

---

## The Comparative Study of the German-French Laws Based On the Trilogy of Childhood, Adolescence, Youth

Kazem Nejad Dahkaei Sedigheh<sup>1</sup>, Rinat Ferganovich Bekmetov<sup>2</sup>, Ilsever Rami<sup>3</sup>, Ildar Shaikhenurovich Yunusov<sup>4</sup>, Olga Nikolaevna Boldyreva<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Kazan Federal University, postgraduate student of the Department of Russian Literature and teaching techniques, Institute of Philology and Intercultural Communication of Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University, [sedi\\_k\\_2012@yahoo.com](mailto:sedi_k_2012@yahoo.com)

<sup>2</sup>Kazan Federal University, Doctor of Philological Sciences, Professor of the Department of Russian Literature and teaching techniques, Institute of Philology and Intercultural Communication of Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University, [bekmetov@list.ru](mailto:bekmetov@list.ru)

<sup>3</sup>PhD in Philological Sciences, Lecturer of the Department of Russian Language and Literature, Istanbul Yeditepe University, [ilsiyar.rameeva@yeditepe.edu.tr](mailto:ilsiyar.rameeva@yeditepe.edu.tr)

<sup>4</sup> Doctor of Philological Sciences, Professor of the Department of Philology at Birk branch of Bashkir State University, [ildar\\_yun@rambler.ru](mailto:ildar_yun@rambler.ru)

<sup>5</sup>Candidate of Historical Sciences, Senior Lecturer of the Department of Russian as a Foreign Language and General Humanitarian Disciplines at Kalmyk State University named after B. B. Gorodovikov, [olya.boldyreva2013@yandex.ru](mailto:olya.boldyreva2013@yandex.ru)

<sup>1</sup>Kazan Federal University, Russian Federation

<sup>2</sup>Istanbul Yeditepe University, Turkish Republic

<sup>3</sup>Bashkir State University (Birk branch), Russian Federation

<sup>4</sup>Kalmyk State University named B.B. Gorodovikov, Russian Federation

E-mail (contact email address): [bekmetov@list.ru](mailto:bekmetov@list.ru)

---

### Abstract

The comparative study of the constitution of different countries is the best solution to know the best political system in the administration of state affairs. In the drafting of the constitution, by knowing the existing political legal system of the world and comparing them with each other, you can know the advantages and disadvantages of each and the strengths of each to have the best The political system used and used it, although the study of the constitution of each country has its special place and it is necessary for lawyers. Among these, French and German laws are discussed in this paper. Germans and French are the leading European continental peoples. For many centuries, they have fell over one each other. At the same time, the French and Germans turned out to be the most actively involved in the Russian life of the XVIII–XIX centuries, which was reflected in many areas, including in Russian classical literature. It is known that the Russian person learned and identified himself mainly in relation to Western European peoples, primarily with the Germans and French. German and French images are widely represented in Russian literature. In addition, they are quite well studied. Usually, national characters are studied separately in literary works. The fundamental novelty of this article is that it reveals the peculiarities of the poetics of Leo Tolstoy's prose in the study of the German French opposition in the reception of Russian consciousness. The object of the study is the trilogy "Childhood. Adolescence. Youth" and the epic novel "War and Peace", which vividly and expressively presents the German-French opposition in its correlation with the Russian cultural world. The article reveals both the factors that determined one or another character of reception of German and French by the Russian national consciousness, and their expression in the poetics of these works.

**Keywords:** German law, French law, Russian law, opposition, reception, Leo Tolstoy, poetics.

### Introduction

In Russian prose of the XIX century, images of Europeans occupied an important place.

Russia, being a Euro-Asian power, constantly reflected on its own path of cultural development and, for the purposes of self-knowledge and self-identification, most often related itself with the European and Western

world. Naturally, this was also reflected in the artistic pursuits of the greatest Russian writers of the XIX century.

