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**Professional Culture of the Specialist of the Future**

**IMAGOLOGICAL MYTHS AND CULTURAL IDENTITY IN  
“ANNA KARENINA” (2012)**

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*Abstract*

The article deals with L. Tolstoy's novel “Anna Karenina” film adaptation, created in 2012 by director J. Wright and T. Stoppard, a world-famous postmodern playwright. The screenplay and numerous interviews are analysed, the four main tasks solved by the filmmakers are discussed; the basic principles of imagological analysis are determined, the influence of the book “Natasha’s Dance” by O. Fidges on the filmmakers’ reception of L. Tolstoy’s novel and imagological myths about Russia is investigated. The article emphasizes the great impact of the book on the formation of such imagological myths about Russia as the lack of national identity among the Russian people. The difference in romantic “regimes” between Russia and Western countries is underlined. We argue that there is a special imagological myth of Russian love formed as the result of the “holy Russian literature” reception and interpretation in general and L. Tolstoy’s novel in particular. The necessity of including the native literature, history and other liberal arts into the technical university academic curriculum is stressed, as they are part and parcel of creative scientific and technical specialist’s education. The idea of integrating the film adaptation and translation analysis of Russian classics into the English language classes at technical universities is proposed.

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**Keywords:** “Anna Karenina”, film adaptation, imagological myth, cultural identity.



## 1. Introduction

Liberal arts have always inspired scientists and influenced the technological progress. A. Einstein once said in his interview: “If I were not a physicist, I would probably be a musician. I often think in music” (Viereck, 1929, p. 113). He was “a speculative thinker, a practical engineer, a sportsman and an artist” and came “close to the Greek ideal of harmonious development” (Viereck, 1929, p. 113). It was ancient Greece where philosophers laid “ultimate ground” of “modern scientific education” by specifying the “categories of episteme and techne” thus demonstrating “the high horizon of cognitive activity” (Karpov, 2015, p. 449). On the one hand, it is impossible to imagine that someone lacking imagination and intuition could make a scientific breakthrough. On the other hand, the distinctive features of modern science, such as: 1. its focus on practical application; 2. its «social and collective character” (Lebedev, 2015, p. 53-54); 3. “fiscalization of science” (Jedlikowska, 2016, p. 14) demand excellent communication skills and very high ethical standards in order: 1. to avoid dangerous practical applications of their discoveries ; 2. to work with “financial agencies, searching for financial resources” to make scientific and technological discoveries profitable; 3. to be successful team players in order to conduct successful research together with colleagues. It is the liberal arts in general and literature in particular that can foster ethical standards and communication skills. At present, major scientific research, projects are international and require joint efforts of many countries. Therefore, the importance of literary imagology as a branch of comparative studies is increasing, since it facilitates successful communication with "other" nations, peoples and cultures, helps to interpret the partner’s final research goals, methods and results properly, taking into consideration one’s national, cultural and political identity.

## 2. Problem Statement

In spite of the facts: that “development of creative professionals is the goal of education ... of modern technical universities” (Fadeeva & Kirillov, 2015, p. 335) and that it is “the creative ... model ... [that] form<s> the core of the University” (Karpov, 2017c, p. 114) there is a problem of “rejection of liberal arts in general” (Fadeeva & Kirillov, 2015, p. 336) among engineering and IT students. “Modern education is lacking humanity, as it has never had” (Karpov, 2015, p. 454), the academic curriculum does not leave much space for liberal arts. Consequently, university teaching staff ought to use every opportunity to help students to get extra information in these subjects, to turn it into knowledge and to let liberal arts permeate into science. We argue that English classes at technical universities can be used for that purpose employing student’s knowledge of English and imagological analysis as part of comparative studies of Russian classical literature, its English translations and British and American film adaptations. “It is only when a man applies the information to doing something, it does become knowledge» (Karpov, 2017b, p. 809).

## 3. Research Questions

What results is it possible to obtain comparing Russian fiction as a source text, its translations into foreign languages, film adaptations made in other countries and different text intermediaries “tak[ing] into account the ... dissonance ... of different cultural groups?” (Karpov, 2017a, p. 723) How

can imagological myths about “other” cultures affect cross-cultural communication? What way can imagological information be introduced to engineering and IT students and be applied by them in their everyday life and profession?

