Research article

Russian–Vietnamese mutual perceptions from linguistic and cultural perspectives

Irina Markovina a, Istvan Lenart a, Alexey Matyushin a,*, Pham Hien b

a Institute of Linguistics and Intercultural Communication, Sechenov University, Moscow, Russian Federation
b Institute of Linguistics, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, Hanoi, Viet Nam

1. Introduction

Political, economic, scientific, and human relations between the Russian Federation and Vietnam have been long-standing and continuously developing. For more than 70 years, both countries have remained in friendly relations, which is especially relevant in the context of rapid and unpredictable changes in the region and the world. In order to enhance better mutual understanding thus raise the effectiveness of political, economic, scientific, and human relations between the Russian Federation and Vietnam, the further development of bilateral relations is needed in the field of culture (Kobelev, 2017), healthcare and education (Zhidkih et al., 2018), and other areas including intercultural studies.

As worded in the Russian Foreign Policy Concept, one of the key provisions of forming a mutually beneficial relationship is “to promote the development of constructive dialogue and partnership in the interests of strengthening harmony and mutual enrichment of various cultures and civilizations” (Komseptsiya Vneshnei, 2016). Vietnam is one of the key partners of the Russian Federation in the Asia-Pacific region (Kobelev and Maryin, 2013). It should be noted that the establishment of an effective intercultural dialogue is not possible without a deep understanding of the representatives of the contacting peoples. The rational development of such relations, based on the results of fundamental and applied research, will contribute to strengthening the role of both countries in the global cultural, humanitarian, educational and scientific space, and furthermore...
will promote closer integration in other areas of great importance (Guiso et al., 2006).

Scientific attempts have been made for the facilitation of intercultural communication including studies on prejudice and stereotyping (Stewart et al., 2021); value theories (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 1961; Schwartz, 1992); research based on measurable cultural dimensions (Hall, 1969; Hofstede, 1980; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1999; Hofstede et al., 2010); theories rooted in intercultural psychology (Triandis et al., 1971; Berry, 1980; Li et al., 2019); the psycholinguistic lacunae theory and theory of language consciousness (Sorokin, 2007; Markovina and Sorokin, 2010; Ufimtseva, 2012, 2014a, 2014b) to mention but a few such works.

The present article describes the first (pilot) stage of the large-scale project aimed to investigate Russian–Vietnamese mutual perceptions reflected in the languages and cultures studied. The ultimate idea behind the research is that the data obtained could help both sides to establish better cross-cultural understanding.

On the basis of experimental data obtained, the authors intend to collect and analyse the Russian–Vietnamese perceptions (ethnic portraits) and self-perceptions (ethnic self-portraits) focusing on the typical characteristics (qualities) of the people (qualitative portraits/self-portraits) and on the personalities that may be viewed as typical representatives of the people (anthroponymic portraits/self-portraits). Further stages of the research will involve the association experiment and further analysis of Russian–Vietnamese mutual perceptions from the linguistic and cultural perspectives as images of the Russian and Vietnamese language consciousness.

Any ethnic image of the world is determined by the ethnic culture, which forms, among other things, the self-perception of the people (Chiao et al., 2010), the perception of other nations (Ageev, 1985) and the world around them as a whole (Kastanakis and Voyer, 2014; Ikonnikova, 1995). Although in the academic literature the technical term ethnic is extensively used, in this paper the authors preferred the term culture-specific understanding culture as defined by Geertz “a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life” (Geertz, 1973, p. 89).

The data presented and analysed in this article has been obtained at the preliminary questionnaire-based stage of investigation of Russian and Vietnamese ethnic images and self-images, reflected in language and culture. As has been already stated, the ethnic portraits and self-portraits of the two peoples were compiled based on two interconnected domains (Sorokin, 2007): that of characteristic traits and of personalised (anthroponymic) images and self-images. Characteristic traits refer to descriptions of other nations, or respondents’ own nation while personified images include names of personalities that were qualified as typical representatives or even symbols of Russia or Vietnam (historical figures, politicians, sportspersons etc., real persons or fiction characters).

The data obtained were further analysed by bringing into service the Schwartz Theory of Basic Human Values (Schwartz, 1992). The theory synthesises findings of a cross-cultural value survey conducted in 82 countries and groups basic human values into ten motivationally different clusters. Those ten clusters are merged into four major categories including openness to change, self-transcendence, conservation, and self-enhancement. Relying on these units, the Schwartz Theory of Basic Human Values enabled the researchers to investigate and comparatively analyse Russian and Vietnamese mutual perceptions and self-perceptions, focusing on intercultural differences and similarities in those.

