

Napoleon's Image in Tolstoy's *War and Peace*: Linguistic and Historical Aspects

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Abstract

The article presents a critical analysis of an image of a historical personality, Napoleon Bonaparte depicted in Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. The authors study the linguistic and historical description of Napoleon as a minor but rather important character in the novel *War and Peace*. The authors focus on the role of qualitative adjectives in the creation of Napoleon's image as a literary character. A historical commentary on the public activity of the French emperor is also presented. The image of Napoleon gathered through linguistic analysis is compared with the information from historical sources. It comes to the conclusion that the image of Napoleon Bonaparte in the novel is as close to reality as possible, despite the fact that in the work Tolstoy has a pronounced negative attitude towards Napoleon as a historical personality.

Keywords: literary character's image, historical personality, linguistic means of image explication.

1. Introduction

Literary character's image is an object of close attention of a number of related sciences: literary studies, linguistics, etc. Linguistics studies the linguistic implementation of literary character's image, and therefore the linguistic side of the image has frequently become an object of scientific research. Studying the linguistic implementation of "author – character" category in a literary text, E.A. Goncharova believes that literary character's image is a series of portrait, action and inner state sketches interrelated through a common semantic centre and forming a component of an image structure of the whole text (Goncharova, 1984, p.87). E.N. Vinarskaya defines character's literary image as a cognitive system including such features as being single (appearance, behaviour, speech), specific (relating to history, epoch, social environment) and universal (author's thoughts on the character) (Vinarskaya, 1989, p.26-27). Attempted reconstruction of lyric character's image can be found in the work by R.S. Voitekhovich and A.V. Bykov dedicated to creative works of M. Tsvetaeva (Voitekhovich, Bykov 2015).

Linguists note that units of almost any linguistic level describing a literary character can be a material of image construction. When considering how and what linguistic means serve to create an image of a literary character, lexical means of creating an image come to the forefront. For instance, I. Ya. Chernukhina studies the image from the lexical point of view and introduces a notion of "lexical structure of literary image". Three layers of vocabulary in the text of the work

(unmarked, colouring and dominant vocabulary) serve as a model of the "lexical structure of a literary image". According to I.Ya. Chernukhina, unmarked vocabulary consists of thematic fields, including lexemes, denoting movements, speech, perceptions, household realities, parts of human body, etc. According to the author, colouring vocabulary includes lexemes, which are repeated especially often and create an image of a character, which enters into the associative and contrast relationship with other images. Dominant vocabulary includes the words that emphasize the most important in a literary image and are repeated more than once. These speech means can be expressed both in separate words and in figures of speech entering into various levels of vocabulary (Chernukhina, 1977, p. 88). The concept of the lexical structure of a literary image underlies the work of V.I. Khovaev, who distinguishes three types of linguistic units involved in creating the literary character's image, in semantic combinations of which the following is expressed: information about the character's belonging to a particular environment; the character's attitude to the world around him/her; information about the character's appearance (Khovaev, 1988, p. 41). In addition to the lexical level, an image of a literary character can be viewed by linguistic means of other language levels. As for morphology, virtually any part of speech that gives one or another characteristic to a character of a literary work can serve as the structural material of an image. L.A. Guseva believes that pronouns, predicate vocabulary and even occasional words are means of image creation (Guseva, 2007). Speech means of character image reconstruction are mentioned in the works of E.P. Artemenko, who studies character's inner monologic speech (Artemenko, 1998), and M.A. Zhdanovich, who examines verbal and speech means of character's image creation in a literary dialogue (Zhdanovich, 2009). O.G. Artemova notes the significance of graphic and paralinguistic means of character's image creation (Artemova, 2002).

The studied notion is mostly often represented by linguistic means of different levels. For instance, L.M. Kozenyasheva believes that a whole set of linguopoetic means (verbal-speech and artistic-compositional ones) is used for creation of a typical image of servant in the English literature of 19-20th centuries (Kozenyasheva, 2006, p.5); N.G. Naumova studies a character's image as a complex of non-procedural (appearance, character's belongings, system of values) and procedural (behaviour model) characteristics running through all language levels (Naumova, 2009, p.11-13).

