairs with nouns such as *lûdi* (“people”) and *graždane* (“citizens”) to create conventional honorific expressions. *Dobryj* also emphasizes honesty and reliability, contributing to a positive evaluation of reputation or name. Examples include *poterâv dobruû slavu* (“losing a good reputation”) and *dobroe imâ* (“good name → good reputation”). These senses align with the third definition in Černyšev (1950) and the sixth in Ozhegov and Shvedova (1999). In addition, *dobryj* can describe positive states, situations, or periods of time, aligning with the fourth definition in Černyšev (1950) and the second in Ozhegov and Shvedova (1999). Expressions such as *dobrye vesti* (“good news”) and *dobroe vremâ* (“pleasant times”) convey optimism and emotional comfort. This usage also encompasses idiomatic greetings and wishes, including *dobryj den'* (“good day → hello”) and *v dobryj put'* (“on a good path → have a good journey”).⁴ The adjective further pertains to functional evaluations of people, animals, and objects, as in *dobraâ lošad'* (“a sturdy horse”) or *dobryj rabotnik* (“a diligent worker”).⁵ Finally, *dobryj* combines with nouns of quantity, distance, or time to signify “ample, sufficient.” Illustrative examples include *dobryh dva časa* (“a full two hours”) and *dobryh desât' kilometrov* (“a solid ten kilometers”).

In summary, while *chakhata* maintains a largely monosemic structure centered on moral virtue, *dobryj* exhibits radial polysemy that extends across ethical, emotional, and quantitative domains. These semantic patterns provide the foundation for the categorization and network analysis presented in Section 3.2.

3.2 Semantic categories of the adjectives

As shown above, the Korean adjective *chakhata* and the Russian adjective *dobryj* share the semantic feature of moral positivity, yet they differ in the structure of their

⁴ The scope of this study excludes fixed idiomatic expressions whose meanings have become grammaticalized or conventionalized.

⁵ Not all examples can be distinctly classified based on the aforementioned criteria. For instance, *dobryj urožaj* (“good harvest”) presents an overlap between qualitative and quantitative evaluation.

semantic networks. *Chakhata* forms a monocentric network that emphasizes intrinsic, character-based evaluation and is predominantly used to describe human personality. In contrast, *dobryj* begins with moral evaluation but expands into meanings associated with emotional warmth, social relationality, functional quality, quantitative emphasis, and positive assessments of reputation or memory, thereby constituting a more intricate polysemous network. This study systematically classifies the senses of the two adjectives into six categories. This categorization is based on dictionary definitions, previous analyses of their semantic networks (Kim 2012; Im 2014), and meanings attested in actual co-occurrence data. Table 3 presents the six semantic categories (S1–S6) along with representative synonyms. Including these synonyms clarifies the conceptual boundaries of each category and illustrates the broader range of usage and semantic organization.

Table 3. Semantic categories

#	Category	Synonyms
S1	Moral Positivity	virtuous, benevolent, upright
S2	Emotional Positivity	affectionate, warm, gentle, tender, kind
S3	Socio-ethical Positivity	just, fair, exemplary
S4	Functional Positivity	beneficial, practical, efficient, of good quality
S5	Situational Positivity	auspicious, welcome, joyful, favorable
S6	Quantitative Positivity	large, ample, sufficient

S1 (Moral Positivity) pertains to the ethical evaluation of a person's character or behavior and directly corresponds to the primary meanings of *chakhata* and *dobryj*. S2 (Emotional Positivity) embodies warmth and gentleness in interpersonal impressions, characterized by terms such as "affectionate," "warm," and "tender." S3 (Socio-ethical Positivity) denotes alignment with communal norms and ethical standards, expressed in terms such as "just," "fair," and "exemplary." S4 (Functional Positivity) evaluates utility, efficiency, and quality, with synonyms including "beneficial," "practical," and "of good quality." S5 (Situational Positivity) conveys positive outcomes and hopeful expectations, represented by words such as "auspicious," "joyful," and "favorable." Finally, S6 (Quantitative Positivity) evaluates entities based on measure, scale, or sufficiency, with representative synonyms including "ample" and "sufficient." These six semantic categories provide the interpretive framework for the subsequent co-occurrence-based analysis of *chakhata* and *dobryj*.