#### 4. Purpose of the Study

To answer these questions the novel “Anna Karenina” by L. N. Tolstoy (2013, 2014) as a source text and other related texts: its translations into English, its film adaptation directed by J. Wright and the screenplay written by the famous postmodern playwright T. Stoppard will be discussed in terms of imagology. Possible research result applications in cross-cultural communication will be offered.

Imagology is a branch of comparative studies which deals with “the images of “other” ... cultures, alien to the perceiving subject” (Papilova, 2011). It does not only reveal “the image of the “stranger”, but also, in connection with reception and assessment processes, characterizes the perceiving subject, i.e. it reflects national identity and its own system of values ” (Papilova, 2011), which may give an excellent opportunity for comparison. The great Russian literature is "a brand known worldwide" (Sartakov, 2019, p. 3). In Western culture there exists an imagological myth of “holy” Russian literature”. Its reception and interpretation in different kinds of foreign texts may help to understand other cultures. Nowadays different European nations have become just a part of a large “multy-ethnic society [ which] develops with the expression of paradoxes of a cultural mosaic, conflicts and tense relations causing the alienation of personal identity from traditions and roots” (Saulite, 2017, p. 227). To avoid conflicts and achieve mutual understanding in cross-cultural communication the imagological point of view could help greatly. Watching, analysing and discussing film adaptations in English can give students an opportunity to find out what imagological myths about Russian people, their history, traditions and culture do exist in the UK and the USA. The Russian and the British images of this country can be compared, thus contributing to the Russian student’s knowledge of the British and American culture.

L. Tolstoy's novel "Anna Karenina" is a precedent text that has been filmed dozens of times and has become an integral part of both Russian and Western culture.

The film adaptation “Anna Karenina” created by T. Stoppard and J. Wright immediately gave rise to a lot of controversial critique in foreign and Russian media and on the Internet: Bykov (2013), Lyashchenko (2013), Sirivlya (2013), Groen (2018), Solomons (2012). A number of scholars devoted their articles to the analysis of this film: Rebel (2012), Shteiman (2014), Zagidullina (2014), Matasheva (2015), Pietrzak-Franger (2015), Popova (2017a, 2017b).

Matasheva (2015) compares the novel, its previous and the latest film adaptations and offers their classification. Rebel (2012) discusses Kira Nightly’s performance both in “Pride and Prejudice” and in “Anna Karenina”. Shteiman (2014) applies political and communicative methods in order to analyse J. Wright and T. Stoppard’s film adaptation of the novel. Zagidullina (2014) examines the hero’s attitude towards love. Popova (2017a) focuses on Anna as the film protagonist and on the mathematical symbols of Levin and Kitty’s love (Popova, 2017b). Pietrzak-Franger (2015) explores the postfeminist concept reflected in the British screen version. However, the postmodern style of the latest film adaptation demands that it should be examined from the imagological point of view, as nowadays not only love, but

cultural identity has become a crucial issue for younger generations, who are trying to combine modern world globalization and cultural diversity.

## 5. Research Methods

This interdisciplinary research deals with the imagological stereotypes and myth study impact on the English language learning. It relies on the methodology of intertextual and imagological analysis. Imagology is a branch of comparative studies. The imagological analysis contradistinguishes ethno-stereotypes, i.e. national and foreign traits of character, diverse linguistic pictures of the world, different mentality types - a nation's generalized way of thinking as opposed to rational thinking and ideology. (Papilova, 2011, pp. 5-7). The imagological analysis may examine: 1. the character's nationality and national identity, lifestyle, social status, profession, personality traits, speech characteristics; 2. language stereotypes in the text; 3. imagological motifs - ethno-stereotypes found in different texts; 4. the author, narrator and character's stereotypes divergence (Papilova, 2011, p. 10). When conducting an imagological analysis of a novel and its foreign translations and film adaptations, students may reveal the specific features of the Russian mentality, and through its assessment by foreign translators, screenwriters and directors as carriers of "other" cultural identities, the peculiarities of their own national character.