Previous investigations of the Vietnamese language and culture ranged from empirical observations of the characteristics of verbal and non-verbal behaviour (Lenart, 2013) to partial comparative studies of languages and cultures (Lenart, 2016) and the studies of the perceptual image of Vietnam embedded in the linguistic consciousness of the Russians (Uong, 2018) and perceptual image of the world in the Vietnamese linguistic consciousness (Nguyen, 2000). Similarly, numerous associative experiments allowed to unfold Russian linguistic consciousness (Ufimtseva, 2003, 2015; Ufimtseva and Cherkasova, 2014; Balyasnikova et al., 2018), ultimately resulting in the publication of The Russian Associative Dictionary (Karaulov et al., 2002).

However, to the best of our knowledge no comparative linguocultural research related to the examination of Russian–Vietnamese mutual perceptions has been carried out. It should be noted that the results of such study may find their use in cultural, business, scientific, and educational contexts, enhancing better understanding between Russia and Vietnam and paving the way for future fruitful cooperation. Therefore, the objective of the study was to obtain empirical data on ethnic portraits and self-portraits as the result of processes of ethnic identification and self-identification. Our hypothesis is that ethnic perception and self-perception differ in the number of characteristics noted, as well as in their range of meanings, thus, highlighting the difference in perception from the insider’s and outsider’s perspectives.

2. Materials and methods

A questionnaire-based survey was conducted online in Russia and Vietnam via Google Forms platform. Respondent groups were homogeneous as regards their mother tongue (Russian and Vietnamese, respectively), age (17–25 years), and social status (university students from their respective countries). The respondents were included in the study based on their statement that either Russian or Vietnamese language, respectively, was their mother tongue, assuming that the language and culture—as a system of shared beliefs, norms, and values that the members of society use during interaction with each other, members of other cultures, and the world (Rates and Plog, 1980)—are tightly intertwined (Kecskes, 2014). The questionnaire was first created in the Russian language followed by its Vietnamese translation (see Appendix 1 for the English translation). With regard to general ethical considerations the questionnaire was checked and approved by the Ethical Committee of Leontiev Center for Cross-Cultural Research (Institute of Linguistics, Russian Academy of Science). The participation in the survey was entirely voluntary; the respondents provided their informed consent by pressing the “Next” button at the very beginning of the survey process.

The research material included 100-100 questionnaires randomly selected out of the total number of 109 Russian and 112 Vietnamese forms filled out by the respondents in both countries. The selection was justified by the necessity to equalize sample size in order to avoid possible Type I errors; otherwise, inaccurate conclusions might be drawn. The questionnaire had two sections, asking the participants to provide characteristic features of the Russian and the Vietnamese people and to give the names of personalities who could be regarded as the symbols of either nation. Following data collection, synonymous reactions found in each section were grouped under one most frequently used notion (e.g. Vietnamese reaction words including chăm chỉ, cẩn cụ, and chịu khó, all meaning hard-working; Russian attributes хардйн, отвяжной, and смелый, all meaning brave or courageous). The analysis and grouping was performed by the native-speaking members of the research team. After that, the resultant groups were arranged into frequency lists, in which the most frequent responses were considered as the characteristics most commonly included in the self-portrait of each nation and in the portrait of its counterpart.

As mentioned above, the investigation was backed by the Schwartz Theory of Basic Human Values (Schwartz, 1992). The ten motivationally different clusters introduced by the Schwartz Theory include: self-direction; stimulation; hedonism; achievement; power; security; conformity; tradition; benevolence; and universalism. As Schwartz words the essence of his conceptual framework: “The theory identifies ten basic personal values that are recognized across cultures and explains where they come from. At the heart of the theory is the idea that values form a circular structure that reflects the motivations each value expresses.” (Schwartz, 2012, p. 2). In this paper, characteristic traits of the Russian and Vietnamese people were grouped into these ten clusters, allowing researchers to cross-culturally compare and analyse the Russian and Vietnamese portraits and self-portraits.
3. Results

A total of 437 and 238 responses were obtained from the Russian respondents regarding characteristic features of the Russian and Vietnamese people, respectively. The Vietnamese respondents provided a total of 308 responses that described ethnic self-portrait and 271 responses that outlined collective portrait of the Russians. The differences in numbers are due to the fact that the respondents provided varied number of responses (from three to five) when answering the questions. However, even at this point these numbers already suggest that respondents from both countries demonstrate less awareness of the other peoples than of their own.

