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CULTURAL VALUES AND NEGATIVE POLITENESS IN ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN

The phenomenon of politeness is universal and at the same time is culture specific. Traditionally it is defined as respect and consideration for other people. But in intercultural aspect this definition does not work as the concepts of politeness, respect and consideration are understood differently and even these words have different meaning. In this paper politeness is viewed as strategic behaviour, a system of culturally-specific and highly ritualized communicative strategies which functions are to maximize harmonious interaction and minimize the possibility of conflict. The present research is mainly based on Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1978, 1987) which gives an effective mechanism for understanding interlocutors' communicative behaviour, but the main emphasis is put on the principal strategic differences between English and Russian negative politeness and the attempt to explain them through social organization and cultural values. The paper gives empirical data on such Speech Acts as Command and Invitation. The comparative analysis was conducted on the basis of ethnographic observation, questionnaires and interviews.

KEY WORDS: *intercultural communication, language and culture, cultural values, politeness, semantic option, pragmatic option, Command, Request, Invitation.*

1. Politeness in Intercultural Communication

The growing interest in linguistic politeness points out to the importance of this issue in human interaction and especially in intercultural studies. Questions dealing with this social and linguistic phenomenon and its realization in different cultures are investigated in a number of social sciences, such as anthropology, cultural anthropology, psychology, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, cross-cultural pragmatics, applied linguistics, communication. Because of its complex character, politeness can be viewed only from an interdisciplinary point of view.

Communication is not only the transmission of information but also of attitudes. Many problems in intercultural communication arise from the difficulty of finding appropriate ways to signal attitudes to interlocutors. Even relatively simple misunderstandings are sometimes difficult to regulate in intercultural situations. Talking to a foreigner, people usually easily forgive grammar or lexical mistakes as they are attributed to faulty linguistic knowledge, but are very sensitive to an inappropriate use of politeness formulas, as they are attributed to intentional cause¹.

¹ See: SIFIANOU, Maria. *Politeness Phenomena in England and Greece*. Oxford, 1992; JANNEY, Richard W.; ARNDT, Horst. Universality and relativity in cross-cultural politeness research: a historical perspective. In *Multilingua* 12, 1993, p. 13–50; AGAR, Michael. *Language shock: Understanding the Culture of Conversation*. New York, 1994.

Being intercultural polite is a very complicated skill. Interpersonal communication is the most sensitive area of intercultural communication. Linguistic knowledge (knowledge of linguistic forms: lexis and syntax) is not enough for successful communication, as politeness formulas are usually not translatable, though very often they seem to be similar. They are used in different situations and can be easily misunderstood. But what is most essential is that politeness is not a set of etiquette formulas. It is a system of communicative strategies which in different cultures are not fully shared. Being polite in another culture requires skills of using culturally specific strategies and modifying verbal and non-verbal behaviour.

Predictability of others' behaviour is necessary for successful communication, for understanding the interlocutor's activity and planning one's own. When an interlocutor's behaviour differs from what was expected, misunderstanding occurs. Such misunderstanding can lead to stereotyping, which in turn harms communication. There are stereotypes, that Poles and Russians are not very polite, the Chinese and Japanese are commonly considered to be very polite in comparison with Europeans². J. Thomas mentions stereotyping about abrasive Russians/Germans, obsequious Indians/Japanese, insincere Americans, and standoffish Britons³. It is regrettable that even some researchers do not avoid stereotyping. Tanaka and Kawade, for instance, differentiate between polite and impolite societies⁴.

Stereotypes should not be judged in a negative

way only. They are important signals of cultural differences, which should be in a particular focus of attention of researchers. Indeed there are serious reasons for English people to judge Russians as impolite: they often sound imposing, argumentative, even aggressive, ask private questions, give advice even to strangers, interrupt interlocutors etc. But such conduct should not be considered as impoliteness. It can be explained through social relationships and cultural values. As Wierzbicka claims, linguistic differences are due to "aspects of culture much deeper than mere norms of politeness" and are associated with cultural differences⁵. The understanding of cultural differences which influence communicative behaviour is a necessary part of intercultural communicative competence.

2. Power and Distance in human interaction

Politeness is tied up with the most basic principles of socio-cultural organization, and interpersonal relationships within social groups and should be viewed in the context of social distance (D) and Power distance (P) which are considered the main dimensions of cultures⁶.

