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**THE PECULIARITIES OF THE GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURES  
IN THE ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN LINGUOCULTURES**

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***Abstract***

The study focuses on issues related to the language picture of the world, cultural values, peculiarities of mentality, particular characteristics of communicative behaviour of representatives belonging to the English-speaking and Russian-speaking linguocultures. A particular attention is paid to the national and cultural peculiarities of speech behaviour, which finds their expression in the choice of grammatical means of the language while producing different speech utterances. This article embraces a range of issues relating to English and Russian grammar structures as the reflection of the national language picture of the world and considers this as a platform for teaching grammar taking into account cultural values and national features of communicative behaviour of the representatives of the corresponding linguoculture. This study highlights the major cultural patterns that people must be aware of to avoid the hidden traps of intercultural communication. The most significant grammatical phenomena are considered to reveal their national and cultural characteristics. The intercultural analyses is carried out to uncover some similarities and differences in the communicative behaviour in English-speaking and Russian-speaking linguocultures. It is identified that studying grammar in a cross-cultural context leads to successful process of intercultural communication and helps to avoid any cross-cultural barriers.

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**Keywords:** Communicative behaviour, grammar structures, intercultural communication, linguoculture, National language picture, speech strategies.



## 1. Introduction

The peculiarities of culture as a set of material and spiritual values of the people are reflected in various national language pictures of the world. Any utterance is culturally conditioned, since the ways to categorize reality used by the native speakers of a particular linguoculture are intimately related to the peculiarities of the grammatical and lexical structures of their native languages. The given study considers cultural values, the features of particular characteristics of communication behaviour of the representative of the English-speaking and Russian-speaking linguocultures and some hidden traps of intercultural communication. The special attention is paid to the national and cultural peculiarities expressed by the usage of different grammar constructions.

While learning foreign languages, cultural differences mainly appear in vocabulary, the lexicon being culturally-based helps to build up the national language picture of the world. However, one should not underestimate the role of the grammatical system, since all grammatical utterances are also culturally-conditioned. Native speakers build their grammar utterances based on differences in their cognitive structures. In each language, such utterances are reflected in grammatical constructions as units of culture and it causes a certain construction of grammatical utterances. Many syntactic constructions are built on the basis of cognitive structures, which makes it possible to consider them as one of the ways to express the language picture of the world and to associate the choice of any syntactic structure with the national and cultural values of representatives of a particular linguoculture (Stanlaw, Adachi, & Salzmann, 2017).

Thus, while considering the peculiarities of the Russian language picture of the world and the English language picture of the world, the most interesting phenomena are the usage of the category of the article, the category of the genus, the use of nominative, dative and dative-like constructions, the use of modal verbs and imperative mood, the word order and even the punctuation. There is no doubt that the diversity of Russian language word-formation in comparison with the English language makes the Russian-language picture of the world more expressive and emotional.

All the above mentioned phenomena contain a large amount of information about the peculiarities of the cultural thought patterns, cultural values and national features of communicative behaviour of the representatives of the corresponding linguoculture. It should be noted that the differences in English and Russian grammatical systems of the language indicate significant national and cultural characteristics. A variety of grammatical constructions not only reflect cultural differences, but also serve as an invaluable tool to learn linguoculture of a particular language. While creating grammatical utterances it is quite difficult to develop the skills of culturally-based grammatical utterances in comparison with the lexicon since the meaning of grammatical constructions and phenomena are more abstract and less conscious than lexical ones. The incorrect use of some grammar constructions and phenomena may produce the effect, which is not intended and it may even cause intercultural conflicts. Moreover, the grammatical peculiarities of the language can have a significant impact on the reciprocal communication. All this assumes that the description of the grammar should take into account the national and cultural characteristics, since this can distort the cultural meaning and thereby strengthen the stereotypes of the perception of interlocutors come from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

## **2. Problem Statement**

In recent years, the interest in studying the grammatical structure of the language and the particular characteristics of the use of culturally-based grammatical structures by native speakers has significantly increased. Some researchers engaged in this problem have combined the principles of cultural relativism and universalism in their works. It is known that the study of the originality and uniqueness of the national language pictures of the world is associated with the study of lexicons of languages. However, numerous works devoted to linguo-cultural research demonstrate that, despite the fact that the correlations between the grammatical structure of the language and the cultural values of its speakers are less obvious than the correlations between the national mentality and vocabulary, they seem more significant. Moreover, it is important that representatives of different national cultures can not only choose the various structural and grammatical units of their languages to express the same semantic content, but also use different structures that seem very similar or identical.