Characteristic and personified descriptions given by the respondents in both countries were collected into frequency lists, resulting in three tables (Tables 1, 2, and 3), contrasting self-portraits of the two peoples, Russian self-portrait and their portrait by the Vietnamese (i.e., how the Russians see themselves versus how they are perceived by the Vietnamese), and Vietnamese self-portrait versus their portrait based on the Russian responses. Table 1 displays the characteristic self-perception of the two nations, marking the percentage of the top-10 mentions in each case. Four characteristic traits coincide in Russia and Vietnam including courage, hospitality, hard work, and intelligence (marked in bold, Table 1). Further to that, Russians see themselves as kind, patient, purposeful, strong, showing solidarity and openness. In the Vietnamese self-description, unity and hard work lead the frequency list with the highest scores of 47% and 44%, respectively. Vietnamese also see themselves as patriotic, friendly, resilient, sociable, and creative.

When contrasting the Russian characteristic self-portrait to how Vietnamese see Russians, kindness, courage, hospitality and intelligence emerge as coinciding traits (shown in bold, Table 2). Russians describe themselves as patient, purposeful, strong, hard-working, open, and showing solidarity, while they are seen by Vietnamese as friendly, resilient, united, sociable, communicative and humorous (Table 2).

Vietnamese self-portrait is contrasted with Vietnamese portrait as seen by Russians in Table 3. The single overlapping item in the top-10 characteristics is hard work. The most typical self-perceived character trait of the Vietnamese people is unity, with 47% of respondents to name it. Further self-descriptive characteristics of the Vietnamese include patriotism, intelligence, courage, friendliness, resilience, hospitality and creativity. The most frequent Russian reaction to describe the Vietnamese people is I do not know with 20% of Russian respondents unable to characterise Vietnamese. When asked about the Vietnamese, the Russians choose the following descriptions: kindness, gaiety, trickery, openness, appearance, war past, individualism, and sincerity.

Besides character traits (Tables 1, 2, and 3), personified portraits of the two nations were compiled by requesting respondents to evoke Russian and Vietnamese personalities (Table 4) who could be viewed as typical representative of the people. Russians provided 341 responses about their national prominent figures and 94 responses about the

| Table 1. Russian and Vietnamese self-portraits. |
|-----------------------------------------------|
| Russian self-portrait | Vietnamese self-portrait |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. kindness ( доброжелательность) | 30% unity (đoàn kết) | 47% |
| 2. patience ( терпеливость) | 29% hard work (cẩn cả) | 44% |
| 3. courage ( смелость) | 29% patriotism (tự quyết) | 29% |
| 4. purposefulness ( целеустремленность) | 27% intelligence (thông minh) | 21% |
| 5. hospitality ( гостеприимство) | 21% courage (đồng cảm) | 20% |
| 6. strength ( силы) | 19% friendliness (thân thiện) | 20% |
| 7. solidarity ( единство) | 16% resilience (kiên cường) | 19% |
| 8. hard work ( трудолюбие) | 16% hospitality (hội khách) | 17% |
| 9. intelligence ( ум) | 14% sociability (hoà dẻo) | 12% |
| 10. openness ( открытость) | 13% creativity (sáng tạo) | 11% |

| Table 2. The Russians: self-portrait versus portrait by Vietnamese. |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Russian self-portrait | % Vietnamese self-portrait by Russians | % |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------|----|
| 1. kindness ( доброжелательность) | 30% | unity (đoàn kết) | 47% |
| 2. patience ( терпеливость) | 29% | hard work (cẩn cả) | 44% |
| 3. courage ( смелость) | 29% | patriotism (tự quyết) | 29% |
| 4. purposefulness ( целеустремленность) | 27% | intelligence (thông minh) | 21% |
| 5. hospitality ( гостеприимство) | 21% | courage (đồng cảm) | 20% |
| 6. strength ( силы) | 19% | friendliness (thân thiện) | 20% |
| 7. solidarity ( единство) | 16% | resilience (kiên cường) | 19% |
| 8. hard work ( трудолюбие) | 16% | hospitality (hội khách) | 17% |
| 9. intelligence ( ум) | 14% | sociability (hoà dẻo) | 12% |
| 10. openness ( открытость) | 13% | creativity (sáng tạo) | 11% |

| Table 3. The Vietnamese: self-portrait versus portrait by Russians. |
|-----------------------------------------------|
| Vietnamese self-portrait | % Russian portrait by Russians | % |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|----|
| 1. unity (đoàn kết) | 47% | I do not know (không biết) | 20% |
| 2. hard work (cẩn cả) | 44% | hard work (трудаолюбие) | 19% |
| 3. patriotism (tự quyết) | 29% | kindness (доброжелательность) | 12% |
| 4. intelligence (thông minh) | 21% | gaiety (vui sướng) | 11% |
| 5. courage (đồng cảm) | 20% | trickery (hớp hồn) | 9% |
| 6. friendliness (thân thiện) | 20% | openness (không biết) | 9% |
| 7. resilience (kiên cường) | 19% | appearance (vndoán mặt) | 9% |
| 8. hospitality (hội khách) | 17% | war past (văn minh quân sự) | 6% |
| 9. sociability (hoà dẻo) | 12% | individualism (tự do tư duy) | 6% |
| 10. creativity (sáng tạo) | 11% | sincerity (vcó tính) | 6% |