In the Russian literary studies of the 1990-2010, the topic of ethnic motives in literature was one of the most relevant and popular. At the same time, as a rule, either one of the ethnic motives was studied, or several, but separately. In the prose of many writers of the XIX century, there is a German-French opposition, presented in an explicit or implicit form, which is reflected in different ways in the reception of the Russian consciousness. There are no such studies yet, or at least they are unknown to us.

This article is devoted to the study of this important problem in the prose of Leo Tolstoy. The German-French opposition in the perception of the Russian person is present to one degree or another in many of Leo Tolstoy's works: in Caucasian stories, "Anna Karenina", "Resurrection". But the German-French opposition is most fully expressed in the trilogy "Childhood. Adolescence. Youth" and the epic novel "War and Peace".

## Methods

The synthesis of traditional approaches (historical-literary, systemic-typological, as well as comparative-historical) with the involvement of relatively new research practices forms the methodological basis of this study.

The methodological principles of these areas are used depending on the specific material and tasks set.

We would also like to emphasize that the article takes into account the results of study conducted by Western and Russian specialists in Slavic studies who used similar methodological developments (see: [1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8]).

## Results and Discussion

The root of the Franco-German confrontation in the world of Russian prose was already revealed in Leo Tolstoy's trilogy "Childhood. Adolescence. Youth". There are often such unusual combinations of words as "German voice", "German face", "German greeting", "German honesty and decency" [9, vol. 1, pp. 4, 6, 263]. According to the observation of Y. S. Bilinkis, such compositions "contain the inherent plexus of the trilogy, they reveal the special moral atmosphere that lives for Irtenyev in Karl Ivanych and about him. "German here is a special world of relations between people primarily in the family, since such a world arises for the first hero of Leo Tolstoy– Irtenyev" [10, p. 92].

It is significant that Nikolenka's favorite creature, who represented the era of childhood for him – mamma ("maman") - is also included in this atmosphere of *German*. This is not only evident in her favorable attitude towards Karl Ivanych, whom she kisses during the morning greeting, calls dear and speaks to him exclusively in German, but above all in relations with children. Here is a characteristic episode:

"After greeting me, my mother took my head in both hands and pushed it back, then looked at me intently and said:

– Did you cry today?

I didn't answer. She kissed me on the eyes and said in German:

– What were you crying about?

When she spoke to us *in a friendly way*, she always spoke in this-language, which she knew perfectly well" [9, vol. 1, p. 9].

The atmosphere of *German* surrounded Nikolenka from the first minutes of his life. In many ways, life was associated with people who were very close and dear to him. So, Herr Frost surprised him to some extent that there was a German "absolutely different" as Karl Ivanych. And so *German* almost as much as a native Russian entered his world organically.

By the will of circumstances, everything *French* in the trilogy evokes almost the opposite feelings in Nikolenka. *French* in the trilogy is represented by characters who do not evoke warm, positive feelings in Nikolenka: "What an obnoxious person this Mimi was! Sometimes you couldn't talk about anything in front of her: she found everything indecent. Moreover, she constantly pestered: *parles done francais* (speak in French, and then, as luck would have it, you just want to chat in Russian) [9, vol. 1, p. 18]. In his new teacher Frenchman St-Jerome, replacing the good old Karl Ivanych, Nikolenka does not accept the obvious unnatural: «... *a dandy, trying to become on a par with all*"; "... *who liked to act as a mentor*"; "straightening his chest and making *a majestic gesture* with his hand, he shouted in a tragic voice"; "His fancy *French phrases*.... were unbelievably disgusting to me" [9, vol. 1, p. 51].

But, as an adult, the narrator softens his pre-assessment somewhat, because he begins to understand the origins of the impression that St Jerome made on him in his "Boyhood". "When I now discuss this man in cold blood, I find that he was a good Frenchman, but a Frenchman in the highest degree. He was not stupid, he was fairly well educated, and he did his duty to us conscientiously, but he had in common with all his fellow countrymen the traits of frivolous egoism, vanity, audacity, and ignorant self-confidence. I didn't like all this very much" [9, vol. 1, p. 50]. Throughout Leo Tolstoy's work, this is perhaps the only time a non-negative hero makes a strong generalized judgment about a foreign national character.