## **3. Research Questions**

How is the national language picture of the world reflected in the grammar structures of the English and Russian languages?

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the article is to analyse the peculiarities of the English-speaking and Russian-speaking linguocultures based on the examples of the use of various grammatical phenomena. Thus, nominative and dative-like constructions, modal verbs, articles, the category of the gender, diminutive-hypocoristic suffixes, imperative mood, a strictly fixed word order of the English sentence, as well as the rules of punctuation are chosen to be discussed in the given study.

## **5. Research Methods**

The study is based on integrative, comprehensive approaches to the study of language material that take into account the principle of integral description of grammatical units on different levels, in particular, the impact of grammatical constructions and phenomena on intercultural communication. Theoretical and methodological basis of this work draws on the works of A. Wierzbicka, L. Visson, E.M. Vereshchagin, V.G. Kostomarov, G.V. Elizarova, O.A. Leontovich, S.G. Ter-Minasova, G.A. Zolotova, T.V Larina, and others which are dedicated to the study of Russian and English grammatical systems from the point of structural-semantic and functional-communicative approach. We are also indebted to theoretical contributions of Penelope Brown, Stephen Levinson, Sara Mills and others on the creation of the politeness theory. Developments in the theory of intercultural communication have been covered by V.P. Furmanova, V.V. Safonova, V.V. Krasniyh, A.P. Sadokhin, V.I. Thorik, N.Y. Fanyan, M.A.K. Halliday, J. Stanlaw, N. Adachi, Z. Salzman and others.

## **6. Findings**

The surrounding world is refracted in the human conscience through culture, which in turn is based on individual perceptions of the individual. The language picture of the world includes universal features

common to all mankind, cultural-specific traits for all members of a social group or community, as well as individual traits inherent in a particular person (Leontovich, 2005). Thus, the formation of a language picture of the world is influenced by many factors such as attitude to perceived objects, attitude to space, time, and attitude to personal freedom and autonomy of the individual as well as directly reflecting the customs and traditions of representatives of a particular culture (Vereshchagin & Kostomarov, 1990). Anna Wierzbicka (1996) in her numerous studies, recognizing some grammatical models as universal, classifies others as a group of linguistic-specific ones, and in fact she opens a new field of research which covers the interpretation of the semantics of grammatical categories. It should be noted that not all scientists share the position of cultural relativism, according to which there is a tangible relationship between the national worldview and the grammatical structure of a particular language. Thus, according to the concept of Noam Chomsky, the founder of "generative grammar" (or transformational-generative grammar), there is "Universal grammar" with its own structure and a set of conditions that all grammars of natural languages must be consistent, and there are no significant inconsistencies between them (Chomsky, 1993).

It can not be denied that the lexicon of the language plays an important role in the realization of the function of language as a cultural tool. Nevertheless, it is wrong to believe that only vocabulary and phraseology carry cultural differences. It is known that all language means are involved in the formation of the personality. The consideration of grammar with the purpose of revealing the nationally conditioned correlations between a language, a way of thinking, a set of value and behaviour patterns was repeatedly undertaken by Whorf (1993), who wrote about the links between cultural norms and various grammatical phenomenon.

As it is known, for a long time the thesis about the inseparable unity of language and national culture caused a certain opposition. That is why quite often while teaching grammar the attention to national and cultural peculiarities of communicative behaviour the representatives of the different linguocultures was not paid. Conversely, if while studying foreign languages, different cultural phenomena are not taken into account, then the study of the foreign language may turn into learning various phonetic, lexical and grammatical phenomena, speech pattern training and the mastering speech mechanisms. However, without knowledge of foreign culture, it will be impossible to carry out successful communication in the context of a modern dialogue of cultures, which involves understanding ourselves as the subject of national culture on the one hand and the representative of a multicultural world society on the other hand (Akopova, Almazova, Zhuk, & Savushkina, 2011; Akopova & Chernyavskaya, 2014; Chernyavskaya, 2016).

