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THE NATIONAL COMMUNICATIVE BEHAVIOUR OF THE BRITISH AND  
THE RUSSIANS.

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Brest, 2017

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## INTRODUCTION

Every nation is unique. It has its own traditions, values, cultural peculiarities and communicative norms. Today there are more and more contacts between people of different countries. The interest to cross-cultural communication and to understanding of the national identity has increased. A number of inter-ethnic conflicts require actions.

All these facts determine the necessity to analyze the communication behaviour of people of different nations in order to avoid misunderstandings and miscommunication, to establish mutual understanding, to enable close contact and to solve urgent problems of our society.

The **topic** of the research is: “The National Communicative Behaviour of the British and Russians.”

The **aim** of the research is to compare the Russian and British models of the communicative behavior and to single out the stumbling blocks a misunderstanding can occur.

The **objectives** are:

1. To analyze Russian and British communicative behaviour.
2. To describe the main features of Russian and British communicative behavior.
3. To compare the situations of the beginning, continuation and the finishing of the communication.
4. To single out the stumbling blocks a misunderstanding can occur.

The **object** of the research is a communicative behavior.

The **subject** of the research is a comparison of the Russian and English communicative behavior.

The **practical value** of the work is possibility to use the results of the research while studying the topic “National Character” in the XI form.

In the first chapter of the research we have singled out the six basic stumbling blocks in intercultural communication, that can provide misunderstanding and miscommunication.

In the second chapter we have analyzed the British and the Russian communicative behaviour, singled out the main differences and similarities. In order to make our research more vivid we have presented our results in the form of the charts.

## **STUMBLING BLOCKS FOR INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION**

Our world continually becomes more and more globalized. People are engaged in crosscultural interaction, either in personal or business relations. But our culture has not become globalized too. There can be barriers which prevent people from different cultures to communicate in an efficient manner. Misunderstandings and miscommunication can make reaching a mutual agreement impossible. People from different cultures have different understandings of the interaction process as well as having different communication styles. One way of avoiding cross-cultural communication problems is having a better understanding of cross-cultural differences. [3, p.12]

Laray Barna proposes six stumbling blocks in intercultural communication, that can provide an answer to many of the “why’s” which are likely to arise when interacting with people from another culture [1, p.337]. The six stumbling blocks include assumption of similarities, language barriers, nonverbal misinterpretations, preconceptions and stereotypes, tendency to evaluate and high anxiety.

### 1. Assumption of similarities

One of the reasons why misunderstandings occur frequently in intercultural communication is due to the fact that people wrongly assume that there are sufficient similarities between people from different cultures. “Assumptions are taken-for-granted, unquestioned beliefs which can affect our communicative behavior” [2, p. 148]. Guirdham points to two different sets of assumptions that are of special importance to intercultural communication:

- ethnocentrism;
- stereotypes.

Ethnocentrism is “a biased set of assumptions in favor of one’s own ethnic group” [2, p. 149] . The ethnocentric person will think of their own culture and its norms, beliefs and customs to be correct and will look down upon other cultures (ibid. p. 149).When assuming similarities people have an ethnocentric view towards people from the other culture. [1, p. 337]. One should be prepared to assume that the nonverbal language will be different from nationality to nationality. Our different cultural upbringings will affect how we for instance show emotions and display them via our body language, and whether or not these emotions will actually be expressed or suppressed depends on the accepted cultural beliefs, therefore signs of grief or happiness may be completely different from one culture to another [1, p. 337].

### 2. Preconceptions and stereotypes

Stereotypes were, along with ethnocentrism, one of the two sets of assumptions detected by Guirdham as being essential for intercultural communication. “Stereotypes are over generalized second hand beliefs that provide conceptual bases from which we “make sense” out of what goes on around us, whether or not they are accurate or fit the circumstance and help reduce the threat of the unknown by making the world predictable” [1, p. 342]. Stereotypes exist

because they have become firm myths by our own national culture and present a hindrance to communication as they obstruct our ability of objectively making sense of the world. Stereotypes continue to exist because they are sustained by only recognizing that information which is supported by the views the stereotypes present us with [1, p. 341].

### 3. Language differences

Language differences are evidently some of the biggest obstacles when it comes to intercultural communication. Apart from the obvious fact that non-native speakers of English will not have the same linguistic variations and understandings of the language as natives, there are also culture bound cues that determine for instance what ways are appropriate for starting a conversation or when a person involved in the conversation has a right to speak, which can be lost on people from an outside culture [2, p. 192].

