

**Секция «Современные проблемы межкультурной коммуникации»**

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### **The Cultural aspects of the city**

First-time visitors to Russia will be struck by the large crowds of people they encounter and the ever-present body contact. Russian cities swarm with people.

Forced industrialization moved masses of peasants from the warm and personal environment of their native villages to the cold and impersonal surroundings of large cities. Between 1926 and 1939, the Moscow and Leningrad regions grew by 3,500,000 each.

There is no real analogy in the United States (or other countries), as Inge Morath and Arthur Miller point out, although Americans can look back to something similar in their own cities in the days before World War I

Most urban residents in Russia are only one, two, or three generations removed from their ancestral villages and peasant traditions. Russian crowd seems to react in a more peasant-like manner than would be the case in Rome, Munich or Pittsburgh. The cities became “ruralized,” imbued with peasant values - at home, on the streets, and at work. Urban civilization did not efface rural mentalities; rather, the opposite occurred. Residents of St. Petersburg, however, will argue today that people are more polite in *Piter*, as their more European city is affectionately called.

Despite the dislocations derived from their move from village to city, Russians regard urban life as infinitely better than rural life. In the city there are new opportunities not only for work but also for education, culture, and recreation. Housing and municipal services, however, have not kept pace with the large influx of new residents.

Most city dwellers live in small apartments in large multistoried buildings rather than in detached houses. But because of the continuing housing shortage, as well as a real estate boom resulting from the recent privatization of apartments, some Russians still live in a *kommunalka* (communal apartment), one family occupying one or two rooms while sharing a kitchen and bathroom with one or more other families. The need to find relief from indoor crowding is one reason why so many Russians are seen on the streets.

Stores and markets these days are full of food and consumer goods - albeit at prices many cannot afford - and Russians no longer need to stand in long lines to make their essential purchases. In some of the older stores, however, customers may still have to stand in line three times to make it costs, then to pay a cashier, and finally to present the cash receipt to a salesperson and pick up the purchase.

Unmet demands can make Russians very aggressive about trying to acquire things they want but do not have or cannot afford, and they are not at all bashful about making such requests to foreign visitors who may be put off by their persistence. A first response of “no” is never accepted as final. Believing that every response can be manipulated and changed, Russians will repeat their requests over and over again, adding a new twist each time.

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### **Communication differences**

Problems of cross-cultural communication tend to become crucial for the process of ongoing globalization of the world because they create obstacles to successful business and professional communication. Let us consider the results of research of the differences in verbal and nonverbal communication in Russian and American culture.

Russia has an oral rather than a written tradition and talk comes naturally to its people. Every Russian seemed to be a born orator. Conversations begin easily between complete strangers and also between men and women. Delivery is unhurried, eloquent, and without pretense. But Russians may also talk around a difficult problem without addressing it directly. Don't expect short responses to simple questions. Americans, by contrast, rather than give a lengthy explanation that will leave the listener uncomprehending if it was a general question, are more likely to respond with a brief yes or no. Straight talk is appreciated, even when it leads to disagreement. When disagreement does occur, Russians look up to honesty rather than attempts to paper over differences. It is far better to level with them and be certain that they completely understand your position. They respect adversaries who are straightforward and sincere in expressing views that diverge from their own. But confrontations over differences of views can often be avoided by letting Russian people talk themselves out. After they have expressed their righteousness and have unburdened themselves, their opposition may moderate, and the differences may turn out to be less than originally believed. In fact, after talking themselves out, Russians and Americans may even find that have an unanimity of views.

Verbal communication is strongly supported by nonverbal communication which helps us understand the accurate meaning of the speaker, his emotions, attitudes and values. Russian and American nonverbal communication have many differences. For instance, in the US culture it is typical to have personal space of about 4 feet and it is noticeable even in friendly conversations. When friends meet they shake hands or give a short hug and immediately step aside to have some distance for conversation. No one can invade American's personal space. Russian people, on the contrary, do not require that much personal space. They like to speak sitting or walking quite close to each other. When they converse facing each other, at the beginning of the conversation people usually keep some distance of about four feet, like Americans do. But, as the conversation proceeds, they tend to come closer and closer. However, they will still keep at least two feet distance. It is considered rude and unfriendly to keep large distance during the conversation. Physical contact by Russians-touching another person-is a sign that things are going well. The degree of physical contact will indicate how well things are going. If Russian places a hand on your arm, for example, or embraces you, you can relax a bit; these are good sign. Facial expressions are also clues to behavior. Russians tend to start out with grim faces, but when they do smile, it reflects progress in developing a good relationship. If a stony look continues, it means you are in trouble.