Wierzbicka (1997) notes that in spite of the fact that in the field of culturally significant objects and concepts, languages have a particularly rich vocabulary and it is natural to look for traces of cultural development and improvement in the lexical structures of language, the cultural development is reflected not only in lexical, but also in grammatical structures. In her opinion, concepts and relationships fundamental to a particular culture find their expression not only in the lexicon, but also in the grammar of the language of the given culture.

In its turn, Elizarova (2005), referring M.A.K. Halliday and P. Henle as well as to numerous linguistic studies, points out that the correlations between cultural values and the grammatical structure of a language are less obvious than the correlations between culture and vocabulary, but at the same time more essential. She agrees with the statement of F. Boas that a set of obligatory grammatical categories in the

language determines those aspects of the experience that must be expressed and it does not depend on the role that the language plays in human thoughts and actions, which are fixed in grammatical categories. That is why it can be assumed that grammar reflects the cultural peculiarities no less than vocabulary. Grammar takes an important part in the learning process of any foreign language, which in its turn closely connected with the process of studying foreign culture. Correspondingly, increasing intercultural knowledge as well as developing the skills of accommodation in intercultural contexts result in successful cross-cultural communication (Holliday, 2013).

To compare the features of the language picture of the world of English and Russian languages, it is very interesting to consider the use of nominative, dative or dative-like constructions, modal verbs, the categories of the article and gender, diminutive-hypocoristic suffixes, imperative mood, the strictly fixed order of words in the English sentence and even punctuation. The uniqueness of word-building of the Russian language in comparison with the English language makes the Russian language picture more expressive and emotional. All listed phenomena, as well as other levels of the language, contain rich information about cultural values, particular ways of thinking, and specific character of communicative behaviour of representatives of the corresponding linguoculture.

The syntax of languages also contains rich information about the peculiarities of the mentality and reflects various cultural assessments. The reason why the constructions of Russian and English utterances are so different is not so much in the peculiarities of the language as in the cultural features. Due to the different conceptualization of reality, the degree of activity in mastering the world and because of the specific of English language division and synthesis of the semantic statement, many English phrases are difficult to translate into Russian without changing the syntactic structure of the sentence. At the same time the Russian syntax is characterized by a number of passive constructions, using the system of local postpositions to express different types of temporal relations, and a special word order to express the communicative actual division (Leontovich, 2005).

Based on the comparative analysis of the syntax Wierzbicka (1996) came to the conclusion that the Russian and English languages are based on diametrically opposite cultural values. Thus, according to the syntactic typology of languages, there are two approaches to life: one can consider human life from the point of view “what I do”, i.e. adhere to an agent orientation, and one can approach human life from the position “what will happen to me”, following a patient (passive, patient-related) orientation (Elizarova, 2005). Therefore, the English language is considered to be an agent-oriented language and the Russian language is a patient-oriented language. In English, most events are presented in such a way that people control them, and all their expectations and hopes are under their control. As a result, the structure of grammatical sentences is associated with nominative and nominative-like constructions (Visson, 2015). That is why in the English language the syntactic level is dominated by nominative constructions such as “I recall ...”, “I believe ...”, “I think ...”, etc. The constructions such as “It seems to me that ...”, “It occurred to me that ...”, “It is impossible for me ...”, etc. play a secondary role in the English language. In Russian, on the contrary, the world is represented in such a way that all events occur without the will of the people and often do not depend on them. As a result, impersonal sentences take a dominant position, and passive constructions are considered the norm; moreover, in writing their presence is simply necessary. For example, dative-like constructions such as «Придется уйти...», «Мне помнится...», «Ей не верится...»,

«Нам непонятно...», «Ему кажется...» in Russian are quite productive, because this is how Russians tell about their mentality, implying that these events simply happen in their minds and that they are not responsible for them (Wierzbicka, 1996). Such structures indicate the collectivism of Russian language at the level of syntax and the tendency of Russian speakers not to distinguish themselves. Thus, they prefer using impersonal constructions in which the semantic subject is expressed by an objective case. All mentioned above confirm the theory of Gaka, in which he points out that peoples often express themselves using syntactic constructions and that people with a high degree of the development of individualism tend to begin their speech with the pronoun "I" (Leontovich, 2005).

