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В.В.Вовчек (4 курс, каф. политологии), О.Г.Ветрова, к.ф.н., проф.

РУССКАЯ КУЛЬТУРА ГЛАЗАМИ ИНОСТРАНЦЕВ

Эффективное межкультурное взаимодействие возможно только в том случае, если его участники осознают, что иная культура ничем не хуже той культуры, представителями которой они являются. Эффективная коммуникация строится на взаимодействии культур, а не на их противостоянии.

Nowadays establishing and developing international and intercultural links has become one of the most urgent problems for the world's community. It is especially urgent and topical for Russia that used to stand apart from the main roads of the Western world and during the Soviet period was almost completely isolated from it by the Iron Curtain. The problem with Russia is that she has always been somewhere in the middle, not a completely collectivistic country but not an individualistic one either. Now we see that the United Europe-oriented behavior is coming up to the frontline, people are becoming more goal oriented and self centered [1].

The sudden drastic change of the situation in Russia, naturally, has caused a whirl of new problems. At the same time it has helped to realize that the language barrier is not the last one in communication between different people and that behind it the cultural barrier is looming large.

Our own system of values supplies us with certain limits for the perception of the foreign culture. Our natural tendencies lead us back to our prior experience; our default opinion becomes the familiarity of our own culture, thus preventing our accurate understanding of the other cultures.

Every meeting with a foreigner, every lesson of a foreign language, every contact with a foreigner at your work place, every work of foreign literature, is a crossroads of cultures because the very concept of "foreignness" implies an opposition to the native language, literature, mode of living, mentality, etc. A clash or, putting it mildly, a dialogue of cultures accompanies every movement beyond the usual circle and hampers communication [2].

The following characteristic can be given to Russia in accordance with Hofstede's Dimensions analysis. This table demonstrates the foreigner's opinion about Russian culture [3].

Individualism/ Collectivism	The society with a strict social structure, strict division into social groups, in which every individual is guaranteed care and attention of others in exchange for loyalty to the group. The attention is given to the goals and demands of the group but not to the individual's goals and interests. People from this group try to talk more about others than about themselves. In case of a conflict the boss is considered to be right. The goal of these people is long term relationship.
Masculinity/ Femininity	More attention is given to cooperation and relationships between people. Attempts to achieve understanding between people. Demonstration of attention and respect toward people around them. Money is not the main aspect of life. Equality between sexes is preached among the members of society.

Uncertainty Avoidance	<p>People try to avoid unplanned situations and try to plan everything in advance. This is the heritage from the old times when government got everything planned for the people. The opposite tendency exists among businessmen who are willing to take risks and make unexpected decisions. Although these qualities haven't gained the national recognition yet, a lot of people, especially the ones who work in the private sector, find the initiative to be most important for successful work in that sphere.</p>
Power distance	<p>The distance from power has been getting shorter since the proclamation of the Russian Federation. This distance was rather long before that. The authorities are trying to persuade people to participate in the government of the country. But the hierarchy still exists in the society and in people's minds.</p>

The actual communication with foreigners naturally gives most obvious and vivid examples of clashes of cultures of all kinds – from the sublime to the ridiculous, from the comic to the tragic.

In facing foreign cultures we can recognize and use our values and stereotypes but we should never forget that effective cross-cultural communication presupposes the interplay of the alternative realities. In interacting with foreigners we learn to recognize and value our fundamental humanity, our cultural similarities and dissimilarities. People should learn how to cooperate with representatives of other cultures and what is more important realize that another culture is not any worse or better than the one they represent, it is different. Only in this case effective cross-cultural communication is possible.

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