## 6. Findings

According to J. Wright, his film adaptation of "Anna Karenina" is a "dissertation on love". In different cultures, attitude towards love can vary greatly. It is shaped under the influence of local customs, traditions, mentality, religion, education, and economic well-being. Russian students may set tasks for their own adaptation of "Anna Karenina" and compare them with the four main tasks the director tried to solve in the film: 1. to show all possible types of love; 2. to explain that female carnal love is fraught with danger; 3. to prove that Anna's tragedy results from the Russian upper class lack of cultural identity; 4. to pinpoint Tolstoy's critical attitude towards overindulgence in romanticism. As a rule, students fail to guess the third task, because in spite of the fact that Tolstoy did criticize Englishism, it does not belong to the major novel motives. "Anna Karenina" is traditionally perceived as a love story rather than a treatise on the national issues. Besides that, the British and Russian conceptions of cultural identity, which, without any doubt, influences one's behaviour, idea of love and attitude towards romantic relationship, differed greatly for the British and Russians in the 19th - century, and do not coincide in the 21st- century globalized world.

Novel screen versions of novels often cause significant but inevitable source text reduction, and the left or dropped out text parts can characterize adaptations quite well. Students check what economic and socio-political novel motives were excluded; and speculate why only the episodes, which deal with love, have been included (Williams, 2012) They find out if the director is actually "examining ... many different kinds of love ... from adulterous infatuation to marital contentment" (McCarthy, 2012). Students look for different love type examples studied in the film: between the mother and child, fraternal, to the Motherland, to God, and try to prove that "the word 'love' is central to the book, and to ... [the] movie" ("Anna Karenina", 2012).

Having contrasted Anna -Vronsky - Karenin love triangle and Levin – Kitty romantic relationship, T. Stoppard comes to the same conclusion as L. Tolstoy. He states that carnal love cannot bring happiness. Students usually notice that, despite of the word “love” polysemy and demonstrated various kinds of love, the authors, nevertheless, reduce the film plot to a “destructive” (Groen, 2018) love melodrama which neglects a lot of historical nuances and Russian-British imagological differences. Unlike Tolstoy- a Russian 19<sup>th</sup> century noble man - T. Stoppard is our contemporary and lives in the UK, where consumerism, satisfaction of all kinds of needs, including the sexual ones, has become the main life goal. He is aware that: it is Anna's sexual dissatisfaction that forces her into adultery. That’s why he makes her exclaim: “So this is love ... This!” (Stoppard, & Wright, 2012)

Students can investigate how justified the application of this physiological principle, which seems to be a relevant interpretation of the conflict from a contemporary western society member’s point of view, is to the novel in terms of the Russian 19<sup>th</sup> century mentality, and if it is possible to correlate this “post-millennial Karenina” (Pietrzak-Franger, 2015, p. 249) picturizing a new social trend -“post-feminism’ (Pietrzak-Franger, 2015, p. 248) which clamours against feminism and characterizes” female sexual desire as socially dangerous” (Pietrzak-Franger, 2015, p. 243) with the longstanding and unquestionable imagological myth about a traditionally very romantic Russian woman in love, formed under the influence of the Russian classical literature .

Students usually share the critics opinion that Anna is shown as a manipulator in the film, but they cannot agree with Tom Stoppard and Joe Wright’s belief based on O. Figes’ book “Natasha’s Dance” that the Russian aristocracy’s lack of national identity and Francophilia - “the Russians were obsessed with French culture in the 19<sup>th</sup> century” (Solomons, 2012) - illustrating their sanctimony and hypocrisy that led to Anna’s tragic death.

The historian O. Figes who insists on the lack of national and cultural identity of noble Russians in his book was the film consultant and gave the film crew a lecture on Russian cultural history. All of them have read his book. J. Wright borrowed the theatre metaphor from it. It conveys the idea of Russian aristocrats “living their lives as if on a stage, ... experiencing an identity crisis. They desperately wanted to be part of Western Europe and imitated the French, including speaking French, they all spoke French more than Russian. » (Thompson, 2012). This way the adaptation creates one more imagological myth about Russia and neglects the fact that the obsession with everything French ceased at the beginning of the 19th century, when "The Napoleonic invasion of 1812 killed .... Francophilia." (Forney, 2014). But the film director still believes that «War and Peace» is full of French and so is «Anna Karenina» (Thompson, 2012) Thereby, students can try to answer two questions: 1. Can T. Stoppard be considered “well-versed in Russian history and culture and identity.” (Thompson, 2012); 2. Was the director right relying on O. Figes and T. Stoppard’s knowledge of Russian history. In order to get acquainted with Francophilia presented in the novel students can conduct an imagological analysis of the episode in its translation when the terrible man speaks French in Anna’s nightmare. This image is not only frightening, but appealing to the Russian imagological myth of the “frivolous” French (Nikolayeva, 1999) and making an allusion to fatal carnal love:" He [man] rummages and mutters in French, very quickly, very quickly, and rolling the rs in his throat, you know: "It faut le battre le fer, le broyer, le pétrir ..." (Tolstoy, 2013 p. 361). As for the British, they traditionally consider the French to be “promiscuous in sexual