English egocentrism, which is the most important feature of the individualistic type of culture, is vividly manifested in the syntactic constructions of the English sentence, which has a strict structure where the subject mostly dominates. In Russian impersonal sentences are often used, since the subject is known from the context and there is no need to use it. It also demonstrates the reflection of the collectivism of the Russian-speaking culture. For example, «Мне 25 лет» – “I am twenty five years old”, «Мне холодно» – “I am cold, « Мне предложили» – “I was offered”. While translating similar sentences into English personal-nominative-like constructions are often used, for example, «Хочется пройтись» – “I feel like going to walk”, «Хочется поесть» – “I am hungry/ I d lke to have a meal”, «Мне неловко» – “I feel embarrassed " and so on.

The expressions of obligation and impossibility in English are usually transmitted using a personal nominative-like model, for example, “I must prepare it”, “We cannot understand this”, etc. In the Russian language, such constructions are encountered, but quite rarely, more often dative and dative-like constructions are used, for example, «Нам нужно», «Им необходимо», etc. This is due primarily to the fact that the subject in the Russian sentences is presented as not controlling events and this peculiarity characterizes the Russians impersonal utterances. Another feature of the Russian language is the presence of sentences with infinitive constructions, the meaning of which is related to the modal categories of necessity and impossibility, but in which the modal verbs are not used, for example, «Не проехать», «Не бывать этому». Sentences of this kind are characterized by the impossibility to control events, helplessness, etc. All the above mentioned allows us to conclude that collectivism, fatalism and passive perception of the world prevail in the Russian-speaking culture (Wierzbicka, 1996).

It is possible to trace some cultural differences in punctuation, namely, in the use of an exclamation mark. It is known that in Russian the exclamation mark is used much more often than in English. Therefore, for example, an exclamation mark is placed in Russian after addressing people in business, private, official correspondence while in English there is a comma in these cases. It may also indicate a greater emotionality of the Russian language in comparison with the English language. Unfortunately, these differences can lead to cultural conflicts, as the representatives of the English-speaking culture may not understand the use of such a large number of exclamation marks, especially with regard to business correspondence. For the native speaker of the Russian language the use of comma instead of the usual exclamation mark may seem offensive and even disrespectful. The exclamation mark is used in English less often, since this language “does not tend to show emotions” (Ter-Minasova, 2008). Mostly exclamation marks can be found in propaganda, advertising and political texts, as well as to attract special attention to changing information.

The confirmation of the emotionality of the Russian language can be found on the morphological level. The use of diminutive-hypocoristic suffixes allows the representatives of the Russian-speaking culture to express the general emotional coloration and tonality of the Russian speech, the necessary subtleties and nuances of the language. The peculiarity of such suffixes shows respect, love, tact, friendly attitude to the surrounding world. In the Russian language, such suffixes as -оньк, -еньк, -ечк, -очк and others can convey a very wide range of feelings: delight, charm, attractiveness, pity, interest, etc. (Ter-Minasova, 2004). In English language, the diminutive-hypocoristic suffixes (-ie, -y, -e, -ey) are the exception rather than the rule (bird-birdie, girl-girlie). While translating this difference causes great difficulties, as it is sometimes extremely difficult to find the corresponding equivalents in the English language and convey all the shades of meanings that they express in Russian. According to T.V. Larina such a limited number of diminutive-hypocoristic suffixes in the English language demonstrates that the English style of communication does not encourage communicants to express emotions and expresses restraint, self-control (Larina, 2003). Ter-Minasova (2004) notes the interesting fact that the Australian variant of the English language is much more often used diminutive-hypocoristic suffixes than British and American variants. For example, "ciggie", "lavvy", "hottie", "backy", "yonngie", "oldies", etc. All this, in her opinion, confirms the differences in national characters.