The above-mentioned approaches prove that the existence of literary character's image is found in a text through language and that this image is linguistically reconstructed. The image of a literary character combines a concept of an image as an individual type, existing in literary studies (Polivanov, 2017), the definition of an image in philosophy as the reflection of a fragment of reality (Kerimov, 2015) and an image of man by language data in the understanding of Yu.D. Apresyan (Apresyan, 1995), since characters of literary work are created in the image and likeness of man and have all typical human characteristics. We study the image of literary character as an author's idea of unreal character similar to a subject of reality implemented in a set of external and internal characteristics of a person which are expressed via linguistic means running through lexical, phraseological, grammatical, and word formation levels of language (Zakirova, 2007, p. 23). The idea of the image of literary character as an image of a person allows to claim that not only an imaginary but a real historical personality can be reproduced in a work of fiction in accordance with author's plan.

The object of the research is the image of Napoleon. The goal of the study is to compare author's interpretation of this image in the novel "War and Peace" with the description of

Napoleon by historians and his contemporaries, which were taken into account by L.N. Tolstoy when creating the character's image.

2. Methods

We selected qualitative adjectives as the richest in linguistic means of literary character's image representation. As word meaning is implemented in a certain syntactic position, we consider qualitative adjectives in their attributive and predicative positions. Attribute expresses an integral inner quality of an object (Sandakova 2006, p. 224). Predicate's task is in showing the object's features which are "communicatively relevant" (Arutyunova 2013, p.12). From the linguistic point of view, the work is based on the method of *inductive* analysis of material (certain observations of linguistic facts are systemised and generalised into theoretical propositions and conclusions); on the *method of componential analysis* used for definition of slightest nuances of semantics of adjectives; on *statistical method* allowing to determine the mostly often used lexemes in order to identify dominant characteristics of a character. During the research we also used the following method: historical-chronological method allowing to subsequently study the transformation of Napoleon's image in Russian society from his accession to power in France to 1912; historical-comparative method identifying the stages of Napoleon's image evolution in Russian society within the specified chronological framework.

3. Linguostylistic analysis and the historical commentary

The conducted research allowed making the following conclusions:

i. The analysis of language material showed that linguistic means evaluating the actions, behaviour, and intellectual abilities of the character are mostly used in Napoleon's description (apart from physical characteristics). The historical personality is seen through the appraisal of the author as well as the other characters.

The evaluation is always the determination of the importance of an object, a subject for other subjects. The prevalence of the evaluation characteristics in the description of Napoleon says that he is an epochal personality not only in the history of Europe, but he also appears to be a significant figure in the space-time continuum of the literary world of the text.

ii. Napoleon's image created by Lev Tolstoy has controversial characteristics. On the one hand, Napoleon Bonaparte is described as **brilliant** and **great**, which shows a wide-spread opinion of Napoleon among people who considered him a role model. On the other hand, his actions are criticised, while Napoleon himself appears an insignificant person. Antonymous adjectives prevail in the description of intellectual abilities forming a "**clever – stupid**" opposition. The contradictory image is created not only through the use of antonymous lexemes but also through neutralisation of positive adjectives. This becomes possible by using together with combinations of words, in which either a negative characterization of the character is given or an ironic attitude to his positive characteristic is expressed, or a positive image of the character is questioned.

iii. Napoleon's image in Russian society was influenced by Russia's foreign-policy course. The study of opinions of Napoleon typical for pre-revolutionary Russia allowed to identify the main stages of the transformation of French politician's image. A romanticised image of an antique hero and peacemaker prevails in the first stage (late 18th – early 19th centuries). During the

second stage (1925-1950) due to active anti-Napoleonic propaganda a negative image of Napoleon as antichrist is formed. An image of the man who violated divine laws and dared to oppose monarchs, the Anointed of God, is created. The third stage (mid-19th – early 20th centuries) is the time when historical works concentrating on Napoleon Bonaparte's talents of a military leader appear. In our opinion, this is due to his dominant sphere of activity, because Napoleon's entire life was connected with military art: participation in military campaigns, the study of special literature, the formation of his own approach to conducting military operations, the reorganization of the French army, etc. Certainly, this is an object of impartial research.