Perception of time is another issue because of the differences in their time orientations and in the time systems they use. In the United States, time is money. The daily routine is properly organized. Most of the Americans always come on time whether for an appointment or a party. When you need to meet with someone, you have to discuss the time a few days in advance. Time orientation in the US culture is for the future. Americans believe that tomorrow is the most important and that they create their future themselves. Russians, in contrast are present oriented. Russian proverb says, 'new time, new songs'. Russian people do not live by their past. Every new time brings something new and this newness is the most important. Russians often say, 'I want everything and now'. They can put aside an important activity or decision, but finally it will be done very fast and unexpected even to them themselves. The time system is also different to Russians. Being 15-20 minutes late or coming earlier is quite normal for Russians and is not considered impolite or disrespectful.

These are, of course, minor differences in Russian and American mentality, which catch the eye. Despite all that it seems that we are not so different. Russians living in America and Americans living in Russia are quite successful with formed families, careers and friends. If that is possible, then all cultural barriers can be overcome.

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### **The healthy way of living in Russia and America**

Nowadays people are more health-conscious than they used to be. They understand that good health is above wealth. A healthy lifestyle is the most important thing in our life. It helps us keep and improve our health and well-being. People around the world have to care of their health. Only a healthy man can enjoy his life, work well, be self-assured and happy. The only way of saving health is a healthy way of life. It means to keep fit, to have balanced meals and to give up drinking, smoking and taking drugs. However, there are unhealthy habits in each country. We will examine them on the example of Russia and America.

In America it gets more and more popular to keep fit. A lot of people try to avoid bad habits. In many American states smoking in public places are forbidden including some bars and restaurants. The police may arrest you for drinking beer in the street. Of course, it is impossible to speak about everyone and a lot of teens in America run the risk. Many people prefer eating fast food. Experts are increasingly worried about obesity. Nowadays a record one in five teens is overweight, putting them at increased risk for heart diseases. And teens don't want to work after school, many are watching TV or surfing the chat rooms.

On the other hand more than half of all teen girls think that they must be on a diet-incessantly battling the 40 pounds they naturally gain as they grow between the ages of 8 and 14. Then they take it to the extreme, spiraling into bulimia or anorexia. Americans try to solve this problem. A lot of special camps are organized for those teens. At school they prefer more healthy food. One more important problem is smoking. But the situation has changed recently because many teens are getting the message and deciding it is cool not to smoke. But still, there are more than 2,000 new young cigarette smokers every day.

The healthy lifestyle in Russia plays a very important role in the people's life as well as in the USA. The special projects, for example, "Promotion of healthy lifestyle for Russian adolescents" has been implemented by the Russian Ministry of General and Professional Education. It is intended to contribute to the prevention of the negative processes currently finding wide acceptance among Russian youth (drug addiction, alcoholism, smoking) which have an extremely negative impact on the health of children.

The truth about current-day Russians and their lifestyles is complicated. In some ways they are in somewhat better shape than their American and European counterparts, but in others their habits are dangerously unhealthy.

As everybody knows alcoholism is one of the most popular bad habits among people in Russia. The contribution that alcohol has made to the large fluctuations in mortality in Russia in recent years is now widely recognized. An association between heavy drinking and Russia is a part of popular culture.

Russia has the highest prevalence of smoking in the world. Similar to alcohol consumption, Russia's government is taking steps to try to rein in the smoking epidemic. In 2010 the Russian Ministry of Health and Social Development started requiring all packs of cigarettes to carry an antismoking message. In addition, the government wants to ban advertising and promotion of cigarettes as well as smoking in enclosed spaces.

Obesity is a health problem in Russia, as it is around the world. In Russia obesity and being overweight increase as the population ages, with nearly 70 per cent of those aged 65 and older being classified as overweight/obese, which is similar to the levels seen in the US. However, there are striking differences in the younger age group (adults under 30), where 26 per cent of Russians are overweight/obese compared with 48 per cent of young Americans.