### 4. Nonverbal misinterpretations

Communication can consist of other than the spoken language. Non verbal communication is understood as the process of communication in which wordless messages are sent and received. It can consist of e.g. facial expressions, body language and gestures and are used to express meaning and reveal feelings and attitudes. People from different cultures have different nonverbal communication styles and what has been adopted by one culture have certain meanings to the members of that particular culture which is interpreted through their cultural frame of reference. Members of specific cultures see the world in personally recognizable patterns and if certain nonverbal signs are not comprehended this poses an obvious communication barrier [1, p. 341].

### 5. Tendency to evaluate

The tendency to evaluate refers to the process of approving or disapproving the statements or actions made by a person from another culture rather than trying to understand them based on the other member's world view. The tendency to evaluate can be successfully compared to the notion of ethnocentrism. Both ideas share the assumption, that people will favor their own culture which may seem more right and natural instead of trying to be open-minded and understand the behavior and attitudes of the other.

### 6. High anxiety

High anxiety and tension refer to the emotional state of feeling uncomfortable in crosscultural connections where many one is faced with many uncertainties. The presence of tension makes the possibility of changing the stumbling blocks mentioned to the positive doubtful. Being in the state of high anxiety in an incomprehensible environment makes you resort to your various defense mechanisms in order for you to alleviate stress when finding yourself in unknown situations, however none of these defenses will lead to effective communication.

Dominant features of communicative behaviour are expressed in native speakers' communication in the majority of situations. To avoid misunderstandings and miscommunication, to establish mutual understanding it should be taken into

account these six stumbling blocks. Moreover, it is important to get acquainted with the culture, traditions, features of character of the people you communicate with. All these facts will make your interaction successful and you will easily achieve the goal of your communication.

## DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES IN COMMUNICATIONAL BEHAVIOUR OF THE BRITISH AND THE RUSSIANS

To avoid cross-cultural communication problems one should have a better understanding of cross-cultural differences. Every nation is unique. It possesses its own history, set of acquired rules of the society and even social character. These facts determine the communication norms and strategies of the society. A set of norms and traditions of communication can be defined as national communicative behavior. To communicate successfully it is important to analyze the differences of the Russian and the British national communicative behaviour.

These distinctions are observed at the very beginning of the conversation.

In Great Britain you should address a foreigner in a following way: Excuse me, is there a post office near here? Excuse me, could you tell me the time, please? Excuse me, is that seat free? Excuse me, you have dropped your glove. People usually identify social status of the person. They will address Lord Byron, Sir Walter Scott in casual conversation. In England people address each other sir/madam, Mr/Mrs/Miss+surname.

In informal speech it is usual to address “boy, young fella (fellow), mate, luv (love),buddy, stranger. The first three formulae are usually used by elderly people in addressing to the young: Young man, would you help me with my bags, please. Hey, young fella, could you ever give me a hand with this A modern tendency is to use “mate” if a man addresses a man: Good to see you, mate. How’re you, mate? Sorry, mate, I’m afraid I must be off now.

In Russia people address with the help of such communication formulae as “девушка, молодой человек, женщина, мужчина”: Девочки, кто еще без билетика, пожалуйста (кондуктор в автобусе – пассажирам среднего возраста), Мужчина, передайте за проезд (в транспорте), Девушка, скажите, что я за вами (в магазине).

In Russian culture terms “дочка, тетя, дядя, бабушка, дедушка” are often used to address strangers: Дочка, тебе что? (буфетчица – студентке), Сыннок, не подвинешься? (пожилая женщина – молодому человеку в автобусе), Дядя, сколько времени? (ребенок на улице – взрослому мужчине).

In Russia totally strange people can occasionally start a conversation. It is possible to involve into the conversation people around you. In Great Britain there is a rule: one should be acquainted to interact. It is absolutely impolite to start a conversation with strangers.

### Contact establishment

	Russian communicative behaviour	British communicative behaviour
The role of personal acquaintance to start a conversation	low	high
Involvement of new	high	low

participants		
Eagerness to contact with other people	high	low
Persistence in communication	high	low

### Sociability

	Russian communicative behaviour	British communicative behaviour
Willingness to communicate	high	low
Communication with strangers	high	low
Privacy of topics	low	high
Desire to involve other people into a communication	high	low

The British people avoid categorical terms (being categorical). In this respect they avoid the answers “Yes” and “No”. Instead their speech is full of phrases “I think”, “I consider”, “It seems to me that”. As professor Ovchinnikov stated, you would hardly hear that a person in Britain has read an interesting book. He will mention that he has found the book interesting. A person in Britain will never name somebody a fool. He will mention that the person does not look very clever. The most widespread epithets are “rather” and “quite” that soften any statement.