Social distance (D) between interlocutors can vary from intimacy to different levels of formality. It is a horizontal type of relationship, which shows the degree of closeness between the interlocutors. The level of D between the members of society varies in different cultures. G. Hofstede defines this dimension in the following way: "Individualism pertains to societies in which the ties

² LEECH, G. N. *Principles of Pragmatics*. London, 1983, p. 97.

³ THOMAS, Jenny. Cross-cultural pragmatic failure. In *Applied Linguistics*, 4, 1983, p. 97.

⁴ TANAKA, Shigenori; KAWADE, Saiki. Politeness strategies and second language acquisition. In *Studies in second language Acquisition* 5, 1982, p. 18-33.

⁵ WIERZBICKA, Anna. Different Cultures, different languages, different speech acts. In *Journal of Pragmatics*, 9, 1985, p. 145.

⁶ HOFSTEDE, Geert H. *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values*. Beverly Hills, 1984; HOFSTEDE, Geert H. *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the mind*. London, 1991.

between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism as its opposite pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty"⁷.

By this dimension cultures are divided into individualistic and collectivist. Degrees of individualism / collectivism vary within countries as well as between them. As H. Triandis claims, there are individuals in collectivist cultures and collectivists in individualistic cultures⁸. But some tendencies prevail. The concept of face is based on how a person understands his/her self: as an autonomous individual or an in-group member.

W. Foley argues that the local ideology of Western Europe may be summarized in one word, individualism⁹. The highest index of individualism in Europe according to Hofstede's research is ascribed to Great Britain¹⁰.

The basic premise of the ideology of individualism is egocentric personal autonomy¹¹. Each person is viewed as having inalienable right to autonomy. Each individual is unique, but all, ideologically at least, have equal claims to this right. The notion of personal autonomy has in the English language its special name – 'privacy'.

Power distance (P) is a vertical type of relationship. In communication it refers to the disparity between the interlocutors in a hierarchical structure and can vary from relative equality to different le-

vels of subordination. The level of P distance also varies in different cultures. Although all cultures have tendencies for both high- and low- power relationships, one orientation seems to dominate.

Hofstede defines P distance as "the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally"¹². "Institutions" are the basic elements of society like the family, school and the community, "organizations" are the places where people work. Adler and Rodman express a similar idea and claim, that some cultures accept differences in P and status, while others accept them grudgingly, if at all¹³. Power distance refers to the degree to which members are willing to accept a difference in P and status between members of the group. I think it is important to add that it also refers to the degree to which they *demonstrate* this difference in speech and manners.

D. Foster gives the following explanation to this dimension: "...in some cultures, those who hold power and those who are affected by power are significantly far apart (high-power distance) in many ways, while in other cultures, the power holders and those affected by the power holders are significantly closer"¹⁴.

3. English and Russian social relationships and cultural values

These two dimensions (P and D) usually go together: more individualistic cultures are charac-

⁷ HOFSTEDE, Geert H. *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the mind*. London, 1991, p. 51.

⁸ TRIANDIS, Harry. *Individualism and Collectivism*. Boulder, 1995.

⁹ FOLEY, William A. *Anthropological Linguistics: an introduction (Language in Society; 24)*. Oxford, 1997, p. 265.

¹⁰ HOFSTEDE, footnote 7, p. 53.

¹¹ FOLEY, footnote 9, p. 265.

¹² HOFSTEDE, footnote 7, p. 28.

¹³ ADLER, Ronald B.; RODMAN, George. *Understanding Human Communication*. Harcourt Brace College, 1997, p. 306.

¹⁴ FOSTER, D. A. *Bargaining across borders*. New York, 1992, p. 265.

terized by lower P distance index, those which are more collectivist, have a higher power distance index.

English and Russian cultures in these terms maintain the following differences: English culture is individualistic with low Power distance, while Russian is collectivist with a higher Power distance. In other words the scale of social distance (D) (horizontal relations) is longer in English culture, as the scale of power distance (P), which reflects the vertical hierarchical relations, on the contrary, is longer in the Russian system than in the English one.

In different cultures distance is viewed in a different way. As A. Wierzbicka notices, "in Anglo-Saxon culture distance is a positive cultural value, associated with respect for autonomy of the individual. By contrast, in Polish it is associated with hostility and alienation"¹⁵. The same could be said about Russian culture, where distance is often perceived as indifference. Russians usually ignore those who they do not know. While getting in touch they prefer to make the distance shorter rather than demonstrate it.

Social distance in English culture reveals in the zone of privacy, which surrounds every person despite his/her age or status. It is one of the most important cultural values which regulates social relationships. J. Paxman calls it "one of the defining characteristics of the English", "one of the country's informing principles" and claims that "the importance of privacy informs the entire organization of the country, from the assumptions on which laws are based, to the buildings in which the English live"¹⁶.