The Russian government is taking aggressive steps toward promoting healthier living through its recent and upcoming restrictions on alcohol consumption and smoking. Similarly, there is more

awareness of the health risks of tobacco use, and polls have shown that 60 per cent of the population would support a 100 per cent workplace smoking ban. A number of cities in the Russian Federation have joined the national association of healthy towns, districts and communities, established as part of the international Healthy Cities project. The aim is to promote healthy lifestyles, create healthy living conditions, and prevent chronic diseases.

However, some data suggests that these steps may not yet be reflected in the current behavior of many Russians as alcohol consumption and smoking rates remain high. In addition, other lifestyle factors are also negatively impacting the health of Russians, including the increasing obesity in the older population and the widespread lack of exercise.

Russia has lower life expectancies than other industrialized countries, with men expected to live to just 62 years old on average. In order to increase life expectancy and improve quality of life, Russia's people must embrace these lifestyle changes.

In conclusion, it is very important to underline that an unhealthy lifestyle means more illnesses and more expense to treat those illnesses. It is very important to be fit and healthy and to take care of your health. The English proverb says: «Health is not simply the absence of sickness». To be healthy we should avoid different bad habits that can affect our health.

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### **The Attitude Towards Time in Russian and American Cultures**

Time is money to some nationalities, and punctuality, a virtue. Meetings are expected to start on time, and work under pressure of the clock is a challenge routinely accepted. To Russians, however, with their agricultural heritage, time is like the seasons — a time to reap, a time to sow, and a time for doing little in between.

Seychas budyit ( it will be done right away) is an expression heard often in Russia, from waiters in restaurants, clerks in stores, and officials in offices. Be assured, however, that whatever has been promised will not be done right away but will more likely take some time.

Communism reinforced the native Russian disrespect for time, because workers could not be fired, and there was no incentive to do things on time. Moreover, in a country where time is not a vital commodity, people become more sanguine about accepting delays. When something very important must be done, it will be done, and time and cost will not be obstacles. But time for Russians is not yet an economic commodity to be measured in rubles and dollars.

Being on time is consequently alien. Russians are notoriously late, and they think nothing of arriving long after the appointed hour, which is not yet an economic commodity to be measured in rubles or dollars.

I would like to say some words about business time. When Russians do arrive, there are a number of rituals that must be played out before the business part of a meeting can start. First, the small talk, a necessary part of all personal encounters; then, the customary tea or other drink, followed perhaps by conversation about family and personal problems; and finally, the business of the day. All this takes time, and the meeting usually does not start before ten o'clock in the morning.

The business part of the talk will also be lengthy because important issues are approached in a roundabout rather than direct manner. Impatient foreign business people often wonder when the key issues of the meeting will be discussed. And after the meeting has concluded and the visitor believes an agreement to proceed has been reached, nothing may happen for weeks, or months, or ever.

In Russia You can promise your friend that you come to him in an hour, but in fact you do not worth to stay another hour or two, because for Russians, time is not measured in minutes or hour but more likely in days, weeks, and months. The venerated virtue is not punctuality but patience. As Russians say «Be patient, hope for the best, but prepare for the worst.»

Americans and some Northern Europeans are oriented toward doing; Russians are accustomed to contemplating. Russians can look at an object all day and reflect on it, but take no action. When faced with an issue to be resolved, they will first think through the historical, philosophical, and ideological consideration. Doers will first consider the practical points, the obstacles to overcome, the details, and how to get from here to there.

Such divergent views of time can create difficulties in cooperative efforts and joint ventures. Americans will want to negotiate an agreement expeditiously, schedule an early start on the venture, begin on time, meet production deadlines, complete the work as promptly as possible, and show early results or profit. Russians will need more time to get organized, and there will be frequent delays and postponements. They will be less concerned with immediate results, and profit is a concept that they are only beginning to understand. The job may be completed but only after considerable prodding from the American side.

And you will ask me — what to do? And I will answer you — not much, expect to persist patiently, and speak softly but carry a big prod. Once prodded, and made to understand that a deadline must be met, Russians can show prodigious burst of energy and will work around the clock to complete the job.