The grammatical category of gender in the Russian language and the article in English is another confirmation of the differences at the emotional level in the Russian-speaking and English-speaking cultures. In Russian, due to the category of gender all nouns and objects of the surrounding world possess masculine, feminine and neutral (middle gender) properties. In English, the gender is not expressed grammatically, all inanimate nouns and zoonyms are expressed by the pronoun "it". The absence of this category in English suggests that the Russian language is more emotional than English and it confirms the more emotional attitude of Russian speakers to the world around them (Ter-Minasova, 2004).

At the same time, articles that emphasize and confirm the central place of the individual in the English-speaking culture do not exist in the Russian language. Articles are necessary for English culture as well as the category of the gender for the Russian language. The native speaker of the English language categorizes the world according to such a parameter as one of many (people or objects) or "the one". The grammatical category of the article in English is obligatory and unchanging. Articles do not allow singling out or pointing to one specific person, place or thing without indicating their sign, meaningful for the representatives of English-speaking cultures. Thus, the category of the article expresses the increased interest of speakers to an individual person or subject. The complexity in the studying English articles by Russian native speakers is mainly due to the difference in their approach to reality and in the perception of the world picture (Ter-Minasova, 2004).

In her studies, Zolotova (2001) trying to trace how the peculiarity of the grammatical system influences the peculiarities of national thinking, analyses the English, French and German languages, which have a different grammatical structures. In her opinion, these languages differ in complexity, and the English language is the simplest, since it possesses only two articles, English nouns have only the category of number and two cases, but there are no case and gender endings. Verbs contain only the endings of the past tense and the third person singular. Highlighting the grammatical system as a factor in the differentiation of national thinking, she believes that English-speaking Americans think stereotypically,

they often display their egocentrism, believing that the partner should be guided by the same rules as themselves. According to her research, Americans are obsessed with the life of their continent, they are practically not interested in the lives of other peoples, and if they joke, they do this, as a rule, unpretentiously (Elizarova, 2005).

Individualistic worldview, based on some respect for personal autonomy and on the right of every individual to independence, is particularly evident in the use of English modal verbs. For this very reason, such a fundamental cultural value as personal autonomy can be violated by incorrect use. For example, not all grammars indicate the fact that the use of the second person pronoun in the combination with a modal verb, even with a modal verb “should”, indicates that the speaker perceives his or her position as allowing him or her to dictate the behaviour of the hearer (Thorik & Fanyan, 2006).

National style of behaviour is closely connected with the category of politeness. Therefore, to achieve various communication goals, there is the theory of politeness preferred by native speakers of English (Larina, 2009). Politeness is understood as the speakers' intention to mitigate face threats carried by certain face threatening acts toward another, the deliberate strategic behaviour of an individual, aimed at satisfying one's own desires and desires in case of some threat (Mills, 2003). According to the theory of politeness proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987), there are two notions such as a positive and negative face of politeness. A positive face means an individual desire to be appreciated, a concern how a person is perceived in a social group. The negative face needs include autonomy and independence and leaves behind the individual the right of non-interference in his or her affairs (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Thus, for English-speaking cultures, the use of a positive face means attention to the listener, sharing common points of view, the demonstration of optimism, etc. While the negative face is aimed at demonstrating a pessimistic attitude and preserving the right to non-interference and allows not carrying out an action. For example, “I wonder if”, “You might consider doing”, “I only want to know”. These examples fully meet the values of personal freedom, autonomy independence and one's own responsibility for everything that happens. The representatives of Russian-speaking culture do not always understand these principles of politeness, as they lean toward collectivism, the division of responsibility and greater frankness in their statements. For the Russian-speaking communicative culture based on other socio-cultural relations, the provision of communicative pressure on the interlocutor is in many cases quite permissible and natural (Larina, 2003).