| Table 4. Categories of Vietnamese and Russian anthropomorphic portraits and self-portraits. |
|-----------------------------------------------|
| Russian self-portrait | Russian portrait by Vietnamese | Vietnamese self-portrait by Russians | Vietnamese portrait by Russians |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Writers (29.91%) | Political leaders (60.35%) | Political leaders (51.93%) | I do not know (71.28%) |
| 2. Political leaders (23.17%) | Writers (13.41%) | Military leaders (29.08%) | Political leaders (17.02%) |
| 3. Scientists (19.65%) | Composers (6.12%) | Writers (12.76%) | Cosmonauts (1.06%) |
| 4. Public figures (14.96%) | Sportspersons (7.33%) | Teachers (1.48%) | Writers (1.06%) |
| 5. Cosmonauts (5.87%) | Scientists (4.96%) | Musicians (1.19%) | Non-specific responses (9.57%) |
| 6. Military leaders (5.28%) | Cosmonauts (3.23%) | Businesspersons (1.06%) | |
| 7. Musicians (4.69%) | Fictional characters (1.46%) | Cosmonauts (0.59%) | |
| 8. Artists (1.17%) | Fashion models (0.87%) | Fashion models (0.59%) | |
| 9. Actors (0.88%) | Material culture (3.21%) | Scientists (0.30%) | |
| 10. Film and stage directors (0.88%) | Miscellaneous (2.04%) | Actors (0.30%) | |
| 11. Fictional characters (0.59%) | Sportspersons (0.30%) | |
| 12. Media persons (0.59%) | Folk heroes (0.30%) | |
Vietnamese. The Vietnamese participants gave 343 responses to personify their own nation and 335 responses to make the Russian personified portrait (for detailed results see Appendices 2,3,4 and 5).

The obtained data was arranged into thematic groups including political leaders, writers, sportspersons, military leaders, etc (Table 4). The Russian personified self-portrait resulted in the following three largest clusters of anthroponyms: writers, political leaders, and scientists, accounting for 72.73% of all responses. The most frequently mentioned personalities in these categories included Pushkin, Tolstoy, and Dostoievsky (writers); Peter the Great, Putin, and Lenin (political leaders); and Mendeleev, Lomonosov, Sechenov (scientists) (Appendix 2).

Reconstruction of the Vietnamese anthroponymic self-portrait resulted in the following three most frequent groups the given personalities belonged to: political leaders, military leaders, and writers, accounting for 93.77% of all responses. Top names in these three groups included political leaders: Ho Chi Minh, Quang Trung, and Nguyen Xuan Phuc; military leaders: Vo Nguyen Giap, Vo Thi Sau, and Le Loi; and writers: Nguyen Du, Nguyen Trai, Xuan Dieu, Le Quy Don (Appendix 3). Both the Russian and the Vietnamese anthroponymic self-portraits incorporated the following further categories: cosmonauts, musicians, and actors/actresses.

The Russian anthroponymic portrait made by the Vietnamese participants consisted of 343 responses, including political leaders (60.35%), writers (13.41%), and composers (6.12%). Vietnamese evoked such outstanding Russian personalities as Putin, Lenin, and Stalin (political leaders); Tolstoy, Pushkin, and Gorky (writers); and Tchaikovsky (composers) (Appendix 4).

The majority of the Russian respondents failed to name famous Vietnamese persons (71.28%), however the most typical answers (posers) (Appendix 4).

In the following three most frequent groups the given personalities included Deleev, Lomonosov, Sechenov (Appendix 3). Both the Russian and Vietnamese portraits incorporated the following further categories: cosmonauts, musicians, and actors/actresses.