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### **Russians and Americans: cultural similarities and differences**

In an 1881 letter to his would-be Russian translator, Walt Whitman, an American poet and journalist, described his sense of a mystical resemblance between Russian and America, two nations traditionally regarded as not merely geographically but also culturally marginal to the nations of Europe:

«You Russians and we Americans! Our countries so distant, so unlike at first glance—such a difference in social and political conditions, and our respective methods of moral and practical development the last hundred years;—and yet in certain features, and vastest ones, so resembling each other».

Despite Russians ambivalence toward the West, and notwithstanding the political and cultural differences and the often diametrically opposed values of two societies, most Russians like Americans.

«The foreign country in which the majority of Russians...are most interested in America», wrote Sir William Hayter, a former British ambassador to Moscow. «It is the goal they are constantly being urged to «catch up and overtake». They share many tastes with it - love of gargets, technology, massive scale...America is their favorite foreign country.

Fascination with machinery is shared by Russians and Americans. The best way to start a conversation with Russian man is to open the hood of a wagon on a downtown street and start tinkering with the engine».

One of the most important aspects of communication in Russian, according to Americans, is hospitality. Everyone heard about traditional “ruski duh” and welcoming of their people.

«... to go beyond casual conversation and really get to know Russians, you must sit down with them and eat and drink together. The best talks with Russians occur as noted, at the table».

Joint endeavors between Russians and Americans are therefore seen as natural. Indeed, Russians get a psychological lift from working with Americans, regarding such cooperation as recognition of their coequal status. But they also expect Americans to accept them as equals to return their admiration, and they are disappointed and puzzled when we do not.

Russians recognize that Americans are richer than they are but they resent being talked down to. While Russians themselves are outspokenly critical of their own society, they can be hypersensitive to criticism by a foreigner.

Much of what Russians see in the United States puzzles them – the free choices, the seeming lack of order, the concern for individual rights, the decay of its great cities and the decentralization of the economy.

To Americans, Russians are also puzzling. Why is it so difficult and time-consuming to reach agreement with them?

Why do they always seem to be delaying decisions instead of being reasonable? Why are they so mistrustful of others, and can they be trusted to honor agreement?

Despite some similarities, Russians and Americans are indeed different. Familiarization with the difference is the first step to bridging them.



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### **Communalism versus Individualism**

There are two outlooks: Asian Communalism and European Individualism. It is interesting to know what outlook belongs to any country because you can understand the basic characteristics of a society based on this knowledge. In each country, the mentality is added to the ancient times and is brought up in humans since childhood. I'm going to consider individualism and communalism in America and Russia.

Asian Communalism is characterized by insistence on the integration of the individual into the community. European Individualism is characterized by personal freedom and competitiveness. Russian sobornost is a balance between the conflicting outlooks of Europe and Asia. It is communal spirit, togetherness. A triumph of human spirit understood as opposing law, formal organization and personal interests. Community is the ideal brotherly love. Sobornost includes the essence of Christianity and represents the higher mission of the people.

All these properties are explained by historical roots in Russian culture and its origins can be traced to the vastness of the great Russian plain. In prehistoric times, Russian teamed up to cultivate the ground, harvest, and protect themselves from invaders and looters. Tools and weapons were primitive and life was hard, but these problems could be overcome and people could survive only through collective efforts of living and working together. The zadruga, clan or family, was the core of tribal society. Over time it has become the Mir, agricultural village community based on mutual interests and territory. Family members lived in small huts. Surrounding land was common and was unfenced. When the peasants moved to the cities as workers and crafters, they brought their communal lifestyle and cooperatives of educated workers, who were called artels. Artel members were engaging to work as a group and shared payments for their work. Some artels rented communal apartments, where they would share an apartment, buy food, eat together as a group. And in the cities and in the villages safety and survival were provided of the collective efforts. This a common way of life saved into the twentieth century. It lasted longer in Russia than in other European countries. As Mir affected so many people and for a long time, it had a strong influence on the formation of the Russian character.

American outlook is inherent characteristics of Western individualism. Differences between Russian peasants and American farmers may best show the contrast between the Russian communalism and American individualism. Agricultural settlers of America were independent farmers who owned their land and lived on it at a distance from their neighbors. Unlike peasants of Mir, American farmers lived behind fences which marked the boundaries of their property. Plus Americans managed to keep their holdings individually, including economic risks and control their own affairs independently from the state.