3.3 Conceptual classification of noun collocates

In analyzing the polysemy of adjectives, it is essential to systematically classify the conceptual domains of the nouns they modify, that is, their collocates. This classification provides the basis for semantic interpretation. The present study adopts the WordNet noun taxonomy (Miller 1995), a framework widely employed in lexical semantic research. Table 4 shows that WordNet divides nouns into 25 top-level categories.⁶ For instance, nouns representing social roles, such as *student*, *doctor*, and *teacher*, are classified under [person], whereas nouns that convey psychological states, such as *happiness*, *anger*, and *anxiety* fall under [feeling].

Table 4. Top-level noun categories in WordNet

#	Category	#	Category
1	act	14	object
2	animal	15	person
3	artifact	16	phenomenon
4	attribute	17	plant
5	body	18	possession
6	cognition	19	process
7	communication	20	quantity
8	event	21	relation
9	feeling	22	shape
10	food	23	state
11	group	24	substance
12	location	25	time
13	motive		

These categories offer an essential interpretive framework when combined with the six semantic sense categories (S1–S6) described in Section 3.2. For example, S6 (Quantitative Positivity) typically appears when an adjective occurs with nouns in the [quantity] category, since these combinations highlight notions of sufficiency in size, amount, or duration. Classifying collocates in this way enables a more precise mapping of the conceptual domains where specific senses of an adjective are realized.

6 Certain classifications include *noun.Tops* (top-level concepts), resulting in 26 categories; however, it is generally accepted that only 25 are semantically valid. Accordingly, this study excludes the *noun.Tops* category.

3.4 Data and methodology

This study conducted a co-occurrence-based analysis to compare the semantic networks of Korean *chakhata* and Russian *dobryj*. The data were sourced from two large web-crawled corpora accessible via the Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff et al. 2014): KoTenTen18 (ca. 1.7 billion tokens) for Korean and RuTenTen17 (ca. 9 billion tokens) for Russian.⁷ Although these corpora offer extensive linguistic coverage, their genre distribution is uneven (e.g., news, blogs, forums). Even so, their scale and contextual diversity make them suitable for comparative semantic network analysis. Both corpora include annotation layers such as lemma, part of speech (POS), and grammatical relations.

Noun collocates were extracted using the Word Sketch tool in Sketch Engine, which identifies statistically significant word associations. For *dobryj*, the analysis focused on the *dobryj* + noun structure, as the reverse order (noun + *dobryj*) rarely appeared.⁸ For *chakhata*, both attributive (*chakhan* + noun) and predicative (noun + *chakhata*) structures were examined. To comprehensively capture collocates, searches were conducted using nextleft and nextright to identify nouns adjacent to *chakhata*, supplemented by noun_left and noun_right to detect modifying relationships beyond adjacency. All results were manually examined to confirm semantic modification, and only unequivocal attributive uses were retained. To ensure reliability, the selection process was independently reviewed and cross-validated by the three co-authors.

A total of 92 noun collocates were identified for *dobryj* and 85 for *chakhata*. Since Word Sketch provides only statistically significant rather than exhaustive collocates, the default thresholds for frequency and association score were retained to ensure reliability and consistency. To broaden the interpretive base, supplementary evidence from previous studies, discourse examples, and, for Russian, additional searches in

7 The data are based on the official documentation of Sketch Engine: <https://www.sketchengine.eu/kotent-en-korean-corpus/>, <https://www.sketchengine.eu/rutenten-russian-corpus/> (accessed September 11, 2025).

8 This outcome does not reflect the actual frequency of predicative uses in Russian but rather a limitation of the sketch grammar used by the Word Sketch tool. The grammar identifies relations such as “X + noun” and “noun + (byt’ + X),” yet the latter is rare because it recognizes only constructions with *byt’* (“to be”). As a result, the tool primarily captures attributive modifiers and minimally detects predicative uses. Only seven collocates were retrieved for “noun + (byt’ + X),” all overlapping with those in “X + noun” and none adjacent to the keyword; these were excluded as they do not affect the overall profile.

the Russian National Corpus (<https://ruscorpora.ru/>) were incorporated.

The collected collocates were classified according to the WordNet noun taxonomy. Polysemous nouns were categorized based on the most salient contextual meaning, with the least context-dependent interpretation selected when multiple readings were possible. Each collocate was then assigned to one of the six predefined semantic categories (S1–S6). Classification was conducted independently by the three co-authors and cross-validated. These procedures provided the empirical basis for comparing the two adjectives by (1) categorizing the conceptual domains of their noun collocates and (2) identifying their evaluative domains. The following chapter analyzes these data and compares the semantic networks of *chakhata* and *dobryj*.