The analysis of previous investigations of the Russian–Vietnamese joint research projects showed that they include a number of topics, primarily focusing on Vietnamese language and culture, and historical and political relationships between the countries (Huynh, 2007; Tür, 2008; Đỗ Trí, 2015). Some of the examples are the investigations of the Vietnamese language and culture that range from empirical observations and analysis of the verbal and non-verbal behaviour (Lenart, 2013) to the comparative Hungarian-Vietnamese studies of languages and cultures in the field of business (Lenart, 2016). Of particular interest are the studies of the Vietnamese image of the world (Nguyen, 2000), as well as of the perceptual image of Vietnam embedded in the Russian linguistic picture of the world (Uong, 2018). Several large-scale associative experiments allowed to unfold Russian linguistic consciousness (Ufimtseva, 2003, 2015; Ufimtseva and Cherkasova, 2014; Balayskina et al., 2018); based on these results, The Russian Associative Dictionary was published (Karaulov et al., 2002). The analysis of this linguocultural source yielded no relevant and up-to-date information regarding the presence of Vietnamese language and culture in the Russian language consciousness. To the best of our knowledge, there has been no Russian–Vietnamese research investigating the linguistic and cultural aspects of Russian–Vietnamese mutual perceptions as processes of ethnic identification and self-identification.

The research presented aimed at laying the foundation for the Russian–Vietnamese comparative linguocultural investigation, focusing on Russian–Vietnamese mutual perceptions.

It is important to note that although in the frames of the Russian Psycholinguistic school of thought and namely in Sorokin’s work “Ethnic Conflictology” (Sorokin, 2007), portraits and self-portraits are referred to as of ethnic origin, in this research the authors understand the technical terms portrait and self-portrait as based on cultural groups investigated, that of the Russian language speakers and those of the Vietnamese language speakers.

Figure 1. Russian (left) and Vietnamese (right) characteristic self-portraits based on Schwartz theory (1992).
The Russian and Vietnamese characteristic self-portraits contain a relatively high proportion of overlapping with 40% of the self-perception traits coinciding, such as courage, hospitality, hard work, and intelligence. Vietnamese results demonstrate a stronger emphasis on collectivistic traits such as unity (đoàn kết) (47%) and patriotism, friendliness, and being sociable, while Russians prioritise more individualistic characteristics including patience, purposefulness, and strength.

Some qualities such as kindness, are characteristic not only of Vietnamese (Nguyen, 2019) or Russians, but rather represent universal human values (Kostina et al., 2015). However, patriotism, for example, is one of the distinct qualities of the Vietnamese nation, or, as Tran Van Giau calls it, “the value of the values” (Van Giau, 1980; as cited in Nguyen, 2019, p. 71), which is confirmed by the data obtained in the research presented.

As regards Russian–Vietnamese mutual perceptions, it can be stated that Vietnamese are generally better informed about Russia than vice versa with the most frequent Russian response registered being “I do not know”. Russian characteristics kindness, courage, hospitality and intelligence are among the top answers by both Russians and Vietnamese. Vietnamese see Russians as friendly, resilient, united, sociable, communicative and humorous, and some negative character traits are also mentioned including they never smile at strangers and they are stupid.

The Vietnamese self-perception is overwhelmingly different from how Russians perceive Vietnamese with only one common characteristic that states that Vietnamese are hard-working. The Russians typically lack information about Vietnamese which can be grasped in multiple outputs of the research including: (1) 20% of Russians cannot provide any single characteristic of Vietnamese; (2) some highly generalised answers appear, i.e. (specific) appearance, national food; (3) some contradictory answers are given including individualism as a characteristic trait of the Vietnamese people. Negative traits can be also observed in the Russian responses such as Vietnamese seem as naïve and indomitable. It is well established that self-criticism constitutes an important risk factor to psychopathology (Werner et al., 2019) that leads to symptoms of health anxiety in representatives of different nations (Akariya et al., 2021). However, it also serves an important cultural function, at least in collectivist cultures, where self-criticism may have both adaptive and maladaptive purposes (Aruta et al., 2021). One of the most known examples of explicit self-criticism is found in the Japanese culture (Takata, 2003). Although some authors suggest that this quality applies at least to the Russian Intelligencija (Maidanskaia and Maidansky, 2018) to our best knowledge, existing rigorous studies, including experimental research (Ulimtsseva, 2003, 2015) do not touch upon this characteristic in Russians and Vietnamese. Therefore, further investigation of the subject may prove useful for establishing better cross-cultural understanding between the two peoples.

Some of less frequent responses are also worth mentioning, as they provide invaluable details on the research theme. For example, the Vietnamese respondents perceive the Russian people as religious (2.25%) and, at the same time, superstitious (2.25%). This apparent controversy does not correspond to the qualities that appear in the Russian self-portrait. Previously, it was shown that the ideological vacuum that could be observed in Russia after the rejection of the ideals and values that had guided the society for over seventy years, was at least partially filled with both traditional and non-traditional religions (Mchedlov, 2006). It is estimated that the Orthodox and Islam believers comprise the majority of religious believers of Russia. However, the results obtained in this study showed misalignment between the Russian portrait and self-portrait, suggesting that Russians, in fact, might be less religious than they appear.

