



Research Article

© 2019 Sabirova et al.  
This is an open access article licensed under the Creative Commons  
Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs License  
(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>).

## Comprehension of the English National Character in Building Professional Linguistic Culture

Diana Rustamovna Sabirova

Elena Gennadyevna Solovyova

Nadezhda Pavlova Pomortseva

Svetlana Petrovna Antonova

Kazan Federal University

Doi: 10.2478/jesr-2019-0027

### Abstract

*The article discusses the integrative competence-based cultural approach to studying the complex and multifaceted world of the culture of the target language through comprehension of the English national character reflected in arts as a way to personal development, interdisciplinary professional mobility and professional culture of the student majoring in Linguistics. The English national character is revealed through its artistic understanding in such most 'English' genres as portrait, landscape and caricature, as well as in the perpendicular architectural style and features of landscape architecture. The authors have designated the content-semantic blocks of Linguistics and Culture Study courses to demonstrate the students who specialize in translation and interpretation the traditions reflected in the national character through the prism of art, thus revealing the semantics of the concept of the national character. The image of the English national character as constructed by English art is analyzed. Its main features are revealed: conservatism, patriotism, snobbery, respect of law and privacy, tolerance, politeness, practicality and rationality, conventionalism, eccentricity and sense of humor, contradiction and sometimes paradox. Interactive technologies that ensure the assimilation of educational material aimed at promoting national, ethnic and religious tolerance, respect of the values of a different culture, focus on cross-cultural communication, inculturation and socialization of the individual are presented in the article.*

**Keywords:** Language, Linguistics, comprehension, reading, English national character, culture, translation, student, semiotics

### 1. Introduction

In the modern multilingual world, the problems of national identity are becoming increasingly relevant. In this regard, the requirements for professional training of a linguist are increasing. They are required to be independent, communicative, multicultural individuals, able to comprehend the mentality, demonstrate a high level of professional culture [Sabirova, 2015].

In translation, the ongoing processes of integration of knowledge, interaction of different cultures and cultural traditions impose on the translator a mission of ambassador of culture, providing for understanding between the parties in cross-cultural communication. For it, the translator needs to freely navigate in the information-semantic, symbolic linguo-cultural space, which is impossible without interdisciplinary integrative activity, introducing students to the emotional and moral experience, ensuring the ability to navigate and adapt in a rapidly changing world and responding to the specifics of translation training in the modern educational space

[Solovyeva et al. 2015].

Therefore, teaching students majoring in Linguistics the faculty faces the challenge of finding new approaches that would ensure the effective training of a competent translator with a high professional culture. One of such approaches can be an integrative competence-based cultural approach to the study of the complex value world of the target language culture through the comprehension of the national character as reflected in arts.

The national character in the context of this study is as a set of certain national psychological traits, mentality, national traditions and customs, which has been determined by certain climatic and geographical factors, peculiarities of historical development, religious beliefs and manifested in the specifics of its national culture, language and communication behavior of people [Kustova, 2003].

Integrative approach makes the science of language more complete, enriches the educational process, since a foreign language is considered in this approach as a means of learning the cultural experience of various countries and peoples, and foreign language culture as a factor in the socialization of the individual [Vereshchagin et al. 1990; Passov, 1999; Kondrateva and Nazarova, 2015].

At the same time, the deep, meaningful penetration into a foreign language culture based on comprehending the characteristics of the national character through the prism of art makes it possible to form such important professional qualities of the translator/interpreter as tolerance and flexibility, sociability, creativity, autonomy, endurance and responsibility.

In this regard, it became necessary to improve students' knowledge in the field of culture of the target language country, to form the professional competencies of the future linguist, able to comprehend the peculiarities of the national character and culture of the target language country as reflected in arts on the basis of independent thinking and creativity, which will enhance their background knowledge and increase the level of their professional culture [Gafiyatova and Pomortseva, 2016; Bakhshandeh et al, 2015].

Here, an important role is given to art, which is considered a means of cross-cultural communication. It helps to comprehend communicative values, diversify the world, influences personal axiological orientations, develops creativity, associative thinking, helps to utilize knowledge concepts, interpret a specific sociocultural situation. All this contributes to the spiritual development, inculturation and socialization of the future linguist [Solovyova and Pomortseva, 2017; Zare, 2015].

## 2. Methods

To provide well-grounded conclusions on the status of the problem of comprehension of the English national character as reflected in arts the professional culture of a linguist the following theoretical and practical methods was applied and allowed to achieve the solution of the research problem:

- a descriptive method for observation and classification of the investigated material;
- a system-oriented analysis of the studies conducted by Russian and international researchers on the problem;
- observation, collecting, analyzing and synthesizing information from the authors' personal decades of teaching experience at the university.