I completely agree with the researchers who claim that if there is a word for a particular con-

cept in a language, then that concept is very important for the culture. H. Triandis states that "for important values all cultures have one word. When you see that many words are needed to express an idea in one language while only one word is used in another, you can bet that the idea is indigenous to the one-word culture"¹⁷.

'Privacy' is a specific English word, which is defined as "being alone or undisturbed; the right to this freedom from intrusion or public attention"¹⁸. A truly comparable word for it doesn't exist in other European languages (French, Italian, Spanish, Polish). The Russian vocabulary has it neither. In different contexts it can be translated in a different way. As a cultural concept it can be interpreted as *personal autonomy*. The note *Private* (No admittance) is interpreted into Russian as *Strangers are forbidden to enter (Postoronnim vkhod vospreschion)*. Privacy can be viewed as a zone which cannot be interfered by anybody.

The cultural value of privacy in English culture is widely reflected in proverbs, which one may consider to be the collective wisdom of the people: *An Englishman's house is his castle / A hedge between keeps friendship green / Good fences make good neighbours / Love your neighbour, yet pull not down your fence / He travels the fastest who travels alone / Friends are like fiddle-strings and they must not be screwed too tightly / Comó seldom, come welcome and others etc.*

To Russians who have neither the word *privacy* nor such a concept in their language and culture these proverbs can hardly be understood, at least sound rather peculiar, as instead of privacy they value solidarity and closeness, which is also expressed in their proverbs: *It is better to have 100 friends than 100 roubles (Ne imey sto rubley, a imey*

¹⁵ WIERZBICKA, footnote 5, p. 156.

¹⁶ PAXMAN, Jeremy. *The English: A Portrait of a People*. London, 1999, p. 117–118.

¹⁷ TRIANDIS, Harry. *Culture and Social Behavior*. McGraw-Hill series in social psychology. McGraw-Hill, 1994, p. 6.

¹⁸ *Oxford Popular English Dictionary*. Oxford, 2000, p. 641.

sto rubley) / Even death could be nice while you are among people (Na miru y smert' krasna) / Without a friend one is an orphan, while having a friend one is a member of the family (Bez druga sirota, s drugom semyanin) and others.

Proverbs like vocabulary, preserve and transfer from generation to generation what is particularly important for the people. They are called "a compact treatise on the values of culture and a part of belief system"¹⁹.

The value of privacy in English culture and the lack of it in Russian explains a lot of characteristics peculiar to the both politeness systems as well as communicative styles.

4. English / Russian politeness systems: Strategies of independence (negative politeness strategies)

In spite of its universal character politeness varies across cultures. As Blum-Kulka claims, "systems of politeness manifest a culturally filtered interpretation of interaction"²⁰. Politeness strategies could be understood in the context of culture-specific social relations, cultural values and attitudes.

Strategies of independence (negative politeness strategies) are used to keep ritual distance from the Hearer and in this way to demonstrate the Speaker's respect for the Hearer's right to privacy. P. Brown and S. Levinson call negative politeness the "heart of respective behaviour"²¹. It corresponds to rituals of avoidance. In English culture, negative politeness is the most elaborate and the most conventionalised set of linguistic strategies for Face Threatening Act (FTA) redress.

Negative politeness strategies are aimed at minimizing the imposition on the hearer. One of the main strategies of independence in English is to give hearer the option not to do the act, which is characteristic to the acts when the Speaker (S) wants the Hearer (H) to do something. These are the most FTAs (especially in English communication).

R. Fasold calls such Speech Acts (SA) "hazardous communicative activities"²². He explains that if you give someone an order or make a request, you expect that s/he would be willing to do something. Typically, it means either that you think that you are in a sufficiently superior social position for the other person to be obliged to carry out the order or request, or that the solidarity between you is sufficient for that person to be willing to act for your benefit (s.p.) If your assessment is wrong and the H doesn't accept your social superiority or acknowledge the right amount of solidarity between you, he might openly refuse to carry out the order or fulfill the request.

This explanation shows that the level of threat depends on the level of Power distance and Solidarity between the S and the H. This is very significant for our comparative analysis.