Also analysed were the personified (anthroponymic) portraits and self-portraits obtained by collecting names of famous Russian and Vietnamese personalities. A disproportion of answers is observed in this regard too: Russians are less informed about Vietnamese personalities than the other way round.

The names of famous personalities were arranged into the following thematic groups: writers, political leaders, military leaders, scientists, composers, cosmonauts, public figures, businesspersons, teachers, sportspersons,
musicians, actors, fictional characters, artists, models, film directors, media persons, folk heroes. I do not know, non-specific responses, material culture, and miscellaneous. The most prominent groups of famous personalities of the Russian self-perception are writers, political leaders and scientists, while in Vietnam the list is led by political leaders (51.93%) and military leaders (29.08%), followed by writers (12.76%).

The names of the personalities obtained from the Russian respondents are partially overlapping with the recent poll conducted in Russia and aimed at establishing the list of the most prominent names in the Russian history (Samiyev Vistoriti, 2021). One of the poll objectives is the assessment of the Russian cultural memory content and its structure, i.e., to describe a kind of pantheon of names symbolic to the Russians. Among the most frequent names mentioned in the poll are Joseph Stalin, Vladimir Lenin, Alexander Pushkin, and Peter the Great. While the direct comparison of our findings and the poll results is not possible due to differences between the two cohorts in terms of their size and demographic characteristics, it can be suggested that the overlapping famous persons might represent the core of the Russian cultural memory.

The prevalence of writers among the responses of both the Russian and the Vietnamese respondents is hardly surprising. Alexander Pushkin, considered by many Russians as “the Soul of the Russian Poetry”, can be viewed not only as a notable public figure, but also as a “cherished object of affection”; the tribute to his cultural primacy “seems to come not from individuals but from Russia, undifferentiated and united” (Sandler, 2004, p. 3). Therefore, we can safely assume that in case of Pushkin there’s a strong symbolic association between his name and the Russian cultural memory that cannot be explained by the mere fact of inclusion of his works in the school curricula. The same applies to Leo Tolstoy, although his name “was firmly entrenched in the Soviet imagination as a symbol of Russia, and as her most ardent patriot” (Bartlett, 2011, p. 444). This was achieved by highlighting Tolstoy’s patriotism, reflected through War and Peace as a means of boosting national spirit. Taking this into account, we might suggest that the apparent lack of patriotism in the Russian self-portrait is compensated by the patriotism reflected in the works of prominent writers, namely Leo Tolstoy.

On the contrary, patriotism in the Vietnamese self-portrait is demonstrated both by the direct mentioning of this quality and by bringing forth political and military leaders as the famous personalities – symbols of Vietnam. Military leaders and war heroes, such as Vo Nguyen Giap, Tran Hung Dao and many others, are respected as national heroes of Vietnam. According to Dang Nghiem Van, the worship of ancestors is a “long-standing religious tradition of the Vietnamese people, which is deeply rooted in cultural morality” (Doan, 2005, p. 451). As education is highly valued by the Vietnamese and is regarded as the most important attribute of status (Cultural Atlas Editors, 2016) it is no wonder that teachers are considered one of the symbols of the Vietnamese people.

The character traits were analysed by the Schwartz Theory of Basic Values and based on the above mentioned ten motivational distinct values four bigger cluster of values were investigated following the original theory (Schwartz 1992) such as: openness to change, self-transcendence, conservation, self-enhancement.

The following major differences were identified:

1. self-transcendence value is 8% higher in the Russian self-perception (36%) than in the Vietnamese self-perception (28%);
2. conservation value is 10% higher in the Vietnamese self-perception (26%) than in the Russian self-perception (16%);
3. Vietnamese see Russians by 10% more open to change (34%) than Russians see themselves (24%);
4. Russians consider themselves by 11% higher in self-enhancement value (24%) than Vietnamese see them (13%);
5. Vietnamese perceive themselves by 10.5% less open to change (18.5%) than Russians consider them (29%); and
6. Vietnamese judge themselves by 12% stronger in self-transcendence (28%) than Russians consider them (16%).

Application of the Schwartz Theory of Basic Values demonstrates two major differences in self-identification. A relatively high self-transcendence value supports the tendency of the Russians to see themselves as loyal, universalistic people: they stand for equality and show deep compassion for others. Vietnamese, on the other hand, demonstrate relatively low openness to change: the Vietnamese respondents generally see themselves much less open to change than the Russian ones.

Thus, the results obtained show that the perception and self-perception of the Russians and the Vietnamese in fact differ in the number of characteristics noted reflecting the degree of awareness about the representatives of each other's culture and their cultures as a whole. They also differ in the content of the qualities mentioned, thus, highlighting the difference in perception from the insider's and outsider's perspectives. We managed to demonstrate the empirical verification suggesting that the proposed hypothesis might indeed be valid. However, further investigation is needed which is to be carried out at the further stages of the research.