4. Results

4.1 Distribution of conceptual categories of noun collocates

The distribution of noun collocates for *chakhata* and *dobryj* highlights cross-linguistic disparities in the trajectories of semantic extension.

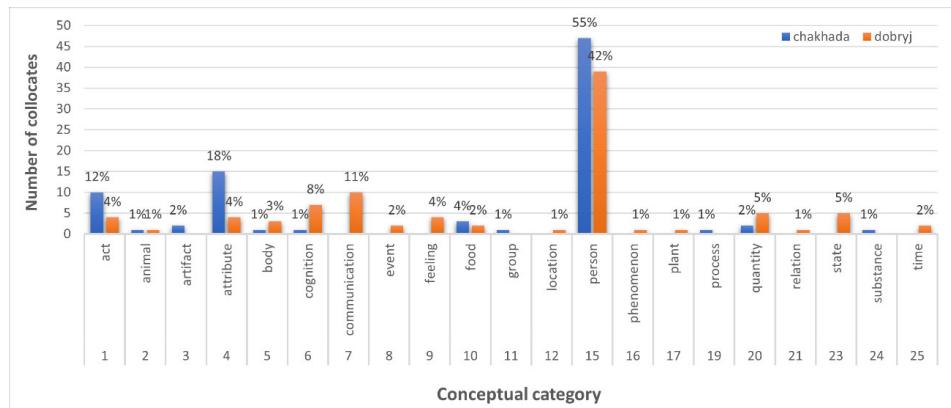


Figure 1. Conceptual category distributions of collocates in Korean and Russian

In Korean, more than half of the collocates of *chakhata* (ca. 55%) belong to the [person] category. Representative examples include *ai* (“child”), *chinkwu* (“friend”), and *cwuinkongtul* (“protagonists”). Frequent collocates also encompass [attribute]

nouns such as *sengkyek* (“personality”), *sengphwum* (“disposition”), *maum* (“mind”), and *simseng* (“temperament”), as well as [act] nouns such as *paylye* (“consideration”), *yangpo* (“concession”), and *hayngsil* (“conduct”). These patterns affirm that the semantic core of *chakhata* revolves around the ethical evaluation of personality and behavior. A limited number of collocates belong to categories such as [food] (*papsang* “dining table,” *mekkeli* “food”) and [artifact] (*hwacangphwum* “cosmetics”), indicating that the adjective is progressively broadening its scope beyond its preferred domains ([person], [attribute], [act]) to encompass inanimate referents. Kim (2012) similarly observed that since the mid-2000s, mass media has popularized expressions such as *chakhan khephi* (“fair coffee”), *chakhan yokum* (“affordable fare”), *chakhan kiswul* (“beneficial technology”), and *chakhan tayskul* (“positive online comment”), indicating the emergence of novel collocational patterns with [-HUMAN] nouns.⁹

In contrast, *dobryj* exhibits a broader yet differently structured semantic distribution. Approximately 42% of its collocates belong to the [person] category, but the adjective also appears with nouns from diverse conceptual domains, including [communication] (*vest'* “news,” *slovo* “word,” *skazka* “fairy tale,” *otzyv* “review”), [cognition] (*volâ* “will”), [state] (*zdrorov'e* “health”), [quantity] (*polovina* “half”), and [feeling] (*nadežda* “hope”). Expressions such as *dobroe nastroenie* (“pleasant mood”) and *dobryj úmor* (“good-natured humor,” i.e., humor that does not demean others) demonstrate how *dobryj* extends beyond moral judgment into more abstract evaluative domains.

However, unlike *chakhata*, *dobryj* rarely modifies nouns belonging to the [attribute] or [act] categories. This tendency arises because speakers assume that a ‘good person’ already possesses kind qualities and dispositions. Although *dobryj* can co-occur with nouns such as *dusha* (“soul”), *nrv* (“disposition”), and *postupok* (“action”), expressions like *dobryj čelovek* (“good person”) are overwhelmingly more frequent in actual usage than phrases such as *dobryj harakter* (“good character; personality”).¹⁰ This is because *dobryj* functions as a holistic evaluation of the person rather than a descriptor of specific attributes. This tendency reflects a conceptual overlap between attribute and

9 Kim (2012) interprets this as a metaphorical extension arising from collocational conflict with nouns that are difficult to combine with the core meaning of *chakhata*, evaluating it as a discursive outcome of Korean speakers’ gradual reconfiguration of the adjective’s semantic features.