## 3. Results and Discussion

In the process of familiarizing with the English culture through works of art, the students majoring in Linguistics acquire the cultural norms, learn to understand similarities and differences between Russian and English cultures in architecture, painting, music, landscape art, etc., values and traditions as well as the mentality of the people. The integration of linguistic and cultural disciplines is reflected on the level of content and technologies. In the integrated content there are semantic blocks that reveal the features of a national character in the following: 1) the traditional household, ceremonial, ritual ceremonial and etiquette culture; 2) culture components having a national specific color; 3) the mental characteristics of culture (conceptual picture of the world and axiological orientations); 4) the national concept sphere as an ordered set concepts of the English people; 5)

the linguistic and communicative behavior of the people; 6) cultural ties between nations; 7) the system of cultural codes that allow to penetrate to the semantic cultural level; 8) comparing national stereotypes of the English perception other nations' culture etc. [Kustova, 2003]. All these semantic blocks are visualized using images of art, embodied in the most 'English' of its genres.

English art reflects almost all the listed features of the English character. In paintings by W. Hogarth, the English are observant, J. Reynolds' works reflect inconsistency, restraint, independence in judgment, W. Blake's - inconsistency, J. Constable's - observability. These artists had different views and techniques, but each of them revealed the main features of the English national character in their works [Shestakov, 2010].

**Understatement.** The 'understatement' concept is considered as implying underestimation, diminution, etc. It is widely represented in modern English, which reflects the temperament of the British, their unwillingness to express their thoughts too directly. Demonstrative politeness, restraint, self-control is the desire to preserve the distance. It is the basis of basic values in relation to space, time, and status. Most clearly in the art of painting 'understatement' appears in the portrait of the Renaissance and Enlightenment.

Connoisseurs note restraint or 'reticence' inherent in the English portrait of this period, regardless of whether it was created by J. Reynolds or J. Gainsborough's genius, or the conscientious brush of other artists. It was the restraint that impressed those continental artists who tried to copy the English portraits. The English portrait is prone to silence, and when he speaks, speaks quietly, like the British themselves to this day. In other words, "an English portrait hides more than it detects" [Pevsner, 1956].

H. Holbein, organically embracing the tradition of medieval English art associated with miniature, created expressive portrait art, based on a clear linear rhythm, combined with the richness of clothes and ornaments [Solovyova and Pomortseva, 2017].

The peculiarities of portrait painting, founded by H. Holbein, were inherited by N. Hilliard, the first national artist of the English Renaissance, who became the court miniaturist of Queen Elizabeth I. In his numerous portraits the first national artist of the English Renaissance N. Hilliard emphasizes the sense of dignity and value of personality.

In the painting of the English Renaissance poets, artists and court nobles created the cult of Elizabeth, which reflected the medieval knightly ideal of a beautiful lady and the greatness of royal power [Shestakov, 2010, p. 96].

**Symbolism.** The use of symbols in artistic images in portraits of Elizabeth I helps to decipher the symbolic nature of the language. Thus, Sieve Portrait of Queen Elizabeth I symbolize chastity. In the painting Elizabeth and the Three Goddesses (H. Eworth), Juno, Minerva and Venus greet her standing on the steps of the temple, where Elizabeth holds not an apple in her hand, but the power. Protestant English artists have never been focused on creating religious and mythological scenes since such painting in churches is not needed. Besides, it did not correspond to reticence and restraint of the English character as well as rationality and common sense.

**Satire.** Another tradition characteristic of English art is satirical. The flowering of the caricature is connected with the English national character, in which there is a desire for a comic, which is called 'English humor'. The development of the English cartoon was associated with the emergence of a democratic press and the formation of a national tradition in graphics, engraving, in particular. It was the satire at the forefront of the creative activity of W. Hogarth, who showed himself as a painter and engraver. Observation of the artist helped him create a satirical series A Rake's Progress, A Harlot's Progress, Marriage à-la-mode.

Understanding the English and Russian mentality, the semiotics of the national character, reflected in the painting, is promoted through familiarity with the works of W. Hogarth (Marriage à-la-mode), close to the traditions of critical realism, and P. Fedotov, who dreamed of overshadowing the famous W. Hogarth (Major's Marriage Proposal, Breakfast of an Aristocrat), representing the comedy of manners, which gives rise to associations. We consider the common thing that unites the representatives of a particular culture. Comparison of works of art by W. Hogarth and P. Fedotov promotes deeper penetration into the peculiarities of a national character.