The study has some limitations, the main of which is that the authors did not compare the data obtained with the data in the existing corpora. The pre-existing corpora might provide invaluable data about the changes that occur in language and culture over time. Therefore, it would seem logical to interpret the results of the present study on the background of the data in the existing corpora. However, this issue is to be addressed in the later stages of our research.

The results obtained in the pilot study are of interest and worth considering by both parties involved: the better we know each other, the more effective is the intercultural dialogue.

5. Conclusions

This study is the first step of investigating the Russian–Vietnamese mutual perceptions in the current linguocultural landscape, breaking the ground for future investigations on the topic and providing the opportunity for scholars to delve into extremely important field of intercultural communication research.

In this study, the authors further developed approaches to the study of the processes of cross-cultural identification and self-identification, discussed and interpreted in detail by Sorokin in a series of works under the general title Ethnic Conflictology (Sorokin, 2007). Sorokin claimed that identification and self-identification are two conceptions that make an “opposing and dialogical unity” (Sorokin, 2007, p. 46). This understanding of the processes of attributing certain characteristics to representatives of one’s own and another culture makes it possible to interpret such results as demonstrating the expressed axiological attitudes of the respondents' cultural/ethnic portraits and self-portraits.

In conclusion, it can be stated that the application of the international theories and methods as well as the Russian ethnic conflictology approaches may contribute to gaining a clearer picture of Russian and Vietnamese mutual and self-perceptions. The research will be continued...
to investigate the content of language consciousness images by obtaining the association fields of the lexemes collected at the current stage of the project. Based on the theory of language consciousness (Ufimtseva, 2012, 2014a, 2014b; Leonard et al., 2019), the major cause of cross-cultural misunderstanding is the difference in the culture-specific content of the consciousness images externalised by association fields of words of the language and shared by the language users as members of one and the same culture. The research question will be how the association images and self-images of the Russian and Vietnamese language speakers differ and what they have in common as fragments of Russian and Vietnamese language consciousness.

The authors believe that the intercultural communication can be substantially improved relying on mutual understanding of the communicating partners (Markovina and Sorokin, 2010).

Declarations

**Author contribution statement**

Irina Markovina; Istvan Lenart; Alexey Matyushin; Pham Hien: Conceived and designed the experiments; Performed the experiments; Analyzed and interpreted the data; Contributed reagents, materials, analysis tools or data; Wrote the paper.

**Funding statement**

This work was supported by RFBR and VASS, project number 21-512-92001\22.

**Data availability statement**

Data included in article/supp. material/referenced in article.

**Declaration of interest’s statement**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Additional information**

No additional information is available for this paper.

**Acknowledgements**

The authors deeply appreciate the valuable comments on the research made by the Vietnamese colleagues and personally Professor Dr Nguyen Van Hiep and Associate Professor Tran Thi Phuong Phuong.
Appendix A. Supplementary data

Appendix 1. Questionnaire — "Us" and "Them": an Invitation to Take Part in the Intercultural Study

"Us" and "Them": an Invitation to Take Part in the Intercultural Study  https://docs.google.com/forms/u/0/d/1rFVA3wE85dIeyUL4heHGt...

Dear Participant,

In the framework of the intercultural survey we would like to obtain the information about your perception of the two peoples - Russian and Vietnamese. The obtained results will be used for further investigation of the mutual perception and will promote better dialog between nations.

The questionnaire is anonymous and should take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. Your answers will be 100% confidential and results of the survey will be reported in a summary format so no one can link you to your responses. The data obtained during the survey will be used only for the research purposes.

Thank you in advance for your participation. It is extremely valuable for understanding Russian-Vietnamese mutual perceptions.

By clicking "Next" you are providing implied consent to voluntarily participate in this research study. You have the right to refuse to participate and/or not answer any question(s) for any reason, without penalty. You have the right to withdraw from the research study without penalty prior to completion of the study (as acknowledged by clicking on the "submit" button). In order to withdraw from the study and not have any of your responses submitted simply close the internet browser without clicking on the "submit" button at the end of the survey.

* Required

Please provide some background information

1. Your age (years): *

2. Your gender: *
   
   Mark only one oval.
   
   ☐ Male
   ☐ Female
   ☐ Other

3. Please, state your native language: *
4. What other languages of your country do you speak? *

5. Please, state your future profession: *

The Russians

6. Please, state 5 characteristics that describe the Russians (separate your answers with commas): *

7. State 3-5 names of the most prominent personalities (people) that symbolize the Russian people (separate your answers with commas): *

The Vietnamese

8. Please, state 5 characteristics that describe the Vietnamese (separate your answers with commas): *

9. State 3-5 names of the most prominent personalities (people) that symbolize the Vietnamese people (separate your answers with commas): *

Thank you very much! Thank you for your time and the provided answers!