The following antithesis should probably be considered in the same series. Nikolenka's mother, in her most intimate moments, loved to speak German. And Nikolenka's dad, we read in one of the draft versions of the trilogy, "... had a bad habit of mixing French words, such words that he could say very well in Russian, with Russians, especially when he said things difficult (difficult words I call those that do not speak immediately, as they come to mind and who know, what I have to say, and before whom to speak, there is an internal struggle)" [9 vol. 18, p. 116]. Thus, when you have to go against your conscience, it is most convenient, it turns out, to turn to the French language.

*French* and *German* are contrasted within the artistic system of Leo Tolstoy's trilogy. This juxtaposition goes along the lines of naturalness / unnaturalness of the German and French worlds from the point of view of the Russian hero of the work. *French* and *German* are actively involved in Russian life and are endowed with quite clearly expressed opposite connotations. Already in the first work of Leo Tolstoy, "Childhood", preference or alienation of *French* or *German* characters in Russian characters. In the artistic paradigm of the trilogy "Childhood. Adolescence. Youth" almost without reservations (Herr Frost), the German world is a positive one. At the same time, positive Russian characters tend to gravitate towards *German*, and not unambiguously positive, like Nikolenka's dad, – to *French*.

Another work by Leo Tolstoy, where the Franco-German opposition appears most clearly, is "War and Peace". In the plot of the epic novel, a significant place is occupied by the battles with Napoleon, when the Russians, most often in alliance with the Germans, fought the French. However, this did not lead to a seemingly looming antinomy in which the French enemies were shown in a negative light and the German allies in a positive light. Other factors come to the fore. Thus, according to the genre requirements of the epic, the event that determines the destiny of a nation must be portrayed from the viewpoint of that people [11, vol. 14, p. 241]. It was the popular Russian "view of things" that largely determined the special understanding of *German* and *French* in the novel-epic by Leo Tolstoy.

In this sense, the arguments of the narrator of "War and Peace" are indicative, recalling numerous, folk, in fact, funny stories on the differences of nations, about the peculiar manifestation of such a trait as self-confidence among the British, Italians, French, Germans and Russians: "Germans can be self-confident on the basis of an abstract idea-science, i.e., an imaginary knowledge of perfect truth. A Frenchman can be self-confident because he considers himself personally, both in mind and body, irresistibly charming to both men and women... The Russian is self-confident precisely because he knows nothing and does not want to know, because he does not believe that it is possible to know anything completely..." [9, vol. 10, p. 47].

Here, all Europeans are generally opposed to Russians. But they also differ among themselves.

Ironically, the dominant feature of both German and French in the artistic world of the epic-novel is, at first glance, the humorous characteristics of the origins of their national self-confidence.

Let us first turn to *German*.

Although in the War of 1812 the Germans were allies of the Russians, they were not accepted by the common people [12, p. 87–88]. Thus, when describing the battle of Austerlitz, we read: "If the Russian army had one, without allies, then perhaps it would have been a long time before this consciousness of disorder would have become general confidence; but now, with special pleasure and naturalness referring the cause of the riots to the stupid Germans, everyone was convinced that there was a harmful confusion that Germans had made" [9, vol. 9, p. 329]. Russian troops were commanded by foreigners, first of all by Germans: "The Russians led five columns: 1) Wimpfen – a German, 2) Langeron – a Frenchman, 3) Przebyshevsky – a Polish, 4) Lichtenstein – a German, 5) Hohenlohe – a German" [9, vol. 13, p. 122].