Thus, the series Marriage à-la-mode allows, through decoding non-verbal languages and meanings displayed by the author, to understand individual manifestations of the national character

of the English (aristocracy, snobbery, rationality, common sense).

**Respect for history.** The national trait of the British is respect for history, for antiquity. In combination with traditional practicality, respect for history can be observed in ancient castles, monuments of medieval culture, full of treasures, in the perpendicular style and the style of decorated Gothic that preceded it.

Decorated gothic is a kind of ambiguity and understatement, while the perpendicular style is straightforward and simple [Shestakov, 2010, p.47]. Perpendicular style in architecture, which has remained unchanged for two centuries, correlates with conservatism and at the same time a certain illigibility of the English.

Comprehension of architectural monuments, signs, symbols, cultural codes allows students to penetrate into the spiritual life of another culture, especially the national character through comparison with their culture. Thus, when considering the semiotics of a Russian church and an English medieval cathedral, students' attention is focused on symbolism, which helps decode non-verbal languages and meanings, helps to understand the mentality of the English people.

**Love of nature.** Landscape is a special genre in English art, important for understanding of English mentality and national character. Here such qualities of an English character as empiricism, a unique sense of nature, a tendency to experiment, to invent technical innovations, are manifested. The development of the landscape was accompanied by aesthetic reflections, there was such a category as 'picturesque'. It is different from the 'beautiful', its semiotics is derived from contrasts of light and shadow, unusual objects, everything connected with the formless and manifested in diversity, contrasts, play of light and shadow. For J. Constable it is characterized by such a property of the English character, as an observation, but the subject of it was not a man and his actions, but nature. "Painting is a science, and it should be considered as the study of the laws of nature...". This J. Constable's statement makes it easy to return to unchanged English quality - a rational approach [Pevsner, 1956].

Technologically, artistic interpretation of historical traditions, reflected in the English national character in the context of the formation of a professional linguist culture may be applied through interactive technologies that are designed to ensure the assimilation of the content of this educational material, which reveals the English national character. The technological component of the training of linguists is based on the method of projects mainly realized though the 'flipped classroom' format, as discussed by L.R. Abdullina et al [Abdullina, et al. 2019]. Here a special role is given to interdisciplinary projects, for example, The Cult of Traditions Through the Prism of Art, Love of Antiquity in England, The Speaking World of the English Portrait, The 900-year History of the Tower of London, 400 Years of British History in Portraits. Case studies are widely used; seminar-compositions that deal with the general problems of several disciplines, for example, The English National Character in the Russian Traveler's View, The World of Blake - the Dark Albion of the Druids, Russian-English Historical, Cultural, and Artistic Ties: the Dialogue of Arts, The Concept the National Landscape of England in the Works of J. Constable and others; seminars-debate (Sense and Sensibility. J. Reynolds and Th. Gainsborough, Turner-Aivazovsky: the Birth of Associations); multimedia at the Hermitage-Kazan Center (Charles Cameron in Russia, English Gardens in Russia, Catherine II and English Artists, etc.); research portfolio method that develops the ability to work with various sources of information on the topic (for example, Hogarth Traditions in the Works of David Hockney, From Elizabeth to Victoria. National Character in Portraits of the XVI-XIXth centuries (a collection of the National Portrait Gallery), World of Rural Nature of J. Constable. The Semiotics of the Temple in the Russian and English public Conscience, and others); game methods (Sense of Humor. Caricature) and many others.

#### 4. Summary

Comprehension of the English national character in the context of the richest culture of the country, its traditions within the proposed approach is aimed at building national and religious tolerance, orientation to cross-cultural interaction, which is impossible without knowledge of not only English, but also Russian culture in all their diversity, the availability of clear and meaningful ideas of the current state of these cultures.

It is quite difficult to understand semiotics even of a native culture, not to mention other cultures. Verbal signs alone cannot convey the fullness and depth of information about each culture. Information, which, due to its complexity, cannot be conveyed by a natural language, is conveyed in a literary text, therefore, the language of art is used to transmit information that exceeds human cognitive abilities [Solovyova and Shagivaleeva, 2017; Golikova and Pomortseva, 2014; Akimzhano et al, 2018].

National character is a key to understanding the life of a nation, it is reflected in the language and connects the individual with his culture. The English national character is the result of the rich history of the country, its traditions, behavioral habits; it is a reflection of the country's climate, nature, geographical features. It's not easy to give an idea of the English character, but one can single out the main features of the national character of the English [Shestakov, 2010; Bicer et al., 2018].