10 According to the noun collocate list in the Russian National Corpus, *kharakter* shows a logDice score of 7.4 (79,578 tokens), *nrv* 8.7 (13,930 tokens), and *dusha* 8.77 (192,351 tokens), whereas *čelovek* reaches 9.62 (1,127,316 tokens).

entity in Russian, where moral and emotional qualities are typically expressed through the person (*čelovek*) rather than through internal traits (*kharakter*).¹¹

Figure 1 shows that both adjectives predominantly collocate with nouns in the [person] category. However, the specific composition of their collocates varies considerably. In the case of *chakhata*, the most frequent collocates include *ai* (“child”), *elini* (“child”), *myenuli* (“daughter-in-law”), *sonyen* (“boy”), *sonye* (“girl”), *ttal* (“daughter”), and *atul* (“son”). These patterns indicate that speakers often use *chakhata* when they evaluate the character of someone younger or socially subordinate, typically from the perspective of an elder or a person in a higher social position.

In contrast, *dobryj* collocates broadly with terms such as *čelovek* (“person”), *drug* (“friend”), *doktor* (“doctor”), *sosed* (“neighbor”), *žensina* (“woman”), *angel* (“angel”), *car’* (“tsar”), and *bog* (“God”). This range extends across social status, gender, and authority. The frequent appearance of authoritative figures, such as the tsar and God, is especially significant. In Russian cultural imagination and literature, the tsar, although an autocratic ruler with absolute power, has traditionally been idealized as the earthly representative of divine will and as a “benevolent father.” Similarly, *bog* is perceived not only as a figure of omnipotence but also as a source of goodness and mercy. As a result, collocations such as *dobryj car’* (“benevolent tsar”) and *dobryj bog* (“benevolent God”) carry strong symbolic associations. Unlike *chakhata*, which tends to express ethical evaluation within hierarchical social relations, *dobryj* highlights emotional warmth and intimacy even when it refers to authoritative or transcendent figures.

4.2 Comparison of collocates by semantic category

This section extracts the semantic categories (S1–S6) of the two adjectives as manifested in actual usage and analyzes the distribution of their noun collocates. Figures 2 and 3 visualize the resultant semantic networks.

¹¹ The noun *harakter* frequently collocates with adjectives such as *nacional’nyj* (“national,” 8.24), *tvérdyj* (“firm,” 7.26), *sil’nyj* (“strong,” 6.98), and *političeskij* (“political,” 7.23), which highlight willpower, determination, and ideological stance rather than emotional warmth. This lexical pattern supports the view that *dobryj* denoting empathy and interpersonal warmth conceptually contrasts with the typical semantics of *harakter* as firmness and strength.

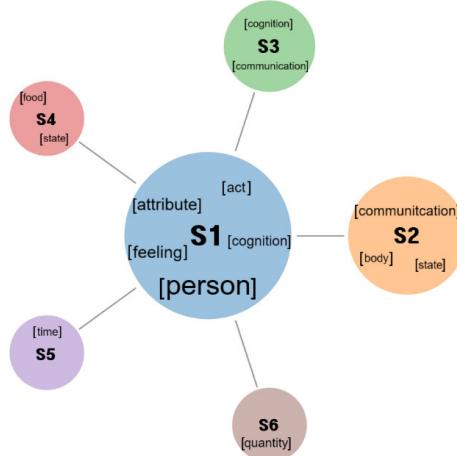
Figure 2. Semantic network of Korean *chakhata*Figure 3. Semantic network of Russian *dobryj*

Figure 2 shows the collocational patterns of *chakhata* grouped by semantics, and Figure 3 presents the corresponding patterns for *dobryj*. Each circle (node) represents one semantic category, and its size reflects the absolute frequency of that sense in the corpus. The terms in each node indicate the conceptual categories of noun collocates associated with that sense. Their font size is proportional to their frequency, allowing the most frequent collocate domains to stand out visually.