Our hypothesis is:

- 1) since the social Distance between the interlocutors in Russian communication is shorter, and thus the level of Solidarity is higher, people don't need elaborated system of strategies to minimize the threat;
- 2) since the Power distance in Russian communication is greater, the S (in a lot of situations) has more authority to give an or-

¹⁹ SAMOVAR, Larry A.; PORTER, Richard; STEFANI, Lisa A. *Communication between Cultures*. Belmont, 1998, p. 39.

²⁰ BLUM-KULKA, Shoshana. The metapragmatics of politeness in Israeli society. In WATS Richard J.; IDE, Sachiko; EHLIH, Konrad. (eds.) *Politeness in language. Studies in history, theory and practice*. Berlin, 1991, p. 270.

²¹ BROWN, Penelope; LEVINSON, Stephen D. *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge, 1987, p. 129.

²² FASOLD, Ralph. *The Sociolinguistics of Language*. Oxford, 1990, p. 58.

der or to make a request and this SA is taken for granted by the H.

4.1. Pragmatic and Semantic options

The pragmatic meaning "I want you to do something" realizes in different SAs (e. g., command, order, instruction, request, invitation, suggestion), which in linguistic literature are called *directives* or *requestives*.

The attempt has been made to distinguish between requestives and directives. A. Tsui claims that the crucial difference is that "a request gives the addressee the options of complying or not complying, whereas an order does not"²³. An order assumes that the addressee will co-operate, whereas a request does not. She offers an interesting classification of the subclasses of requestives and directives which provides a basis on which to explain some of the politeness strategies in English, but can hardly be used for comparative analysis as what in one language seems to be a directive in another may be a requestive (e. g., in spite of the fact that *Give me that book, please* doesn't contain any options for the H, it is not deemed in Russian communication a command, rather a request).

In English communication, a command is conventionally expressed by imperative (*Give me that book*) and a request by interrogatives (*Would you give me that book, please?*) or declaratives (*I'd appreciate if you would give me that book*). In Russian this rule does not apply.

In intercultural studies it is important to distinguish between functional pragmatic meaning and semantic meaning, between pragmatic options and semantic options.

Pragmatic option (PO) refers to pragmatic (context) meaning. In Ex.1 and Ex.2 the S doesn't

give options to the H, neither in Ex.3 and Ex.4. In spite of the formal and semantic differences between the phrases they are all directives, as they have contextually unambiguous meaning, though in Ex.3 and Ex.4 the contextual meaning is different from the literal meaning.

Ex. 1. *Show me your ticket* (bus conductor to a passenger).

Ex. 2. *Move up your car* (policeman to a driver).

Ex. 3. *May I see your ticket, please?*

Ex. 4. *Could you please move up your car?*

Semantic option (SO) refers to the form of the phrase and its semantic meaning (Ex.3 and Ex.4). The question (as a linguistic model) always contains an option as it can be given a positive or a negative answer. The H chooses between *Yes* and *No*.

These different types of options need not always coincide. In Ex.3 and Ex.4 the H does not have a pragmatic option (he is supposed to do the act), but is offered a semantic option, which is contained in the form of the utterance (formally he is asked a question).

I propose the following definitions of directives and requestives for inter- /crosscultural research:

Directive is a SA which provides no pragmatic option for the H, who is supposed to comply with the S;

Requestive is a SA, which offers the H a pragmatic option.

Politeness does not necessarily mean giving options, giving options is to a great extent culture-dependent.

4.2. Directness / indirectness and politeness

The most striking difference between English and Russian politeness is revealed in the use of impe-

²³ TSUI, Amy B. M. *English Conversation*. Oxford, 1994, p. 93.

ratives. Restriction on the use of this form in English, which has been noticed by many linguists²⁴ can be exemplified only through a comparative analysis. A. Wierzbicka, who has paid a lot of attention to this specific trait of English communication, argues that in English the imperative is mostly used in commands and orders²⁵. Our data demonstrate that the tendency to avoid it extends even further and to some extent applies to commands too.

According to my data English people tend to avoid this form in all SAs with pragmatic meaning *I want you to do it*, trying to diminish and soften their imposition and demonstrate their respect to other people's autonomy (privacy), and it does not matter whether the H is obliged to comply with the S (as in command), whether the action is of benefit to the speaker (request) or to the hearer (invitation)²⁶.

4.2.1. Request

Request is considered to be one of the most threatening SA as it is performed in the interest of the Speaker and at the cost of the Hearer.