The British people never argue in public. Even if a person in Britain is not quite well served in a restaurant, he will pay for the meal instead of having arguments. They avoid conflicts and prefer having idle conversations. It is regarded as “mauvais ton” even to show intelligence. Even if you are sure that two by two is four you should be prepared to hear a different point of view.

### Communicative persistence

	Russian communicative behaviour	English communicative behaviour
Communicative dominance	Is observed	Is not accepted
Desire to influence the participant of the conversation	high	Is not observed
Desire to defend the viewpoint	Is observed	Is not observed



The Russian people on the contrary are impertinent. A researcher I. A. Sternin points out that Russian people can express their emotions and give evaluations to people in public places: Как ты стоишь?; Разве так причесываются?; Поди, надень другую кофту!; Ложись-ка пораньше спать!; Обязательно съешь еще что-нибудь!.. [2, с.18]. R. Reitmar named Russian culture *Einmischungskultur*, «a culture of intrusions».

#### Communicative evaluation

	Russian communicative behaviour	British communicative behavior
Desire to evaluate the situation and the people involved	high	Low
Positive evaluations	mid	High
Negative evaluations	mid	Low
Categorical evaluations	high	Low

The British people are emotionally reserved. The words emotional, effusive, demonstrative, excitable have in England negative connotation. They prefer not to express their emotions in public. As professor Lubimov mentioned, having heard about a terrible earthquake Englishmen will not show their excitement, they will say “It is an unpleasant situation, isn’t it?”. They will never accuse you of lying. They will mention that the information is not probably correct.

The Russian people on the contrary are fond of making value judgments. Their speech is full of exaggerations and hyperboles. «... Русские точно также эмоциональны и склонны к крайностям при выражении морального восторга, как и при выражении морального осуждения» [1с. 83]. The reason for that lies in emotional and anxious Russian sole. The Russian ancient commandment states: be humble. «Общая христианская заповедь кротости и смирения в приложении к речевой этике требует кротости в беседе...[4, с. 178]. So we can observe a wide gap between culture and nature of Russian people. К. Kasianova, explains the contradictions if Russian sole in the following way: «русские мягки, кротки, терпеливы и готовы на страдания не по природе своей, а по культуре. Это культура ведет нас путем воздержания и самоограничения вплоть до самопожертвования. Природа же наша отнюдь не такова. Она склонная к бурным и неконтролируемым эмоциональным взрывам» [3, с. 125].

#### Emotions

	Russian communicative behaviour	British communicative behaviour
Level of self-control	low	high
Desire to hyperbolize emotions	low	high
Ability to express	high	minimun

negative emotions		
Acceptance of emotional conversation	high	minimun

The British people are able to control themselves. In any situation they remain calm and cool-hearted. Moreover it is not typical to share one's problems in order to prevent people from disappointment. An important feature of any communication in Great Britain is its low volume. In order not to disturb the others, the British often talk as if they are talking to themselves.

The British people are people of few words. They are surprised by our ability to talk over the phone for hours. They prefer to explain the reason for their prone call immediately. That concerns the negotiations either. Silence in Great Britain is a necessary component of communication. It is not habitual in Great Britain to carry a conversation. Communicants can keep silence up to 5 minutes. It is sometimes difficult to renew the conversation after such long pauses.

#### Communicative self-control

	Russian communicative behaviour	British communicative behaviour
Attention to your own speech	Low level	High level
Prognoses of the results of communication	Low level	High level
Control of facial expression and gestures	Low level	High level
Volume control	Low level	High level
Attention to lexis	Low level	High level

One of the dominant features of people's communicative behavior is politeness in everyday life. The phrase "Would you be so kind as to pass me the salt?" is a common practice. If people bump into each other in the street both of them are supposed to apologize. A policeman will say to you: "Excuse me, Sir! It is not a bad idea to switch the lights on!" Could you please come to my office for a moment? (an employer to his employee) / Would you mind repeating that, please? (a teacher to his student). It is stated in the dictionary that "polite" means "showing consideration for others in one's manners, speech etc".

In Russian dictionary we can see that "polite" means "observing the rules of behaviour". People in Russia do not use the strategies of softening of the impact of the communication. They are inclined to strengthen the effect of the words: "Будьте добры, повторите ваш вопрос. Обязательно приходите. Вы должны непременно быть. Отказы не принимаются!"