Russians feel free to visit a friend's house without notice, even if it is enough late hours at that moment. They regularly offer lodging for the night for friends who visit their city. This gesture is not only based on their tradition of hospitality to travelers, but also on a lack of affordable accommodation. Americans who adopt Russian friends will find that they can get too unexpected visits and requests for housing from their new friends. Individualism in America is brought up from childhood. For example, in private homes children have their own rooms and personal lockers in schools, what almost never occurs in Russia.

So both of these outlooks were formed for a long time since prehistoric times under the influence of many factors. And they still affect the formation of personality. Some useful conclusions can be made from the research. If you know these features of character of nations you can avoid some misunderstandings while communicating with foreign friends.

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### **The understanding of the term hospitality in Russian and American cultures**

Every culture has its own rules and traditions of the hospitality. The notion of hospitality differs from country to country. What is accepted as a cultural standard in one society might be regarded as an unacceptable behavior in another. Visitors to a country should develop understanding and respect for the target culture. Nowadays our life becomes more international and we have an opportunity to host foreign guests in our country. That's why the main aim of this work is to study the differences between the understanding of the term "hospitality" in Russian and American cultures. For that purpose we have learned the special literature and we have tried to find some useful information in the Internet about different traditions connected with the theme of our research.

People in America express their hospitality in the way they usually welcome strangers, in their preparedness to talk and provide the guests with all things they may need. Americans invite friends to their homes, organize relaxed conversations around the dinner table in order to become better acquainted with people and to learn more about them. People in the USA try to prepare for a specific number of guests. It is very important because if guests arrive with one or two unannounced friends it is considered impolite and sometimes even embarrassing to the hosts because there is probability that they have not prepared enough food for the guests, or maybe they haven't got enough room for them at the table. Guests who are unable to be on time have to telephone their hosts as early as possible and to explain their lateness or to give a real arrival time. After the guests came, the hosts often say "make yourself at home" which means to be in a positive and welcomed mood. Outfit for most evenings is informal for everybody. Guests are usually invited to a dining room after a short period of socializing in the living room. The meal may be served in "family-style", when dishes of food are passed from person to person to take a portion on their own plates. In another way meal may be served in "buffet-style". In this case, food is placed on a side plate for guests to serve it themselves. Some families offer a prayer of thanksgiving before they start to eat.

Sometimes people can even have problems with conversation. In America people consider three main ways to start talking – the weather, the people's occupation and questions about people's homeland. American individualism is often shown in conversations-the expression of their ideas is highly valued. In the U.S. it's a visitor who chooses when to end the evening and to return home.

What you can expect in meeting in Russia is its traditional hospitality. It is usually seen in the historical way how we welcome strangers. Traditionally, Russians welcome guests with bread and salt even when guests arrive unexpectedly, without a notice. When we welcome guests, it is necessary for Russian people to provide them with everything. We often try to make the best impression to the visitors, it's our task to make them feel happier and not to worry about anything. If the guests are expected to come at a certain time, the whole house is cleaned and prepared for the visit. Russians can easily make a visit without a special invitation. We just let the hosts know about our plans in advance and they'll be very happy to accept us. It is unacceptable in Russia to leave guests without a treat. A host usually lade the table with different kind of food - everything depends on the company, the time of the day, and the financial condition of the host. When Russian people prepare for meeting at home, they always cook a lot of food. Mainly, it includes a large first course dish, second course and some different salads. Of course, you'll always find vodka-probably the symbol of Russian hospitality-or vine for female friends on the table. After everything is eaten, the party is not over. Russians like drinking tea with sweets, cakes or pies. Russian guests can stay at the host's house for as long as they want. Sometimes such visits take very long time, longer than it was planned, and if it's already midnight, the host usually offers the guest to stay overnight.

Today many people around the world don't follow these traditions and some people are not even hospitable. Still, every country is known as hospitable and has its own interesting and unique traditions, so it is really worth to learn most of them. In conclusion, comparing two absolutely different countries we can underline that there are a lot of similarities in welcoming guests and it is very important to appreciate any kind of hospitality.

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### **Optimism and Pessimism in Russian and American cultures**

Culture of a country is mostly determined by how people react to current events, government, economics, politics and life in the country in general. Some people say there are optimistic countries and pessimistic ones. To begin with, optimism is a disposition or tendency to look on the more favorable side of events or conditions and to expect the most favorable outcome, but pessimism, vice versa, is a tendency to emphasize the negative or unfavorable or to take the gloomiest possible.