For both adjectives, S1 (Moral Positivity) is the dominant sense. This sense accounts for approximately 81% of collocates of *chakhata* and 59% of those of *dobryj*. *Chakhata* frequently co-occurs with [person] nouns such as *chinkwu* (“friend”), *emma* (“mother”), *ai* (“child”), as well as with [attribute] nouns such as *sengphwum* (“disposition”) and *maumssi* (“heart”). *Dobryj*, in addition to [person] nouns, also collocates with abstract and psychological nouns: *duša* (“soul”), *nrv* (“disposition”) from [attribute]; *volâ* (“will”), *sovest'* (“conscience”) from [cognition]; and *nadežda*

(“hope”), *raspoloženie* (“goodwill”) from [feeling].

S2 (Emotional Positivity) is not attested for *chakhata*. No instances of emotional use appear in the corpus. In contrast, approximately 15% of *dobryj*’s collocates realize this sense, most frequently with nouns in [communication] category. Expressions such as *dobroe slovo* (“kind word”), *dobryj sovet* (“kind, warm advice”), and *dobraâ skazka* (“gentle fairy tale” for children) demonstrate how the adjective conveys warmth and positive emotional tone.

S3 (Socio-ethical Positivity) constitutes approximately 16% of *chakhata*’s collocates and 9% of *dobryj*’s. In Russian, *dobryj* frequently combines with abstract nouns such as *tradiciâ* (“tradition”) from [cognition] and *reputaciâ* (“reputation”) from [communication]. In these contexts, *dobryj* emphasizes warmth and communal solidarity. For example, *dobraâ tradiciâ* denotes not merely a “morally correct tradition” but one that evokes emotional comfort and fosters social cohesion. Consequently, *dobryj* in S3 conveys a form of communal ethics, and its affective tone partially overlaps with S2 (Emotional Positivity). In contemporary Russia, nostalgia for Soviet-era practices (such as neighborly mutual aid, collective participation in national holidays, or the simplicity of everyday life) often leads speakers to frame these practices as “good traditions.” One illustrative example is the expression *6 dobryh tradicij iz SSSR, kotorye stoit vernut'*, *čtoby naš mir stal čutočku dobree* (“Six good traditions from the USSR that are worth bringing back to make our world a little kinder”).

By contrast, *chakhata* in S3 combines with concrete nouns such as *papsang* (“dining table”) from [food], *kiep* (“enterprise”) from [group], and *hwacangphwum* (“cosmetics”) from [artifact]. Cheon (2019) notes that *chakhata* is frequently used to describe companies and products associated with public values such as fair trade, donation, and eco-friendliness. Similarly, Kim and Lee (2020) argue that expressions such as *chakhata kiep* (“ethical enterprise”) reflect public expectations regarding corporate social responsibility. As a result, *chakhata* has become closely linked to discourses of ethical consumption, extending to evaluations of corporate image and consumer behavior more broadly. Although both adjectives extend to non-human referents, *dobryj* emphasizes collective emotion, whereas *chakhata* reflects moralized consumption.

In S4 (Functional Positivity), *dobryj* (6.5%) is more prevalent than *chakhata* (2.4%). *Dobryj* collocates with nouns such as *vino* (“wine”) from the [artifact] category and

služba (“service”) from [act], highlighting practical or functional evaluation. In Korean, however, *chakhata* extends to physical attributes through collocates such as *mommay* (“body shape”) and *oymo* (“appearance”) from [body], indicating a shift from moral evaluation to aesthetic assessment. Although these uses may appear purely aesthetic, the adjective often conveys judgments of appropriateness, or social desirability rather than physical attractiveness alone. In this respect, *chakhata* expresses a form of functional or socially valued quality that aligns with S4 (Functional Positivity). Expressions such as *nwunkil salocapnun chakhan oymo* (“captivatingly good looks”) and *kwunsal ceylo, chakhan mommay* (“slim, attractive body”) illustrate its role in contexts of beauty and appeal (Xia 2022: 391).

A notable contrast emerges when the adjective modifies nouns in the [artifact] category. In Korean, *chakhan wain* (“ethical wine”) refers to wine associated with eco-friendly or socially beneficial modes of production and consumption, which aligns with S3 (Socio-ethical Positivity). This usage is illustrated in the phrase *hwankyeungul sayngkakhanun chakhati chakhan wain* (“a thoroughly ethical wine mindful of the environment”; Asia Economy, 2020). In Russian, however, *dobroe vino* highlights sensory and functional qualities such as taste, which corresponds to S4.