#### Politeness

	Russian communicative	British communicative
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	behaviour	behaviour
Politeness of children to strangers	high	normal
Politeness in everyday life	low	high
Politeness in business communication	medium	high
Attention in communication	low	high
Interruption of the communicator	Is acceptable	Is not acceptable

One of the forms of the communications in Great Britain is “small talk”. That is a communication in the sake of communication to establish close contact or to idle your time. It is a common practice to have a small talk at dinner. A small talk supposes a strict rule: one should avoid any remarks that can destroy the peace of the conversation. The British people usually talk about the weather.

Each situation usually presupposes a certain topic of conversation. One shouldn't talk about private life in public. People in Britain usually do not discuss work troubles at home and home problems at work. It is prohibited to phone somebody home in order to discuss some business. They don't like to discuss private life and family either. Such topics are considered to be provoking. There are some proverbs to illustrate: An Englishman's house is his castle (Дом англичанина – его крепость); Good fences make good neighbours (Хорошие заборы способствуют добрососедским отношениям); Love your neighbour, yet pull not down your fence (Люби своего соседа, но не разрушай свой забор); He travels the fastest who travels alone (Тот едет быстрее, кто едет один); Come seldom, come welcome (Чем реже ты приходишь, тем больше тебе рады). The English formula “How are you?” has lost its semantic meaning. This question is answered in the following way: “I'm well, I'm fine, I'm great”. The answer doesn't depend on your real state. That's just a common rule: be optimistic, a desire to demonstrate in a communication that everything is OK: ‘Are you all right?’ ‘Yes’. ‘Are you sure?’ ‘I'm fine...

In Russia people usually discuss family matters, problems and hardships. The question “How do you do?” is carefully answered. Furthermore people usually complain, express discomfort and dissatisfaction.

#### Formality/Informality of communication

	Russian communicative behaviour	British communicative behaviour
Communicative informality in addressing high status people	Is not observed	observed
Privacy of topics of discussion	observed	Is not observed

Establishment of friendly relations with people	observed	Is not observed
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You should not underestimate the role of written communications in Great Britain. It is a common practice to give a postcard for special occasions (graduation from the university, giving birth to a child, passing the exams). A Christmas postcard is a kind of tradition in England. People usually send and get from 50 to 100 postcards for Christmas.

It is not typical of Russian people to give somebody a postcard. Letters exist nowadays just as a part of business communication. Moreover if you give somebody a postcard on a special occasion but not a phone call, your friends will be hurt and disappointed.

#### The role of oral/written communications

	Russian communicative behaviour	British communicative behaviour
The role of written communication	mid	high
Business written communication	high	high
Casual written communication	low	high

Language in Great Britain is an indicator of social status and social class of people. The British people are able to recognize the social group, origin, education, political bias, occupation judging from the way one speaks. An important role here plays co-called acquired pronunciation that one can get at the early years at expensive public schools.

The British people do not like learning and using foreign languages. They consider that in is enough to speak clearly at any place of the world to be understood. They are extremely surprised if in some countries the stuff does not understand English speech.

To finish a conversation in Great Britain there is a certain number of communication strategies. One should use a set of accepted phrases to complete the conversation correctly and not to violate the rules of behaviour. In Russia there are no rules to complete a conversation. It can sometimes be instantly terminated.

#### Completion of the conversation

	Russian communicative behaviour	British communicative behaviour
Smooth completion	Is not obvious	Obvious
Changing of the topic to finish the conversation	Seldom used	Often used



## CONCLUSION

In the research we have singled out the main differences between English and Russian communicative behaviour, which concern both the essence of the communication and communications strategy. These differences in a way can be explained by distinct understanding of the term “polite”. The Russians think that to be polite means to follow the rules of behavior and the British are sure that to be polite is to be attentive to other people. There is a tendency even to minimize the influence on the interlocutor. The British communicative behavior can be determined by the features of their national character. They are extremely reserved, do not show their emotions in public, and possess the high level of self-control. The British people avoid conflicts and control the volume of their speech not to disturb others.

At the same time the Russian people are inclined to express their emotions in public, to involve into their conversation as many participants as possible. They are eager to evaluate all the news and occasions they witness. They are categorical, lack self-control, emotional, impertinent and are often characterized as «a culture of intrusions».

As these two nations are totally different there is a high probability that misunderstandings and miscommunication can make reaching a mutual agreement impossible. So to overcome such stumbling blocks in intercultural communication as assumption of similarities, language barriers, nonverbal misinterpretations, preconceptions and stereotypes, tendency to evaluate and high anxiety one should be prepared to understand a foreign culture. In order to understand a culture it is necessary to learn the national character, to analyze the main social rules and communication behaviour.

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