In Russian communication it can be expressed both by direct (imperative) and indirect (question) utterances, but imperative sentences are preferable. Imperative modified by *please* ('*pozhaluysta*') does not sound as demanding and imposing as in English. In Russian *please* seems to have a stronger pragmatic meaning than in English and easily transfers directives to requestives. In a spoken language, especially while talking to children, it is often named *a magic word*, that means if one says

this word while asking for something, s/he will never be refused (if children forget to say *please* in their request they are often asked *Where is the magic word?*). Thus the Russian model *Give me that book, please* (*Day mne tu knigu, pozhaluysta*) should be characterized as a request and not a command.

In Russian communication, an imperative modified by '*please*' is the most frequent form employed to make a request. Indirect utterances (*Could you give me that book, please*) are also possible but, as they sound more formal and distant, they are usually used in a high register of communication and are common mostly for formal level. Mostly they are not appropriate in interactions between equals (friends, students), neither they are used by those who have more power (parents talking to children, teachers addressing students etc.).

It is important to note that the Russian language has a polite *vy* (*vous*) pronoun and its verb form which also modifies the imperative and makes it sound more polite.

The most frequent form for the request in English is a question with a modal verb (*Can you / Could you / Would you*). According to the summarized data of E. Rintell they are typical for all levels of deference: high (71,95 %), mid (84,5%), and low (62,5%)²⁷. As for direct utterances (I need and imperative) they are not appropriate for high-deference level at all (0%), and are not frequent on other levels: 3,1% (mid-deference) and 34,4% (low-deference).

According to the data of CCSARP in Australian English, for instance, indirect utterances ac-

²⁴ SIFIANOU, footnote 1; LEECH, Geoffrey; SVARTVIK, Jan. *A Communicative Grammar of English*. London; New York, 1994; AIJMER, Karin. *Conversational Routines in English: Convention and Creativity*. London; New York, 1996; TSUI, footnote 23, and others.

²⁵ WIERZBICKA, Anna. *Cross-cultural Pragmatics: The Semantics of Human Interaction*. Berlin, 1991, p. 30.

²⁶ In Russian communication invitation can hardly be considered as imposition rather as a positive act.

²⁷ RINTELL, Ellen. Sociolinguistic variation and pragmatic ability: a look at learners. In *Journal of the Sociology of Language*. 27. The Hague, 1981, p. 11–33.

count for 84,2% while direct utterances for 9,8% only²⁸. Russian researchers give similar data for British English: question models – 91,9 %, imperative – 3,1%. For an elementary request imperative is the only appropriate form (100%). On average imperative is used in Russian 19 times more often in comparison with English (58,35% and 3,1%)²⁹.

The English language offers for request a set of elaborate models with numerous hedges, modifiers and downtoners as *Do you think you could possibly give me that book, please? / I was just wondering whether you could possibly give me that book or I was thinking maybe you wouldn't mind giving me that book* which dissociate the H from the act and minimize the imposition. Such formulas do not exist in Russian as Russian speakers never minimize their imposition to such an extent. To Russian ear such models sound too elaborate, ambiguous and obscure.

In order to be more polite instead of softening their request Russian speakers can on the contrary intensify it. Literary such utterances can be rendered as *Be kind, give me that book, please (Bud' dobr, day mne tu knigu, pozhaluysta)* or even *Be kind, give me that book, please. I ask you very much (Bud' dobr, day mne tu knigu, pozhaluysta. Ya tebia ochen' proshu)*. This example shows that while an explicit performative sounds in English too intrusive and English speakers tend to avoid it since, as J. Thomas claims, "in many circumstances it seems to imply an unequal power relationship or a particular set of rights on the part of the Speaker"³⁰, Russians on the contrary intensify this verb by adding *very much (ochen')* to it.

The English language has more elaborate system of requestive utterances in comparison with Russian but the main differences reveals not in the set of forms but in the choice of linguistic forms and strategies for the request which demonstrates that an attempt to reduce the imposing nature of request is much more typical for English communication than for Russian one. Russians prefer more structurally direct request than the English, who tend to prefer more structurally indirect constructions and make more effort to minimizing their imposition.

4.2.2. Directives

As for Russian directives, they are commonly expressed by bare imperative, as utterances with semantic option are not common for the situations, which do not provide any pragmatic option (Ex. 5.2–16.2).

In English communication, directives are expressed not only by the utterances, which provide neither a pragmatic option nor a semantic option (imperative), but also by those which offer no pragmatic but have a semantic option (interrogatives or declaratives) as in examples 5.1–16.1.

For Russians such utterances sound rather odd and can be misunderstood. J. Thomas gives a very typical example, saying that the utterance "*would you like to read?*", which in an English classroom would be a highly conventionalized polite request/directive to do so, in a Russian classroom often elicited the response *no, I wouldn't* (from students who had no intention of being rude, but who genuinely thought that their performances were being consulted)³¹.