In the text of the epic novel, the German commanders could not understand the Russian mentality. On the eve of the Battle of Borodino, Prince Andrei and Pierre were forced to witness the following dialogue:

«– Der Krieg muß im Raum verlegt. Der Ansicht kann ich nicht genug Preis geben (War must be carried into space. It is a view I cannot praise enough), said one.

– Oh, ja, said another voice, da der Zweck ist nur den Feind zu schwächen, so kann man, gewiß nicht den Verlust der Privatpersonen in Achtung nehmen (Oh, yes, since the aim is to weaken the enemy, the loss of private individuals cannot be taken into account...)" [9, vol. 11, p. 207].

Andrey Bolkonsky reacts sharply to this: "These German gentlemen will not win the battle tomorrow, but will only give a shit about how much strength they will have, because in his German head there are only arguments that are not worth eating an egg, and in his heart there is not what is in Timokhin" [9, vol. 11, p. 208]. German self-confidence is being revived by Bolkonsky's mouth, and their undue confidence in scientific theory – a supposed knowledge of the perfect truth – is once again actualized.

When Kutuzov is given an order by Barclay de Tolly to recover money from the army chiefs at the request of the landowner for the cut-off oats, the Russian military commander angrily cancels this decision, accompanying it with the phrase: "... o, neatness German..." [9, vol. 11, p. 170]. Prince Andrei links such actions of Barclay de Tolly exactly with his "non-Russian" character.

In the description of "Russian German" of Berg, the emphasis is not on typical German "self-confidence", but also on widely held ideas about "German precision". For example, in the drafts of the epic novel in two sentenc-

es about Berg five times the lexium "neat" [9, vol. 13, p. 500]; there the apartment of Berg is perceived by Bol-konsky "neat, clean to outrage» [9, vol. 13, p. 500]; in the same place, and Berg is perceived by Bolkonsky as "disgracefulness neat and clean" [9, vol. 13, p. 726]. Obviously, in the artistic world of the epic novel, Berg's German neatness is the antithesis of Russian naturalness, and sincerity. It is no coincidence that his wife becomes Vera, who is very different from all the other Rostov. It is significant that the degree of his "Russian" character is determined by the way a character relates to Berg [13, vol. 1, pp. 50–51]:

«– ... and how do you get on with that German?" asked Rostov, with a contemptuous smile (about Berg).

– He is a very, very nice, honest, and pleasant fellow," answered Boris [9, vol. 9, p. 292].

In the early version, there was a sequel that was then removed: "Again, Rostov was struck not by chance, but by a significant difference in views with his friend. He looked intently into Boris's eyes and sighed, as if saying goodbye forever to his former friendship and the simplicity of relations with a childhood friend.

– No, for me it is better to let it be not so honest and accurate, but to have a real person..." [9, vol. 13, pp. 503–504].

The negative perception of Germans by Russian characters is determined by the genre nature of "War and Peace". Popular opinion during the Napoleonic Wars perceived the Germans in this way. It is significant that the phrase "Are we any Germans?" in different variations is expressed by Rostov who most vividly represent the Russian world: Natasha [9, vol. 11, p. 313], her father [9, vol. 11, p. 84], and her brother Nikolay [9, vol. 13, p. 634].

Pushing away from *German* in the artistic system of "War and Peace" is a kind of attempt at national self-identification of truly Russian characters. And this is despite the fact that the Germans here are allies in the war against Napoleon.

In Leo Tolstoy's funny story quoted above, the Frenchman is self-confident because he considers himself personally, both in mind and body, irresistibly charming for both men and women. In general, and in the epic novel, French is associated with self-admiration, the beauty of cliched phrases, the desire to produce an external effect. Etiquette and convention are in the blood of the French: "De Beausset bowed low, with that courtly French bow which only the old retainers of the Bourbons knew how to make" [9, vol. 11, p. 212]. In earlier editions, this is expressed more vividly: "In 1811, there was a French doctor in Moscow who quickly became fashionable, a huge, handsome man, *amiable as a Frenchman...*" [9, vol. 13, p. 304]; in the French language, "the expression of every thought, even every feeling, had its *own ready-made, graceful and beautiful forms...*" [9, vol. 13, p. 74].