Yale Richmond, the author of the book "From nyet to da: understanding the new Russia" tells that Russian pessimism contrasts with American innocence and optimism. [1; 35]

The American expect things to go well, and they become annoyed when they do not. The Russian expect things to go bad and have learned to live with disappointments. He explains that Americans like happy endings in their horoscopes as well as in their novels and films, but Russian astrologists and writers prefer tales of tragedy. [1; 35-36] Besides, he believes that Russian pessimism is based on difficult Russia's past. [1; 36]

Weather, wars, violence, cataclysmic changes have made pessimists of Russian people. In addition, for the American, history is a subject, a black-and-white newsreel; for Russian it is like a tank in their street, a search carried out by strangers in their apartments. Almost every life has been touched directly by the great historical spasms of revolution, war and terror. For the Russian, repression always comes from the outside world.

He also notes that when you asked how things are, the Russian are likely to reply *normalno* which can be translated as *not too bad*. The interpreters Richard Lourie and Aleksei Mikhalev gave the other definition of this word. In their interpretation, *normalno is a wistful, ironic word, containing all the pain that came before and all the hope of the bright future, the great dream of the present, a 'normal society*. [1; 36] As for the American, they are usually friendly and welcoming. *I'm fine, thank you!* is an answer which you hear if you ask the American how they are. I partially agree with Yale Richmond's point of view. It may be due to the fact that the book was written twenty-two years ago. According to the latest statistics, optimism of Russian people increased more than 1.5 times since 2010. Russian respondents look forward with great optimism than residents of most European countries and the USA. The number of optimists is 5-10% fewer than that of pessimists in most developed countries such as Germany, Austria, the USA, France, Canada, etc. But Russia has results that are very different from other countries. Among the Russian, the number of optimists is 15-20% more than that of pessimists. [2]

Now Russian citizens are able to plan their lives further ahead. In other words, success-oriented people believe that their future can be better than the present. [2]

It is important to note that Russian optimism does not depend on the socio-economic well-being of a nation. They are used to achieve everything by themselves. This is reflected in Russian proverbs such as "God helps them that help themselves" [3] or "Every man is the architect of his own fortune." [4]

As for the book by Yale Richmond, I like his thought that despite Russian pessimism and complaining, there is an admirable durability, a hardy people who have more than proven their ability to endure severe deprivation and suffer lengthy hardships. [1; 37-38] Tibor Szamuely has written of "the astonishing durability of certain key social and political institutions, traditions, habits, and attitudes, their staying power, their essential stability amidst the turbulent currents of violent change, chaotic upheaval, and sudden innovation." [1; 38]

Moreover, I asked my classmates if they are optimistic or not. Twenty of twenty-two told that they look to the future with confidence. And to my mind, that is the most important.

To sum it up, we can discuss this topic again and again because it is always relevant. But I believe that you can understand country's culture only when you live there. We cannot compare the countries judging only by books and websites.

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### **The Russian Language**

«The Russian Language is great and mighty» - wrote Lev Tolstoy (Leo Tolstoy). That is the first thing that comes into the head of a Russian when they talk about their native language. It is known that the Russian Language is one of the most difficult languages and it has its own specific.

Russian is the official language in the Russian Federation, which has a population of more than 140 million people. The Russian language belongs to the Indo-European language family. That`s why it is included to Slavonic group. Moreover, it has many relative languages such as Ukrainian, Belarusian, Bulgarian, Polish, and Serbian. Because of these languages have much in common, knowing Russian will make it easier for you to speak any other Slavic languages, such as Polish, Czech, Slovak, Bulgarian, Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian or Slovene. Russian speakers have a good chance of being understood anywhere from Riga to Belgrade.

About 10% of Russian words are internationalisms and bear a resemblance to English words. For example, проблема-problem, кофе-coffee, or кафе-café. There are also plenty of loan words from Italian, French or German so you have an advantage if you know any of these languages already. Admittedly, those loan words might look a bit archaic as they made their way into the Russian language in the 18th and 19th centuries, such as the word hair salon, парикмахерская, from the German word for wig maker. The main source of loan words for modern Russian is English so don`t be surprised if you see words such as flash card, флэш-карта or hacker, хакер. By the way, even the old word вокзал, train station, comes from a very similar English word – Vauxhall. English has had a big influence on Russian lately. Professions, business-lexicon, firm names, technical novelties – everything is given English names. Sometimes existing words have been changed already by its English analogs. Here it is very fashionable and so some people think that using of such words is more prestigious. Besides, English names often raise sales of firms.