²⁸ BLUM-KULKA, Shosana; HOUSE, Julianne; KASPER, Gabriel. *Cross-cultural pragmatics: Requests and apologies*. Norwood, 1989.

²⁹ Summarized data of PhD thesis of Egorova M.: ЕГОРОВА, Мария. *Контрастивно-прагматический анализ способов реализации просьбы: сопоставление британской, американской и русской традиции*. Воронеж, 1995.

³⁰ THOMAS, Jenny. *Meaning in Interaction: an Introduction to Pragmatics*. London; New York, 1995, p. 48.

³¹ THOMAS, footnote 3, p. 101.

As A. Tsui claims that a directive that does not give the addressee any option but to comply is even more face-threatening than a requestive and points out that forms, which typically realize requestives are often used instead of those, which typically realize directives³² as in the example *May I see your ticket please*.

Some other examples typical for English communication:

Ex. 5.1. *I'd like to ask the horns measure four* (conductor to the musicians).

Ex. 6.1. *Can I draw your attention to this table* (lecturer to the students).

Ex. 7.1. *Can I ask you to write down your answers?* (teacher to the pupils).

Ex. 8.1. *Would the following students please contact the department secretary about the examination* (on the notice board).

Ex. 9.1. *Can I have 5 slices of that ham?* (customer to the shop-assistant).

Ex. 10.1. *Could I have a bottle of champagne and two glasses right away delivered to room 2001* (visitor of the hotel to the waiter).

Ex. 11.1. *Would you mind popping down to the shop?* (mother to her son).

Ex. 12.1. *Can you give me a few minutes?* (supervisor to the student)

Ex. 13.1. *If you would like to follow me, we'll be going in through the main entrance* (guide to tourists)

Ex. 14.1. *Would you kindly stop smoking please. Thank you.* (bus driver to a passenger).

Ex. 15.1. *Would you like to pop your head back?* (hairdresser to the client),

Ex. 16.1. *Will you kindly open your bag?* (at the customs).

In all these examples the S has some power over the H in accordance with his/her status or

situation. It is obvious that the H (or Hearer) is not given any option and is supposed to comply with the S. Nevertheless the S tries to soften his/her command by putting it in a form, which provides illusion of an option.

Russian speakers in all these contexts would use a bare imperative as the use of a form, which offers a semantic option is not appropriate in situations, which do not offer any functional option. The imperative could be modified by the word 'please' (*pozhaluysta*), which transfers directives to requestives. In Russian the above phrases would be translated literally as follows:

Ex. 5.2. *Play measure four (please).*

Ex. 6.2. *Pay attention to this table (please).*

Ex. 7.2. *Write down your answers (please).*

Ex. 8.2. *Contact the department secretary about examination.*

Ex. 9.2. *Give me 5 slices of that ham (please).*

Ex. 10.2. *Bring a bottle of champagne and two glasses to room 2201 (please).*

Ex. 11.2. *Pop down to the shop (please).*

Ex. 12.2. *Wait a few minutes (please).*

Ex. 13.2. *Now let's go in through the main entrance.*

Ex. 14.2. *Stop smoking.*

Ex. 15.2. *Pop your head back, please.*

Ex. 16.2. *Open your bag (please).*

These examples confirm the observation of J. Thomas that "polite usage in Russian permits many more direct imperatives than does English", she points out that "transferred into English such direct imperatives, seem "brusque and discourteous"³³ (s. p.).

Power distance, which is typical for directives (in all the situations the S have some authority over the H), and higher level of solidarity allow the Russian S to be more direct and demanding

³² TSUI, footnote 23, p. 109.

³³ THOMAS, footnote 3, p. 102.

which is taken for granted and does not sound impolite.

4.2.3. Invitation

The general pragmatic meaning *I want you to do that* is to some extent characteristic of invitations as well. This SA demonstrates the same peculiarity. English speakers tend to give options to the H (as in Ex. 17.1.–18.1.), or at least they use formulas with semantic options (Ex. 19.1.–20.1.), while Russians do not use this politeness strategy. They express their intention in a direct way and prefer imperatives as in Ex. 17.2.–20.2.:

Ex. 17.1. *It would be nice to have tea together, but I am sure you are very busy*³⁴

Ex. 18.1. (e-mail invitation)

I was wondering if you would like to come over to me for a meal this Saturday evening. I know it's a fairly short notice. So please don't worry if you have other plans.