Rambal's phrase and gestures are not without pretensions to showiness and beauty: "Nous autres nous sommes clementes apres la victoire: mais nous ne pardonnons pas aux traitres (Robber, you will pay me for this. Our brother is merciful after a victory, but we do not forgive traitors), he added with a gloomy solemnity in his face and with a beautiful energetic gesture" [9, vol. 11, p. 361]. Invents for his possible fans a beautiful, melodramatic story about the seducer Mademoiselle Borienne. Napoleon makes a "kind of pensive tenderness" at the sight of the portrait of his son [9, vol. 11, p. 213]. At the same time, the narrator insistently emphasizes that Rambal, Mademoiselle Borienne, and Napoleon, "like every Frenchman", love to play in public [9, vol. 11, p. 325].

At the same time, as in the case of *German*, the degree of proximity to *French* determines the measure of "Russianness" of the characters in "War and Peace".

Such are the representatives of secular society. So, Rastopchin, despite his patriotism, always "thought... in French" [9, vol. 11, p. 377]. It is almost the highest praise in society to say that someone looks like a Frenchman or a Frenchwoman: "Well, my dear, your little princess is very nice. Very nice and perfect Frenchwoman" [9, vol. 9, p. 29].

A vivid marker of the degree of "Russianness" was the language of communication of persons. Helen passed "in French with Russian language, which she always seemed to be some confusion in her case" [9, vol. 11, p. 237]; Helen's dad spoke "elegant French language" [9, vol. 9, p. 4]; "the Prince Hippolyte began to speak Russian in the same accent as the French, who have been in Russia for a year" [9, vol. 9, p. 26]; Natasha Rostova's father "spoke bad French" [9, vol. 9, p. 43]; "Marya Dmitrievna always spoke Russian" [9, vol. 9, p. 73]. This series of examples can easily be continued.

We also note that the evolution of the main characters of "War and Peace" – Andrey Bolkonsky and Pierre Bezukhov – also reflected in their language knowledge of the readings: from French to Russian.

In "War and Peace", the only Frenchman who is warmly and lovingly treated by the people of the Russian world is the captured French boy Vincent, who was renamed to "Vesseny, and by the peasants and soldiers to Visenya. In both names there was a suggestion of spring which seemed appropriate to the appearance of the young boy" [9, vol. 12, p. 138]. Children's purity and naturalness dominate over the yet-to-be-expressed French conventions, etiquette and the desire for posing, which determined the sympathy of Russian soldiers and Cossacks to "Vesseny / Visenya".

It is known that some researchers consider "War and Peace" to be a bilingual (Russian-French) work [14, p. 23]. Accordingly, the role of *French* in comparison with *German* in the artistic world of the epic novel is much higher. It is generally accepted that in "War and Peace" *Russian* and *French* acquire the status of special ethical cat-

egories. However, our analysis shows that *German*, in a certain sense, can also claim a similar status. The category of *German* here expresses other principles: an unfounded belief in the omnipotence of theory / science, excessive accuracy and a love of cleanliness, which deprive everything of a sense of authentic life. At the same time, both *French* and *German* in "War and Peace" are opposed to "Russian" in terms of naturalness, truthfulness, and fullness of life.