Nevertheless, while *dobryj* does not typically combine with [artifact] nouns in the socio-ethical sense, its meaning has been recontextualized in contemporary commercial discourse. A representative case is *Dobryj* Cola, a brand launched in 2022 by Multon Partners, following the withdrawal of major Western companies from the Russian market after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. In this context, Multon extended the emotional and cultural capital of the long-established *Dobryj* juice brand to a cola product. The brand’s key slogans such as *Tak vkusno v mestе* (“So tasty together”), *Naš vkus — naša kola* (“Our taste — our cola”), and *Vkus, kotoryj nas ob'edinâet* (“the taste that unites us”) emphasize warmth, trust, and communal belonging. In this context, *dobryj* serves not as a marker of product quality but as a cultural signifier expressing shared emotional and social values.

S5 (Situational Positivity) and S6 (Quantitative Positivity) occur only with *dobryj*. These patterns confirm that *dobryj* exhibits greater semantic flexibility and a higher degree of polysemy than *chakhata*. Approximately 7% of its collocates realize S5, typically with nouns such as *vest'* (“news”) from [communication] or *znak* (“sign, omen”) from [phenomenon]. A similar proportion of collocates realize S6, where *dobryj* combines with [quantity] nouns, as in *dobraâ sotnâ* (“well over a hundred”)

and *dobraâ polovina* (“more than half”).

5. Discussion

5.1 Comparison of semantic network structures

Both *chakhata* and *dobryj* function as primary adjectives for the positive evaluation of human character. However, their semantic networks exhibit notable distinctions. As shown in Section 4, most collocates of *chakhata* belong to S1 (Moral Positivity), reflecting evaluations of personality traits from an ethical perspective. Expressions such as *soki chakhata* (“to have a kind heart”), *chakhan ai* (“a good child”), and *chakhan myenuli* (“a good daughter-in-law”) describe individuals who display socially desirable virtues such as politeness, modesty, and consideration. This moral evaluation is hierarchically oriented. In Korean, *chakhata* is generally used to describe those who are younger or socially subordinate to the speaker, and it sounds awkward or inappropriate when referring to elders or superiors. This asymmetry reflects the Confucian moral framework of Korean society, in which ethical judgment flows downward from higher to lower social positions. Accordingly, the adjective emphasizes conformity, obedience, and social harmony rather than individual moral autonomy. By contrast, *dobryj* does not presuppose such hierarchical directionality. It can be applied across differences in age or status, expressing mutual warmth, empathy, and emotional closeness.

Since the mid-2000s, however, *chakhata* has progressively collocated with non-human nouns, broadening its significance beyond interpersonal evaluation. Specifically, collocations denoting social value (S3) have increased in frequency, frequently associated with external factors such as commercial discourse and the rise of ethical consumption. Examples such as *chakhan kiep* (“ethical enterprise”) indicate that the adjective now conveys not only moral character but also wider societal ideals. Nevertheless, at its core, *chakhata* remains anchored in the cultural expectation of “socially desirable character,” thereby forming a cohesive and highly centralized semantic network.

By contrast, *dobryj* has established a more radial network, extending significantly beyond S1 into a range of evaluative dimensions. Although *chakhata* has only recently

started to expand into S3 (Socio-ethical Positivity) and S4 (Functional Positivity), *dobryj* spans S2 (Emotional Positivity), S5 (Situational Positivity), and S6 (Quantitative Positivity), with these meanings firmly codified in dictionaries. Its collocates encompass not only [person] nouns but also abstract domains such as [communication], [cognition], [state], [quantity], and [feeling]. Notably, in Sketch Engine, the top collocates of *dobryj*, ranked by association score (logDice), include *volâ* (“will”, 9.26) and *tradiciâ* (“tradition”, 8.68), indicating that the adjective establishes robust habitual associations with abstract values and concepts as well as with human qualities.¹² In contrast, in Korean, *chakhata* does not typically combine with abstract nouns such as ‘will’ or ‘tradition,’ reflecting its restriction to the evaluation of human character and socially observable behavior.