4. Linguostylistic analysis of Napoleon's image.

The analysis of linguistic means used by the author for creating the image of Napoleon Bonaparte allows a deeper and more complete comprehension of this image. This article considers qualitative adjectives as a means of creating the image of Napoleon Bonaparte. Qualitative adjectives are used by L.N. Tolstoy in both attributive and predicative positions, implementing its own special meaning in each of them.

4.1. Analysis of qualitative adjectives describing Napoleon in the novel "War and Peace"

Adjectives describing Napoleon in attributive position: Analysis of language material showed that the largest group of adjectives in attributive position is a semantic group of adjectives expressing Napoleon's appraisal by other characters as well as a group of "intellectual" adjectives. The most frequently used among "evaluative" adjectives are lexemes **great** and **brilliant** united by the seme "gifted". In most cases the lexeme **great** has the meaning "incredibly gifted, brilliant" and goes with the words *man, commander, emperor, Napoleon, tactician*. Compare: ... *spoke with delight of a great nation and a great man ...* (Tolstoy 1977, Vol.4, p.471); ... *institute like Legion d'honneur of a great emperor Napoleon ...* (Speransky) (Tolstoy 1977, Vol.2, p.506). As for the description of the character's actions, the adjective **great** goes with the nouns *deeds, acts, words* and means "outstanding in its meaning and value". Compare: *His every action, every evil deed or small deception would immediately turn into a great deed in the mouths of his associates* (Tolstoy 1977, Epilogue p.627).

The adjective **brilliant** is used to describe both the character and his plans. As for Napoleon's description, this lexeme has the meaning "of genius, extremely talented, creatively gifted", however, within the context his genius is called into doubt. Compare: *And brilliant Napoleon, suddenly considered a robber, was conquered and taken to the island of Saint Helena* (Tolstoy 1977, Epilogue p.681); *Napoleon, called a brilliant commander, gave a battle losing a quarter of his army and stretching his line even more* (Tolstoy 1977, Vol.3, p.182). Such lexeme of **brilliant** as "typical of genius, created or performed by such" describes the results of the character's mental activity consisting in making assumptions about the progression of military operations. Compare: ... *he ... designs a brilliant plan of a future campaign all over the Russia's map* (Tolstoy 1977, Vol.4, p.475). The lexemes **great** and **brilliant** often point at the character's talent and genius describing him as an outstanding and extraordinary personality.

There are also adjectives which express the negative appraisal of the character. The lexemes "small, pathetic" of **worthless**, "despicable, petty, empty" of **pathetic**, "attaching importance to trifles, insignificant facts" of **small-minded** and others disparage Napoleon's outstanding skills. Compare: *The old knyaz seemed to be sure ... that Bonaparte was a worthless Frenchy ...* (Tolstoy 1977 Vol.1, p.122).

In the attributive position Napoleon's mental abilities are given negative characteristics. Negative meaning is found in the adjective **narrow-minded** which allows to depict Napoleon as a man "of narrow outlook; dull-witted". Compare: *I remember his complacent and **narrow-minded** face in the field of Austerlitz* (Tolstoy 1977, Vol.3, p.56). After that, negative description of Napoleon's intellectual state is gradated (narrow-mindedness – meaningless public speaking – obscured mind). Napoleon's speeches lack sense and meaning (the adjective **meaningless**). Compare: *...gives **meaningless** speeches that would ruin him* (Tolstoy 1977, Epilogue p.625). Napoleon's mind and thoughts are not clear and even clouded (the lexeme **obscured**). Compare: *... his **obscured** mind found justification in the fact that among the hundreds of thousands who had fallen there were less French than Hessians or Bavarians* (Tolstoy 1977, Vol.3, p.258). It is obvious that Lev Tolstoy had intentionally brought something negative into the description of mental abilities of this characters in order to show Napoleon as a man of sick mind who started wars for the sake of the shadow of an idea.