## Summary

1. The German-French opposition in Leo Tolstoy's prose matters only in the reception of a Russian person.
2. In the trilogy "Childhood. Adolescence. Youth" *is a German* word given in positive different connotation. Image of Karl Ivanych and the German language evoke very similar feelings in the main character – Nikolenka Irtenyev-and his mother.
3. *French* in the trilogy is filled with negative connotations. The figure of the St-Jerome teacher and the French language cause rejection in Nikolenka. On the contrary, the protagonist's father, who is prone to moral compromises, is forced to resort to conventional French.
4. The unnaturalness of the French, the love of external effects, lush phrases, conventionality and refinement of the forms of the French language are sharply alien to the Russian person. A certain comicality of German characters with their accuracy, their sentimentality and kindness, the "intimacy" of the German language, due to the specific circumstances in the trilogy, makes everything *German* in the perception of the Russian person understandable and close, almost native.
5. Despite the allied relations of the Russians with the Germans in the war with Napoleonic France, both *German*, and *French* in War and Peace are resented in a negative connotation, which is due to the events depicted and the genre nature of the work.
6. The Russian consciousness in the German and French characters actualized various features as alien.
7. Russian characters in the epic novel who tend to *speak German* or *French* fall out of the Russian world.
8. Fundamentally opposed in the epic novel, *Russian* and *French* acquire the status of ethical categories and are a variant of the traditional ways of human development.

## Conclusions

Leo Tolstoy, when depicting German and French characters, especially in "War and Peace", emphatically relies on established ethnic stereotypes, which is conditioned by the genre nature of the works, the peculiarities of the Russian mentality, and the artistic audacity of the author. The analysis of the German-French opposition in the perception of the Russian consciousness made it possible to actualize the features of Leo Tolstoy's poetics in a new way. In this regard, it seems promising to study the German-French opposition (possibly others) in the works of other writers (for example, I.S. Turgenev and I.A. Goncharov).

## Acknowledgements

This paper is performed as part of the implementation of the Kazan Federal University Strategic Academic Leadership Program

## Bibliography

- [1] A. Donskov, "Leo Tolstoy and the Canadian Doukhobors: A Study in Historic Relationships", Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 345 p., 2019.
- [2] D. Moulin-Stozek, "Leo Tolstoy – the spiritual educator", International Journal of Children's Spirituality, vol. 13, pp. 345–352, 2008.
- [3] J. Bayley, "Leo Tolstoy", Plymouth: Northcote House, 234 p., 1997.
- [4] "Critical Insights: Leo Tolstoy, ed. R. Stauffer", vol. 1, 300 p., 2017.
- [5] I. Medzhibovskaya, "Tolstoy and the Religious Culture of His Time: A Biography of a Long Conversion", Lanham: Lexington Book, 405 p., 2008.
- [6] B. Russell, "Russia and Western Civilization: Cultural and Historical Encounters", New York: M.E. Sharpe, 392 p., 2003.
- [7] V.N. Krylov, "The poetics of the literary-critical essays of Marina Tsvetaeva", Slavia Orientalis, vol. 2017, Is. 2, Pp. 281–300, 2017.
- [8] Krylov Viacheslav N., Yan Yang, "The Golden Rose by Konstantin Paustovsky": reception of Russia as a conceptual image in modern Chinese literary culture", Imagology i Comparativist – Imagology and Comparative Studies, vol., Is.13, Pp. 188–215, 2020.
- [9] L. N. Tolstoy, "Complete works: in 90 volumes", Moscow: GICHL Publishing House, 1928–1958.
- [10] I. Bilinkis, "Folk and national in the artistic system "War and Peace" by L. N. Tolstoy, The Ways of Russian prose of the XIX century, Leningrad: LGPI Publishing House, pp. 86–99, 1976.
- [11] F. Hegel, "Works: in 14 volumes", Moscow, Leningrad: Sotsekgiz, 1929-1959.

- [12] K. Clausewitz, "1812", Moscow: State Military Publishing House of the People's Commissariat of Defense of the USSR, 276 p., 1937.
- [13] N. O. Lossky, "The Character of the Russian People: in 2 volumes", Moscow: URSS, 1990.
- [14] V. V. Vinogradov, "On the Tolstoy Language", Literary Heritage, Vol. 35-36, Moscow: Publishing House of the USSR Academy of Sciences, pp. 117–220, 1939.