Ex. 19.1. *Just wondering, if you'd like to come over on Saturday. I'm having a small do for my birthday.*

Ex. 20.1. *I'm having a birthday party. Would you like to come?*

The English polite invitations (especially in Ex. 17.1. and Ex. 18.1.) would sound rather impolite and even derisive to the Russian ear and would trigger a negative response, since giving options in these situations is inappropriate and it could be interpreted as evidence of the Speaker's insincerity, rather than a demonstration of his/her respect for the Hearer. The usual Russian rendition of these invitations could be translated literally as follows:

Ex. 17.2. *Let's go out for coffee. Do you want?*

Ex. 18.2. *Please come to me for a meal this Saturday, will you? I'd be very glad to see you.*

Ex. 19.2. *I'm having a birthday party on Saturday. I'd like you to come.*

Ex. 20.2. *Come to my birthday party.*

Russian interlocutors would rather intensify their pressure on the H than give him / her options and soften the imposition in the above situations. Thus instead of saying *It would be nice to have tea together, but I am sure you are very busy* (Ex. 17.1.) which sounds more than strange to Russian speakers, they could say *Let's go out for coffee. Stop working. Relax. It's time to have a break.*

The observations given above were confirmed by the results of my empirical research which are shown in tables 1 and 2³⁵.

4.3. Some results of the empirical research

4.3.1. Strategies in commands

The data for my analysis came from a discourse questionnaire, which consisted of 4 situations requiring commands, and was filled by 80 English and 80 Russian students. In situation 1 the policeman was supposed to tell the driver to move up his car, in situation 2 the teacher wanted the pupils to open the book, in situation 3 the customer told the waiter to bring the menu and in situation 4 mother told her son to go to the shop. I consider all these situations as directives (commands) because they do not offer any pragmatic option to the H who is supposed to do what the S says.

The results of the experiment confirm the statement, that in situations where the H is supposed to do the act Russian speakers prefer direct utterances while the English tend to conceal their intention, using the formulas with semantic op-

³⁴ This example was taken from SCOLLON, Ron; SCOLLON, Suzanne. *Intercultural Communication: A Discourse Approach*. Oxford, 2001, p. 50.

³⁵ For detailed analysis see: ЛАРИНА, Татьяна. *Категория вежливости в английской и русской коммуникативных культурах*. Москва, 2003.

Table 1. English / Russian commands

№	Situations	English subjects			Russian subjects		
		Imperative %	Question %	Other %	Imperative %	Question %	Other
1	The policeman tells the driver to move up his car	12	34	54	62	1	37
2	The customer tells the waiter to bring the menu	0	98	2	60	40	0
3	The teacher tells the pupils to open the book	52	19	28	100	0	0
4	Mother tells her son to go to the shop	6	92	2	80	20	0

tions: *Would you mind moving it, please?* / *Would you please open your textbook?* / *Could you possibly go to the shop?* / *Could I see the menu, please?*

The data give interesting socio-cultural information and indicate how English / Russian speakers look upon their interlocutors and how much power they give them. The table shows that the Russian teacher has much more power than the English one. Though the English teacher uses imperatives quite often (52%), the Russian one does not use any other formulas but imperatives (100%). S/he is not supposed to give any options (even formal) to the students. Direct style of communication dominates.

In the family asymmetrical type of relations also prevails. Russian mothers use indirect utterances 4,6 times less frequently than English ones. Imperative model softened by *please* (*pozhaluysta*) is the most appropriate in this situation (80%): *Go to the shop, please* (*Shodi, pozhaluysta, v magazin*). English speakers on the contrary prefer interrogative utterances in this situation (92%), thus they demonstrate their respect to personal autonomy of the children: *Will you run down to*

the shop, please? / *Would you go down to the shop for me?* / *Could you possibly go to the shop?* / *Would you mind popping down to the shop?*

Interesting differences are seen in situation 2. The data show that English customers do not use imperatives addressing the waiter while Russian ones do it often (60%), demonstrating Power distance between them. *Bring the menu, please* (*Prinesite, pozhaluysta, menu*) is the most typical formula. On the other hand it is important to point out that besides the word *please* (*pozhaluysta*) the directive is modified by the *vous*-form which is expressed in the verb (*prinesi-te*). Another significant difference concerns the structure of interrogative utterances which are also used in this situation by Russians. In contrast to conventionalized English utterances (*Could I have the menu, please?* / *May I see the menu, please?*) which are Speaker-based, Russian formulas are mostly Hearer-oriented (*Could you bring us the menu, please?*), as the *point-of-you distancing* strategy is not typical for Russian system of politeness. English speakers on the contrary use it quite often to dissociate the Hearer from the discourse in order to minimize their imposition.