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

Google Forms
Appendix 2. Anthroponymic self-portraits: Russian self-perception

| Category         | Examples                        | Percentage |
|------------------|---------------------------------|------------|
| 1. Writers       | Pushkin (39); Tolstoy (14); Dostoevsky (11) | 29.91%     |
| 2. Political leaders | Peter the Great (29); Putin (14); Lenin (7) | 23.17%     |
| 3. Scientists    | Mendeleev (20); Lomonosov (16); Sechenov (11) | 19.65%     |
| 4. Public figures | Nabokov (4); Schulman (4); Kant (3) | 7.33%      |
| 5. Cosmonauts    | Gagarin (19); Tereshkova (1) | 5.87%      |
| 6. Political leaders | Peter the Great (29); Putin (14); Lenin (7) | 23.17%     |
| 7. Scientists    | Mendeleev (20); Lomonosov (16); Sechenov (11) | 19.65%     |
| 8. Public figures | Nabokov (4); Schulman (4); Kant (3) | 7.33%      |
| 9. Cosmonauts    | Gagarin (19); Tereshkova (1) | 5.87%      |
| 10. Political leaders | Peter the Great (29); Putin (14); Lenin (7) | 23.17%     |
| 11. Scientists   | Mendeleev (20); Lomonosov (16); Sechenov (11) | 19.65%     |
| 12. Public figures | Nabokov (4); Schulman (4); Kant (3) | 7.33%      |

Appendix 3. Anthroponymic self-portraits: Vietnamese self-perception

| Category         | Examples                        | Percentage |
|------------------|---------------------------------|------------|
| 1. Political leaders | Ho Chi Minh (98); Quang Trung (16); Nguyen Xuan Phuc (12) | 51.93%     |
| 2. Military leaders | Vo Nguyen Giap (81); Vo Thi Sau (13); Le Loi (3) | 29.08%     |
| 3. Writers       | Nguyen Du (22); Nguyen Trai (19); Xuan Dieu (1); Le Quy Don (1) | 12.76%     |
| 4. Teachers      | Chu Van An (5) | 1.48%      |
| 5. Musicians     | Trinh Cong Son (3); Nguyen Van Dong (1) | 1.19%      |
| 6. Businesspersons | Pham Nhat Vuong (8) | 0.89%      |
| 7. Cosmonauts    | Pham Tuan (2) | 0.59%      |
| 8. Fashion models | Ho Ngoc Ha (1); HHen Nie (1) | 0.59%      |
| 9. Scientists    | Ngo Si Lien (1) | 0.30%      |
| 10. Actors       | Ngoc Trinh (1) | 0.30%      |
| 11. Sportspersons | Hoang Thi Loan (1) | 0.30%      |
| 12. Folk heroes  | Thanh Giong (1) | 0.30%      |

Appendix 4. Anthroponymic portraits: Russians perceived by Vietnamese

| Category         | Examples                        | Percentage |
|------------------|---------------------------------|------------|
| 1. Writers       | Tolstoy (28); Pushkin (12); Gorky (6) | 13.41%     |
| 2. Composers     | Tchaikovsky (21) | 6.12%      |
| 3. Scientists    | Mendeleev (13); Lomonosov (4); Kalashnikov (1) | 5.25%      |
| 4. Sportspersons | Sharapova (12); Dzyuba (2) | 5.25%      |
| 5. Fictional characters | Anna Karenina (1); Mascha and Bear (1); Ded Moroz (Santa Claus) (1) | 1.46%      |
| 6. Fashion models | Shazk (1); Tarun (1); Darilova (1) | 0.87%      |
| 7. Material culture | Matryoska (5); Felt boots (2); Balalaika (2) | 3.21%      |
| 8. Miscellaneous | Ocheretnaya (1) | 0.29%      |

Appendix 5. Anthroponymic portraits: Vietnamese perceived by Russians

| Category         | Examples                        | Percentage |
|------------------|---------------------------------|------------|
| 1. Do not know   | Non-motivated refusals (60); Motivated (7) | 71.28%     |
| 2. Political leaders | Ho Chi Minh (15); Nguyen Minh Triet (2); Tran Duc Luong (1) | 17.02%     |
| 3. Cosmonauts    | Pham Tuan (1) | 1.06%      |
| 4. Writers       | Nguyen Du (1) | 1.06%      |
| 5. Non-specific responses |  | 9.57%      |