Cultural and linguistic specifics in English and Russian are also indicated by the use of imperative mood. According to some foreign researchers, the use of imperative mood allows influencing the distribution of communicative roles in different ways. It may even initially put the speakers above their interlocutors, and therefore it must be used very carefully (Larina, 2003). Russian communicative culture is characterized by a higher vertical distance (emphasising hierarchy), that is, Russian interlocutors quite often may have a direct impact on their interlocutors and this fact manifests itself in the frequent use of imperative mood. While in the English-speaking culture, interlocutors tend not to demonstrate their superiority and try to convey the direct impact on their interlocutors. As noted previously, the reasons for such different communicative behaviour lie in various socio-cultural attitudes and cultural values. The autonomy of the individual takes the leading place in the hierarchy of cultural values of the representatives of the English-speaking culture, and therefore no one has the right to impose their will on anyone. Equality and respect for personal independence is manifested in the desire to reduce any impact on the interlocutor.

In contrast, the Russian-language culture is characterized by a higher power distance and the lack of personal autonomy, which allows direct influence on the interlocutor (Leontovich, 2005).

In view of the above facts, the desirability and undesirability of actions in the Russian-speaking culture is formulated in the form of regulations or prescriptions, while in the English-speaking culture in the form of descriptions. For example, in Russian such sentences are often used: «Не сорить», «Стой, вход воспрещён», «На газонах не лежать», etc. In English, information is presented in the form of some instructions, which politely explain the rights and duties of people's behaviour in society. For example, "Thank you for not smoking", "No junk mail, please", "Please, keep off the grass, thank you", "Please take all your litter with you". Such constructions as "it is prohibited", "it is forbidden" are used quite rarely and only in the situations when something threatens life and health of people or endanger public security. For example, "Petrol Station. Danger. No naked light. Smoking prohibited", "Warning. Watch for the step down". All this once again confirms that the use of prohibition is perceived as an intrusion into the personal lives of people and as an imposition of somebody's will on them. These restrictions also apply to the use of a negative form of imperative mood, which also has the form of the prohibition of action (Visson, 2015). That is why while translating Russian sentences with the words «нельзя», «нет», «не надо» it is necessary to tone down utterances and use affirmative constructions such as "Take your time", "Stay calm", "Remember to take the key", "Take it easy", etc. For the Russian language, such means of replacing negative imperatives are less typical. In the texts of public announcements, there is often a tendency to avoid the use of a negative form of imperative mood. It allows rewriting the ban into the instruction. Some English modifiers such as "please", "thank you", "kindly" help to tone down the use of imperative mood. For example, "Please, knock before entering. Thank you", "Please, keep off the lawn". In English-speaking culture, the preference to use affirmative negative constructions is the reflection of positive thinking and it characterizes the peculiarity of English communicative behaviour.

## **7. Conclusion**

As a conclusion, it should be noted that differences in English and Russian at the level of grammar indicate national and cultural peculiarities, and grammatical variations not only reflect cultural differences, but also represent an invaluable tool for studying culture and social norms of behaviour. In the field of grammar, the need to develop skills to use grammar taking into account cultural peculiarities is even more urgent than in the field of vocabulary, since meanings of grammatical constructions and phenomena are more abstract and less recognisable in comparison with the use of vocabulary. The omission of polite strategies might not have resulted in complete communication breakdown. Nevertheless, their usage made the learners' language more culturally appropriate. Suffice it to say that if to use grammatical forms incorrectly, it will be very difficult to identify the produced effect. The nature of the grammatical material can exert a great influence on the reciprocal perception of the interlocutors and the wrong usage of grammar constructions may even lead to cross-cultural conflicts. All this assumes that it is necessary to develop the ability to apply appropriate grammatical structures according to culturally accepted norms. Grammar should be described taking into account the national and cultural peculiarities as well as particular characteristics of communicative behaviour of representatives of different linguocultures. The arbitrariness of the interpretations is unacceptable, since this can distort the cultural meaning and thereby strengthen the

stereotype of perception on the part of the interlocutor. The competence and consciousness of cultural differences help avoiding the danger of possible misperception in the intercultural communication.

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