However, this restriction in the abstract domain does not imply semantic stagnation; rather, while its range remains limited in conceptual extensions, *chakhata* has shown notable expansion in concrete social contexts. The divergent development of these semantic networks reflects both socio-cultural context and the registers in which the adjectives typically occur. In Korean, *chakhata*, as previous studies have noted, has significantly expanded into S3 and S4 via media discourse, collocating with non-human nouns to denote social value or functional utility (Im 2014; Kim 2015; Kim and Lee 2020). Expressions such as *chakhan sengpwun* (“ethical ingredient”) and *chakhan mommay* (“slim, attractive body”) are prevalent in consumer discourse, advertising, and online communication.

In Russian, by contrast, *dobryj* is intricately woven into established greetings, idioms, and formulaic expressions such as *dobroe utro* (“good morning”), *v dobryj put'* (“bon voyage”), *dobryj molodec* (“brave young man”), and *dobryj čelovek* (“kind person”, address form). Its primary domains of usage are literary, traditional, and informal registers. The Russian National Corpus shows that *dobryj* occurs most frequently in folktales, sentimental fiction, drama, historical prose, and children’s literature, achieving IPM (instances per million words) of 1046.18 in folktales and 908.79 in sentimental fiction. In summary, *chakhata* has secured semantic flexibility

12 In the Russian National Corpus *volâ* (“will”) also appears as a top collocate of *dobryj*, with the highest association score. This indicates that *volâ* represents a core cultural concept in Russian, intricately connected to freedom, moral responsibility, and theological goodwill. Particularly, *dobraja volâ* is interpreted in philosophy and Christian theology as “the will toward good” (*blagovolenie*), referring simultaneously to divine benevolence and human voluntary moral action.

and contemporary relevance through expansion in modern and practical registers, whereas *dobryj* functions as a conventionalized lexical resource that conveys emotional warmth, sustained primarily through literary and traditional genres.

5.2 Emotion and morality: Cultural differences in evaluative frames

Although both *chakhata* and *dobryj* convey positive evaluations, the evaluative frameworks in which they function are shaped by distinct cultural criteria. *chakhata* primarily evaluates character and behavior against moral and social norms, whereas *dobryj* foregrounds emotional warmth, gentleness, and benevolence in interpersonal relations. This distinction is suggested, though not explicitly defined, in dictionaries: the Standard Korean Language Dictionary glosses *chakhata* as “a character or conduct that is good and upright,” emphasizing ethical correctness, while Černyšev (1950) and Ozhegov and Shvedova (1999) define *dobryj* as “benevolent, kind, and good-natured,” highlighting emotional responsiveness.

The emotion-centric orientation of Russian semantics is further evident in antonymic patterns. Although *dobryj* is conventionally opposed to *zloj*, which appears parallel to the Korean antonyms *akhata* (“evil”) or *motdoeda* (“bad”), in actual usage, *zloj* typically denotes an emotional state or affective tone (“angry”, “fierce”, or “aggressive”) rather than moral wickedness. In Russian literature, *zloj* frequently conveys inner emotional turmoil rather than immoral conduct. For instance, in Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina* (1877): *Â ne zloj čelovek, â nikogda nikogo ne nenavidel, no eë â nenavízu vsemi silami duši...* (“I am not an evil person. I have never hated anyone. But her, I hate with all the strength of my soul...”) emphasizes the intensity of momentary emotion rather than inherent character. Another example from an online forum asserts: *Â — zloj čelovek. Ser'ezno. Ne to čtoby plohoj. A vot imenno — zloj, serdityj. Skol'ko sebâ pomnû, vsegda zlísâ na čto-nibud'...* (“I am an evil person. Seriously. Not exactly a bad one, but precisely— evil, angry. For as long as I can recall, I have consistently harbored anger towards something...”). Notably, the derived verb *zlit'sâ* (“to get angry”) further reinforces the affective anchoring of *zloj*. However, when extended to non-human referents such as *zloj veter* (“fierce wind”), the adjective conveys intensity or hostility rather than literal emotion.

By contrast, Korean *akhata* (“evil”) and *motdoeda* (“bad”) evaluate behavior in

terms of normative violations such as selfishness, immoral deeds, or improper conduct. Expressions like *motdoen pelus* (“bad habit”) or *motdoen cis* (“bad deed”) highlight the moral quality of the action itself. The opposition between *chakhata* and *akhata/motdoeda* therefore reflects an ethical dichotomy grounded in social norms and expectations. Accordingly, the pair *dobryj–zloj* forms an affective evaluative framework, whereas *chakhata–akhata* forms a normative one.