4.1.2. Adjectives in predicative position characterising Napoleon: In the position of predicate the most frequently used structure when describing Napoleon is "link verb **to be** + short form of the adjective (in Russian)" with the adjectives **great** and **brilliant** as the most often used. Expressing the topicality of the feature in predicative position in present time, the above-mentioned adjectives united by the seme "giftedness" show the Napoleon's appraisal by the people around him. Compare: *... Napoleon is **great** because he has risen higher than the revolution...* (Tolstoy 1977, Vol.1, p.27); *Napoleon as a man is **great** at the Pont d'Arcole, in a hospital in Jaffa where he holds out his hand to the plague-stricken... but there are other acts of his that are hard to justify* (Tolstoy 1977, Vol.1, p.29); *Napoleon Bonaparte had been despised by everyone while he was **great** ...* (Tolstoy 1977, Vol.2, p.632); *He was winning everywhere, meaning he killed many people because he was really **brilliant*** (Tolstoy 1977, Epilogue p.628). Despite such prevailing lexemes, their positive meaning in this context is neutralised by neighbouring language units destroying the positive meaning of the adjectives. When such statements as "*while he **was great***" and "*had been despised by everyone*" or "***was really brilliant***" and "*killed many people*" are found near in a sentence, one starts to doubt the greatness and brilliance of this man. Compare: *We do not know for sure the **real brilliance** of Napoleon in Egypt* (Tolstoy 1977, Vol.4, p.471). There are also adjectives in predicative position which express negative opinion of the character. Compare: *Napoleon himself is not important anymore, all his actions are obviously **pathetic and vile**...* (Tolstoy 1977, Epilogue, p.628).

In predicative position as compared to attributive we can see the lexemes **smart**, **cunning**, and **stupid** in the description of Napoleon which express existing / limited mental abilities of a person. However, this antonymy is neutralised in the context: the meaning of the adjective **clever** is diminished. Compare: *And he went off to kill the Africans for some reason and killed them so well, and he **was** so cunning and **smart** that having returned to France ordered everyone to obey him* (Tolstoy 1977, Epilogue, p.681). Non-procedural qualities expressed by the adjectives **smart** and **cunning** in the context are presented as homogeneous with the procedural quality of "killing", which results in an unexpected formula: killed = was cunning = was smart. The quality expressed by the adjective **smart** acquires a negative connotation. Disapproving of the Napoleon's actions, the author cannot give a unique estimate of his character's activity. Compare: *But to say that Napoleon destroyed his army because he wanted it or because he **was so stupid** would be as unfair as if to say that Napoleon had brought his soldiers to Moscow because he **was so smart** and brilliant* (Tolstoy 1977, Vol.4, p.471). Being a part of a conjunctive structure with a causative meaning, the adjectives point at the supposed display of the quality in time which is identified as a supposed cause of action. It is impossible to state certainly that the destruction of

the army had been a result of Napoleon's **stupid** actions just as it is unfair to say that Bonaparte's troops had reached Moscow only thanks to his **smart** and brilliant leadership. Thus, his intellectual abilities are put in doubt.

5. Napoleon as presented in historical sources

In historical studies Napoleon's image is rather versatile and varies depending on the time and place of publishing of these historical works. Interpretation of his personality by his contemporaries seems especially interesting. Since mid-18th century Russian high society had admired France, its culture, political ideas. The Revolution of 1789 and following events brought a storm of criticism of blind imitation of western ideas. Critical views were presented in journalism by S.N. Glinka and A.S. Shishkov (Stepanov 2015). Napoleon Bonaparte's rise to power brought about a new wave of popularisation of France in Russian society, which is greatly shown in the articles of the time of Napoleon's rule. M.O. Lobachkova notes that his image was influenced by Russia's foreign-policy course (Lobachkova 2007). Before 1804 Russian journalism seemed loyal to Napoleon's policy within the propaganda of consular regime. In the international arena he acted as a peacemaker, a keeper of Christian traditions (Lobachkova 2007). Public opinion of this time is well shown in N.M. Karamzin's "Vestnik Evropy" ["European Herald"] in which over 50 articles on Napoleon had been published over 1802-1803 in 48 issues (Kafanova 2015, p.101). According to O.B. Kafanova, "Napoleon's image created by Karamzin is an ideal of political leader promoted by the publisher himself and, at the same time, a reflection of an antique myth" (Kafanova 2015, p.101). Anthony Cross notes that "Napoleon was all over the 'Vestnik' both as a personality and as the key to European world" (Cross 2002). N.I. Grech called Napoleon "Great" in the journal "Geniy vremeni" [Genius of the time] (Fedotova 2009).