Many people who are learning to speak Russian agonize over its pronunciation and grammar. The various endings of the nouns, six cases, two aspects of the verbs and the correct placement of stress may seem tortuous indeed. In spite of this fact, the good news is that there are only three tenses in Russian and the word order in Russian sentences is predictable.

Both America and Russia have their own specific tongue twisters. Let`s see some of them:

Russian: *Шла Саша по шоссе и сосала сушку.* (Sasha walked down the avenue and sucked a biscuit.)

American: Sally sells seashells by the shiny seashore, so she can see the shimmering silver ships. In sunshiny summer, she strolls along the seashore, shoeless splashing somersaults while she skips.

The Russian sense of humor might seem sarcastic to foreigners and at times even rude, but even Russians are ready to laugh at themselves. Since the Soviet era, jokes have reflected not only realities of everyday life but also politics. This is still unchanged in modern Russia where new jokes are being told the day after a story about a political row appears on the front page of the newspapers. In fact, Russians also laugh about the same topics as the rest of the world, such as cute things children say, mothers-in-law, neighboring countries and grannies visiting the doctor.

As with all languages beware of false friends (words that sound similar but have a different meaning). Do not try to buy a magazine, магазин, in Russian - you end up with a shop. It is better ask for a journal, журнал. Do not be surprised if someone invites you into his cabinet, кабинет. You are not meant to sit in his cupboard or join his cabinet, you're simply invited into his office. And watch out for which syllable of a word is stressed as it has an impact on the meaning. Я плачу, means I'm paying while я плачу, means I'm crying, which you might well be considering the prices in Russia today. If your name is Luke or Luka, do not be offended if people start giggling when you are introducing yourself. Luke, люк, means hatch and Luka, лук, means onion.

Some quotations of Russian famous people testify to the fact of richness and eloquence of Russian language. Everyone is making plans, but no one knows if he is living to the evening. Famous Russian writer Lev Tolstoy included whole pages in French in his novels, but the author of "War and Peace" still represents Russian culture for millions of people. Love letters have to be burnt. The past provides the noblest fuel. Acclaimed prose stylist Vladimir Nabokov may well be called either a Russian or an American writer. As the creator of "Lolita" himself acknowledged, Russian was not his first language, and with the help of foreign nannies, he could read only simple words such as cacao. Schtschi! Russian was not the native language of other iconic Russian figures, such as minor German princess Sophie Friederike Auguste, better known as Empress Catherine the Great. She managed to write the simple Russian word cabbage soup, щи, with eight spelling mistakes: schtschi that is eight wrong letters in a two-letter-word, as the Russian joke goes.

According to the Russian scientist M.V. Lomonosov: «The Russian language surpasses all European languages, since it has magnificence of Spanish, the liveliness of French, the strength of German, the delicacy of Italian, as well as the richness and conciseness of Greek and Latin».

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### **Does the Russian soul really exist?**

Human feelings are very important in Russia, and people who do not share the depth of those feelings will be considered cold and distant. When Russians open their souls to someone, it is a sign of acceptance and sharing.

The Russian soul can turn up suddenly in the most unexpected places, and as suddenly disappear. So when foreigners believe that Russians are about to get down to serious business, they can become emotional and unbusinesslike. The soul is well known in the arts, where it presents itself as emotion, sentimentality and energy. The soul is the essence of Russian behavior.

The Russian soul is often derided in the West as a fantasy of artists and writers. If the soul ever really existed, it was the product of a traditional society. In a modern society the soul is quickly forgotten and Russians become as realistic as Westerners.

The truth lies somewhere in between. Russians do have a rich spirituality that contrasts with Western rationalism and pragmatism. Their conversation is weighty and lengthy. The rational and pragmatic approach does not work for them. More often, it is personal relations and feelings that determine a course of action. Westerners are more likely to depend on the cold facts.