5.3 Ambivalence, irony, and discursive reconfiguration

Despite the differences in the range of their semantic extensions, *chakhata* and *dobryj* display notable parallels in contexts involving semantic contradiction or ironic inversion. Lim (2014: 992–994) identifies two such phenomena in modern Korean collocations with *chakhan* + N. The first involves oxymoronic combinations such as *chakhan totwuk* (“good thief”), *chakhan am* (“good cancer”), and *chakhan pailesu* (“good virus”), where the inherent semantic conflict prompts reinterpretation. In these cases, *chakhata* is reframed in terms of “public benefit,” or “low harmfulness.” The second phenomenon concerns semantic inversion, whereby *chakhata* itself acquires negative undertones. Expressions that once conveyed praise such as *chakhan kwukmin* (“good citizen”), *chakhan salam* (“good person”) imply passivity, lack of agency, or submissiveness.

Cheon (2019: 257) argues that this semantic shift must be understood within the social context of post-IMF Korea. During this period, discourses of success, such as the “jackpot myth,” promoted *nappun* (“bad”) as an index of proactive self-management and modern sophistication, while *chakhan* (“good”) came to be reinterpreted as passive, outdated, and incompatible with competitive achievement. Thus, although *chakhata* originally functioned as a marker of filial obedience in the Confucian tradition (Kim 2015), it has undergone semantic inversion in contemporary value systems and now frequently connotes weakness or vulnerability.

Russian *dobryj* shows a comparable form of ambivalence. The phrase *dobryj malyj* can refer not only to a “kind man” but also to someone naive or ineffectual. Zhang (2022) notes that *dobryj* and its synonyms are often used to describe people, especially men, as “overly gentle,” or “lacking willpower.” Questions such as “*Slaboharakteren li dobryj mužčina?*” (“Is a good man weak-willed?”) and “*Počemu devuški ne lübát*

i ne cenât dobryh parnej?” (“Why do women not like or appreciate good guys?”) illustrate how *dobryj* can take on negative interpretations when it clashes with social expectations of masculinity.

In both languages, therefore, *chakhata* and *dobryj* originate in the domain of moral positivity but can shift toward ironic or critical meanings depending on cultural expectations. This pattern shows that “goodness” is not an absolute value but a context-dependent construct that is continually reshaped within specific sociocultural frameworks.

6. Conclusion

This study compared the semantic networks of Korean *chakhata* and Russian *dobryj* by analyzing their noun collocates in large-scale corpora, categorizing them into conceptual domains and evaluative categories. Through this approach, the study showed how each linguistic community situates the concept of “goodness” within its cultural values and how this concept is reflected in actual language use.

First, structural distinctions emerged between cohesion and radiality. *Chakhata* forms a cohesive network that is concentrated in S1 (Moral Positivity) and situated largely within the [person] category. *Dobryj*, while retaining S1 as its core meaning, expands radially into conceptual domains such as [emotion], [cognition], and [communication], thereby encompassing broader and more abstract evaluative areas.

Second, the evaluative frameworks shaping semantic extension display clear cultural contrasts. *Chakhata* functions within a framework of moral legitimacy and adherence to communal norms, reflecting a Confucian orientation toward social roles. *Dobryj*, in contrast, conveys evaluation grounded in emotional attitudes toward others, highlighting the Russian emphasis on affective communal ties. These differences also appear in their antonyms: whereas *akhata* marks moral transgression and norm violation, *zloj* primarily denotes anger and emotional strain.

Third, both adjectives exhibit paradoxical or ironic extensions, revealing that moral positivity can be reinterpreted across discourse contexts. In such uses, originally positive adjectives may undergo evaluative inversion shaped by cultural expectations and contextual cues.

Overall, the cross-cultural comparison of *chakhata* and *dobryj* supports the

argument presented in Section 1 that culturally embedded evaluative adjectives mirror the moral and emotional conceptualizations of their respective communities. Future research may build on the semantic and collocational categories established here by applying them to other culturally marked adjectives. Such work will deepen our understanding of how language encodes cultural value systems and will further illuminate the linguistic and cultural divergences between Korean and Russian.

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Received: 2025. 10. 07.

Revised: 2025. 10. 29.

Accepted: 2025. 11. 24.