relations” (Vostrikh, 2010). The film *Francophilia* is likely to stress this specific French and Russian attitude towards carnal love. Vronsky does not go to the gypsy choir performance, which is an imagological myth about regular Russian upper-class entertainment, but to the “French theatre” to “watch ... a “risqué” show with Can- Can Girls.” (Stoppard, 2012). Students can look up in a dictionary the words: “risqué”- a French word that means something “a little shocking, usually because it is about sex” (Hornby, 2005, p. 1313) and “Can-Can”- a famous dance in which “women kick their legs high in the air”. ” (Hornby, 2005, p. 217) in order to feel the reference to the British imagological myth about the British competitors - the “promiscuous” French (Vostrikh, 2010) pinpointed in the adaptation by specifying what kind of theatre Vronsky visits.

As a rule, all the students know quite well what L. Tolstoy’s novel is about. “*Anna Karenina*” is a “verbal precedent phenomenon” which implies “texts in the broadest sense of the word”. It is a “precedent text” (Gudkov, 1998, p. 82-83), a constituent part of the imagological myth about the “holy Russian literature” (T. Mann), “the nation’s mirror”. Classical Russian literature is believed to represent «Russian version» of the panto-Christian «myth» about fallen person rebirth” (Klimova, 2005) and “succumbing to love as if it were a supernatural power” (Aronson, 2015). It may be especially interesting for students to compare the traditional Russian idea of love as a “romantic” “Regime of Fate” which may be “detrimental to comfort, sanity or life itself” and the western one - a “romantic” “Regime of Choice” “rationaliz[ing] emotions ... and reject[ing] commitments” (Aronson, 2015). In the novel and in the script, students can find a lot of examples of such a “rationalizing” attitude towards love and family. Initially it was typical for Karenin. He demanded that Anna should have it too. Levin also asserts:” I believe in reason” (Stoppard, 2012, p. 194). Students analyse why this rational approach lets the heroes down. In the novel Levin and Kitty’s romantic relationship contrasts with Anna and Vronsky’s carnal love. In the 2012 film adaptation T. Stoppard, being a postmodern author, reproduces this “precedent situation” (Raspava, 2017) with irony. Students should decide if T. Stoppard ‘s interpretation of Levin and Kitty ‘s marriage as an “ultimately perfect marriage with Mother Russia (Alicia Wikander)” (Groen, 2018) was influenced by O. Figes’s book. Students can compare Levin in the novel, where he is “Tolstoy’s “mouthpiece” (Mandelker, 1993) and “an embodiment of a true Russian” (Kuzmic, 2016, p. 95), and in T. Stoppard’s script, where he is a grotesque character. Though “Levin is important” (McCrum, 2012) as Tolstoy’s ” alter-ego” (Groen, 2018), he looks more like his caricature - an “idealized” “clumsy symbol perpetually surrounded by nature but so damned artificial” (Groen, 2018), “a clown”, a parody of the 19th century revolutionary democrat that “is so similar to modern-day leftists». (Forney, 2014) whose “intellectual father” (Forney, 2014) was L. Tolstoy, just in accordance with the characteristics V. Lenin (1908) gave to the writer:” I am a bad wicked man, but I am practicing moral self-perfection; I don't eat meat any more, I now eat rice cutlets.” Figes (2003) stresses that in spite of his later ascetic life young Tolstoy found peasant women ”available to him by his ‘squire’s rights’ ” (p. 240). To prove this Figes (2003) quotes Tolstoy's diaries: «21 April 1858. A wonderful day. Peasant women in the garden and by the well. I’m like a man possessed» (p. 240). In spite of the fact that Levin’s love is usually considered to be “spiritual, not carnal” (Zagidullina, 2014, p. 72). Stoppard (2012) shows in the script how a “proper lady[’s]” (p. 48) romanticism can be defeated by carnal love. In this “only “physiological” scene in the Levine's story” (Zagidullina, 2014, p. 72) he cheats on Kitty seducing a