Logical categories are inapplicable to the soul. Russian sensitivity doesn't want to use logic – logic is seen as evil. The most important thing is sensation, emotion, tears and dreams.

As Tatyana Tolstaya, one of Russian leading writers, said

“In Russian culture, emotion is assigned a positive value. The more a person expresses his emotions, the better and more “open” he is”

The soul is described by Tolstaya as sensitivity, imagination, patience that permits survival, poetry, fatalism, mistrust of rational thought. All these qualities have been attributed to the “Slavic soul”.

Russians are sensitive to the feelings of others as their own. They make great sacrifices for their trusted circle, and they expect real sacrifices in return.

In the early ages of the twenty-first century, the Russian soul is still spirited. Old virtues endure – respect for parents, regard for learning. Belief in village virtues is still strong – sense of duty, importance of family, love of nature. Students hang on the words of their professors. Grateful audiences present flowers to musical performers. Before vacating a home where they have lived for some time, Russians will sit for a minute or two, reflecting on events they have experienced there. Even in the postindustrial age, Russians demonstrate that emotions and personal feelings still matter.

But today, fear for the future of the Russian soul bothers Russians. Their soul has survived centuries of state domination and seventy years of communism. Will it also survive the transition to the free market and democracy, and the call of American culture?

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### **Russia and the USA: similarities and differences**

It is believed that people learn their culture only through knowledge of other cultures. That is why it is necessary to analyze foreign basic values and compare them with native. Exploring American and Russian values, some interesting similarities are definitely found and they make realize that establishing communication between these countries is relatively possible. However, some cultural misunderstandings between two nations are readily apparent because each of them sometimes thinks that the other behaves strangely and differently from what is expected.

First of all, our object will be similarities. Russia and the United States of America have several similarities such as self-perception of the role in the world, the resources, militarism, expansionism, ethnic diversity, innovation and hospitality. Both Russia and America regard themselves as chosen nations with messianic missions, who are destined to bring their own versions of enlightenment to less fortunate people. Both countries are vast, rich in resources, both are great military powers, expansionist, and have tamed a wilderness in the past. Indeed, as historians noted, there is a frontier spirit shared by Siberia and American West. More than that Russians feel a common identity with Americans as citizens of multiethnic, continental powers. And as two energetic and inventive peoples they share one great trait: they show a heartfelt hospitality to foreigners from abroad.

Despite all similarities, historical experience separates Russians and Americans. There are significant differences between Russia and America in respect to the authority, attitude to the country, relation between individual rights and the government, attitude to the law, economy roots and, finally, between war experience. Authority in America has been diffused and flows upward from the people to a representative government. In Russia, authority has always been centralized and flows down. From this follows local peoples' attitude to their countries. Russians love their nature, birch-trees so Russian love of their country is somewhat more geographical than patriotic. At the same time Americans love their freedom and democracy of the country, they believe that it's their sacred duty to protect freedom and democracy all over the world. Americans attitude to America is political.

In the United States, individuals are celebrated and their rights vis-à-vis government are protected in both law and practice. In Russia, from its earliest times, individual rights have been subordinated to the greater communal good. Nowadays Russians often think that it's normal to break the laws in Russia. Americans as a rule don't think so because they know that laws are created to protect each of them and all of these laws really work.

The American economy is based on the private sector and a free market, and the role of government has been minor. Russian governments have distrusted the free market and have played an active role in the economy. American attitude to money is more careful than Russian because they always had to worry about paying for medical care of his family and other costs which are paid by government in Russia. So attitude to money is the result of differences in our economic systems.

For much of its history, Russia has been in a state of almost constant warfare with neighboring nations, and its people have often suffered extreme cruelties and violence on their own land. The US has fought its wars mostly abroad, and its people have not known wartime hardship and devastation. This is connected with collectivism of Russians and individualism of Americans. Americans have not been trained to see themselves as members of a close-knit, interdependent group or other collectivity. They have a unique zeal for entrepreneurship and individualism. It's what built the country. Conversely Russians find themselves part of some group. They always have some kind of attachment.

The question of all mentioned values becomes important when we cannot understand and explain the behavior of foreigners. We should understand that foreigners behave in this strange way not because they are rude or crazy, but simply because they proceed from a different list of values. In other words, what they consider good and standard behavior in their society does not always coincide with what we consider good and standard in our society.