Russia's participation in the third and fourth anti-French coalitions resulted in the dominance of anti-Napoleon views. Romanticised image of Napoleon, the saviour of the nation, is transformed into the image of Napoleon the Antichrist (Lobachkova 2007). Anti-Napoleon propaganda continued with the start of the Patriotic War. Russian Orthodox Church contributed to the formation of Napoleon's Antichrist image. In the Holy Synod's appeal as of 6 July, 1812 Napoleon was called "a power-seeking, insatiable enemy not keeping his vows or respecting the altars" who "encroaches on our freedom, threatens our homes and reaches forth his predatory arms on the proper décor of houses of God" (Official website of Moscow Eparchy of Russian Orthodox Church). Within the army priests distributed the information on the satanic origin of Napoleon: according to gematria, Napoleon's name totalled 666, the number of the Beast. The journal "Syn Otechestva" [The Son of the Country] "demonised" Napoleon's image usually calling him: "an evil destroyer of Kingdoms and thrones", "an insatiable bloodthirsty devastator who had ruined Europe", "the scourge of God", "Satan at the heart of evil". Napoleon was called a "butcher" and "barbarian" (Stepanov 2009). After foreign campaigns there comes a new stage of the formation of Napoleon's image in Russian society. He is no longer a barbarian but a reclaimed thinker. Journals publish fake memoirs of the former emperor in order to show negative influence of enlightening ideas on state principles. On the whole, since the first quarter of the 19th century Napoleon's actions were considered in the context of official patriotic views. In the following years Napoleon's image becomes less negative. According to E.I. Babakina, attempts of unprejudiced approach are found in the works of A.I. Mikhailovsky-Danilevsky, N.A. Polevoy, M.I. Bogdanovich. However, while Mikhailovsky-Danilevsky's approach to the study of Napoleon was limited by official protective ideology, N.A. Polevoy and M.I. Bogdanovich were the first to raise a question of the need to objectify the image of Napoleon in historical studies (Babakina 2015).

Works of French, German, English historians dedicated to Napoleon appear at that time. The works examining Napoleon from the point of objective approach appear in Russia in late 19th – early 20th century, especially in the year of 100th anniversary of Patriotic War of 1812. Apart from the works of autocracy-protective nature there also appear the works of the representatives of political oppositional circles. Principal attention is paid to Napoleon Bonaparte's strategical activities (Babakina 2015). Criticising the aggressive plans of the French emperor, the authors of the works acknowledge his talent of a military leader.

6. Conclusion.

Comparative analysis of linguistic means creating the image of Napoleon in the novel "War and Peace" and historical accounts of society's attitude to the emperor showed that Napoleon's image expressed through the language has many similarities to the opinion people had of him in late 18th – early 20th century. According to the results of the research, Napoleon's image created by Lev Tolstoy expresses author's attitude to this historical personality, on the one hand, and quite corresponds to the transformation of the image in public conscience before the revolution of 1917, which shows that the author wanted to make Napoleon's image as realistic as possible in order to present an unprejudiced reconstruction of a historical era.

In our opinion, the approach used in the work differs by its novelty, since the study of an image of a literary character – a historical personality has not been previously conducted in terms of history and linguostylistics. It is also rather promising, first, in terms of the study of three temporal axes (calendar, event-related, perceptual time) of the literary text. Secondly, the study of how historical personalities and realities are reflected in a literary text from the point of view of language and history allows to single out what is realistic in the reconstructed image and what is fictional. This approach allows going deeper into the author's message, which contributes to the adequate interpretation of the text.

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