The following features are inherent in the English national character: conservatism, obedience to law, rationality, patriotism, snobbery, reserve, home commitment, tolerance, politeness, conventionalism, eccentricity, controversy and, even, paradox. All these features relate to the term 'Englishness' which is untranslatable into Russian and are reflected in art.

Art, through its integral nature, has the ability to most clearly reflect the national psychology of a given people. The proposed approach paves the way for comprehending the English national character, as reflected in works of art, through their figurative understanding and interpretation.

Existing in the universal categories of ethical and aesthetic values, it is art that allows an individual to perceive and understand the uniqueness and individuality of a foreign culture. Empathy allows one to penetrate the life of people of another culture, and this imaginary picture serves as the basis for creative activity.

## 5. Conclusions

Thus, comprehension of the English national character through the prism of art contributes to building the professional culture of the linguist, teaches understanding of one's own and foreign cultures. Appeal to the mentality, values and national character of another culture enriches personal experience, stimulates creativity. The proposed integrative competence-based interdisciplinary approach to organizing the content of linguistic education in the context of the research problem will allow students to more deeply study and understand the differences in types of cultures, identify their specific manifestations in the multicultural space, become a person with a culture of social interaction with other cultures.

## 6. Acknowledgements

The work is performed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University.

## References

- Abdullina, L.R., Ageeva, A.V., Gabdreeva, N.V. (2019). Using the "Flipped classroom" model in the teaching of the theoretical disciplines (French language) at the university. *XLinguae*, vol.12., iss. 1X, pp.161'-169.
- Akimzhano, T., Amandykova, S., Tleukhan, R., Daurembekov, Y., & Aykumbekov, N. (2018). Problems of applying and realization of preventive measures in the form of detention concerning persons, suspected and accused in the commission of the act of terrorism and crimes of extremist nature. *Opción*, 34(85-2), 800-823.
- Bakhshandeh, M., Sedrposhan, N., & Zarei, H. (2015). The Effectiveness of Cognitive-Behavioral Group Counseling to Reduce Anxiety, Marriage; Single People have to be Married in Esfahan City (2013-2014). *UCT Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Research*, 3(1), 10-13.
- Bicer, A., Perihan, C., & Lee, Y. (2018). The Impact of Writing Practices on Students' Mathematical Attainment. *International Electronic Journal of Mathematics Education*, 13(3), 305-313. <https://doi.org/10.12973/iejme/3922>

- Gafiyatova, E., Pomortseva, N. (2016). The role of background knowledge in building the translating/ interpreting competence of the linguist. *Indian Journal of Science and Technology*, vol. 9(16), pp 1-11.
- Golikova G.A., Pomortseva N.P. (2014). The phenomenon of extension/contraction of the text: images of nature in Ch. Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre* and its screen adaptations. *Journal of Language and Literature*, vol. 5, # 3., pp. 153-157.
- Kondrateva, I.G., Nazarova, M.V. (2015). Integration of science and language in teaching English. *Journal of Language and Literature*, vol. 6, iss.3, pp.204-207.
- Kustova L.S. (2003). "The mystery of national character". Moscow: Ikar, 164 p.
- Passov E.I. (1999). "Communicative foreign language education. The concept of development of individuality in the dialogue of cultures". Lipetsk: LGPI, pp. 40-45.
- Pevsner, N. (1956). "Englishness of English Art". New York: Praeger.
- Sabirova D.R. (2015). Ethnocultural Component of Foreign-Language Education: Innovative Mode. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*. MCSER Publishing, Rome-Italy, vol 6, # 3, pp. 362-367.
- Shestakov V.P. (2010). "History of English art. From the middle ages to the present day". Moscow: Galart, 480 p.
- Solovyeva E., Sabirova D., Morozova T. (2015). Forming students' linguistic and cultural competence in academic translation and interpretation studies. *Procedia: Social and Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 199, pp. 415-422.
- Solovyova E.G., Shagivaleeva D.I. (2017). The Dialogue of cultures of England-Russia through the prism of art in the integrative linguistic-culturological educational space of the university. St Petersburg: Asterion, pp.132-142.
- Solovyova E.G., Pomortseva N.P. (2017). "Discovering English Culture. Readings for Language Students (From the Dark Age to the Golden Age)". Kazan: KSU, 166 p.
- Vereshchagin E.M, Kostomarov V.G. (1990). "Language and culture. Linguistic and cultural studies and teaching of Russian and foreign languages". Moscow: Prosveshcheniye, 223 p.
- Zare, Z. (2015). The benefits of e-business adoption: an empirical study of Iranian SMEs. *UCT Journal of Management and Accounting Studies*, 3(1), 6-11.