peasant woman in his Russian bath, which is one more imagological myth about Russia. O. Figes considers “banya” to be “a place for sex and wild behaviour” as opposed to exclusively hygienic “Western bathrooms” (p. 46). «Postcoitum» (Stoppard, 2012, p. 46) Serafina asks him to bring her from Moscow some «soap, ... smelling like for a proper lady. » (Stoppard, 2012, p. 48) After reading through this episode in the script, students can try to answer the following questions: 1. Does this scene demonstrate Tolstoy’s negative attitude towards “overindulgence in romanticism”? (Pietrzak-Franger, 2015, p. 251) 2. Does T. Stoppard offer his hero a dose of reality, showing how materialistic women are? 3. Was the director finally right leaving this episode out? In the screenplay it is immediately followed by the ball in Moscow, where Kitty’s “proper lady” romanticism is terribly defeated for the second time - by Anna. Vronsky - Kitty’s suitor - falls in love with. T. Stoppard shows that romanticism is doomed to be defeated by carnal love. Students determine which “romantic regime” these two Kitty’s competitors choose to live in, taking into account that Anna is passionate, but also very romantic by nature, and Serafina, who is afraid of sin, nevertheless commits it without love. Being practically-minded, she tries to get some benefit from Levin. Unlike that peasant woman, Anna wants nothing from Vronsky, but his love and admiration. However, her soul is devastated by her adultery, and she blames Vronsky: “You murdered my happiness.” (Stoppard, 2012, p. 41) Having found sexual harmony, Anna lost her sunshine. Her sexual desire becomes dangerous both for society and for herself.

Students discuss the following topics in small groups:

1. Anna, Kitty, Serafina and Levin as illustrations of two more imagological myths about Russia: the “downtrodden”, but “righteous” Russian common folks; the mysterious “Russian soul”, which was created and promoted by the Slavophiles. (Figes, 2003, p. XXX).
2. T. Stoppard’s idea that all the noblemen in the 19th century Russia suffered from the lack of national identity, as both: St. Petersburg upper-class members and country squires were performing actors. The only difference between them was that the latter were “colonized” not by the French or English culture, but by the idealized image of the Russian one.
3. The difference of goals set by Tolstoy and by the authors of the film which is caused by the dependence of peculiar British reception and interpretation of Russian literature on the imagological myths about Russia, Russian romantic relationship, Russian culture.
4. The controversial film reception was predetermined by the facts given in O. Figes’ book “Natash’s Dance “. The historian’s stance expressed in it has influenced the screenwriter and director’s interpretation of Tolstoy’s “Anna Karenina”.

## 7. Conclusion

“When literature and history ... become information only, ... sense of belonging to one’s people and country are precluded” (Karpov, 2017b, p. 809). To avoid this, students should study Russian literature and history comparing source texts, their foreign translations, film adaptations and text intermediaries, which make it possible for them to get an idea what imagological myths the British and Russians have and how they affect the culture reception. Comparing the novel “Anna Karenina” and its film adaptation they find out that there is still a huge difference in Russian and British interpretation: of

“love” (Pietrzak-Franger, 2015, p. 251) - as a regime of either fate or choice, family – consisting of either father and mother or only of “saintly fathers” (Pietrzak-Franger, 2015, p. 251), Russian history – being either great or created artificially, national and cultural identity- either present or absent. The imagological information about “other” peoples can help to understand their literature and art and thus facilitate the cross-cultural communication. Imagological information can be introduced to engineering and IT students during their classes of the English language and can be used by them in their everyday life and to avoid blunders in communication. The national and cultural identity problem is urgent in Russia today. The knowledge of positive imagological myths about Russia, such as “holy Russian literature” and sacrificing Russian love, can help students to obtain national and cultural identity.

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To my family.

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