4.3.2. Strategies in invitations

For this speech act I chose 4 situations as follows:

1. You invite your friend to your birthday party.
2. You invite your friend to come round to you place.
3. Your Mother (Granny) invites you to come round to dinner.
4. You and your friends are going on an excursion and you invite your new colleague (classmate) to join you.

The result got from the questionnaire confirmed my observation concerning different strategies used by English and Russian speakers in this SA.

While inviting English speakers use Hearer-oriented interrogative models, wondering if the H is interested in accepting the invitation and giving him an option: *Would you like to come / Can you come / Are you free to come / Do you want to come* etc.

Russian speakers on the contrary use a lot of Speaker-based formulas, especially in situation 1, where they toll to 56% (they are not shown in table 2, as it is aimed at demonstrating the difference in using imperative in cultures in question): *I invite you / I want to invite you / I'd like to invite you / I want you to come* and even *I expect you (to come) / I'll be waiting for you*, which are more direct than performative formulas, as they eliminate any objections even hypothetical and just put the hearer before the fact (*I'm having a birthday party on Sunday. I expect you to come*).

Besides declarative models imperative is also very frequent in Russian invitation: in situation 1 it tolls to 24% (*Come to my birthday party / I'm having a birthday party next Saturday. Come*), in situations 2 and 3 over 70% of Russian subjects used imperative constructions. They could be translated literally as follows: *Come to me to have tea today / Come to me. I have not seen you for a long time / I have cooked a nice dinner. Come. / I have a tasty dinner today. Drop in.*

In order to sound more polite English speakers tend to use different strategies *modifying their imposition*. They use indirect Hearer-oriented constructions, interrogative models, indirect question with *I wonder*, past tense (*I was wondering*), modifiers (*just*), conditionals (*Would you like to come / Could you come*).

Russian speakers invite directly, they use strategies *intensifying their imposition*, eliminating any option, and demonstrating their strong desire to see the Hearer. Actually it is difficult to say whether in Russian culture invitation is a FTA and whether it should be perceived as imposition. I suggest that for Russian people invitation is a positive act. They have no doubt that the H would accept it with eagerness and would be happy to come. They invite persistently using performative (even explicit) and declarative models, which are Speaker-based, imperatives and intensifiers: *I invite you (Ya tebia priglasha-yu) / Come by all means (Prihodi obiazatel'no), No objections are accepted (Vozrazheniya ne priny-mayutsia)*. Thus they express their strong desire to see the H.

Only in situation 4, where the distance between the interlocutors is larger Russian speakers tend to use interrogative invitations, wondering if the H is interested in being invited: *We are going on an excursion, do you want to join us? (My edem na ekskursiyu. Ty hochesh poehat' s nami?)*. This peculiarity can be regarded as another confirmation of the fact that negative politeness is strongly associated with the level of distance between interlocutors. In this situation Russian speakers did not use the direct imperative, instead 32% of them used constructions starting with *Let's (Let's go on excursion together. – Davayte po-edem vmeste na ekskursiyu / Poedemte s nami na ekskursiyu)* which is also quite a direct form of inducement.

Table 2. *English / Russian invitations*

№	Situations	English subjects			Russian subjects		
		Imperative %	Question %	Other %	Imperative %	Question %	Other %
1	You invite your friend to your birthday party	0	78	22	22	20	58
2	You invite your friend to come round	10	76	14	46	22	32
3	Your Mother (Granny) invites you to come round to dinner	12	84	4	74	6	20
4	You are going on an excursion and invite your new colleague (classmate) to join you	0	88	12	0	62	38

5. Summary

The asymmetry of social relationships and differences in cultural values gives an indication of how to understand differences in the politeness systems as they are clearly reflected in the way people use the language in their interaction.

In intercultural communication it is necessary to proceed from the assumption that being direct does not always mean being impolite.

The preference for conventional indirectness and elaboration in negative strategies, which is characteristic not only for formal occasions, but prevails in everyday encounters, reflects the importance of individual autonomy in English culture. To this end English communicators use negative politeness strategies more often than Russians, for whom treating their Hearer in a direct way is conventionally acceptable.

For Russian communication because of the relatively traditional short distance between indi-

viduals, negative strategies are less typical. Direct style prevails.

The English seem to place a higher value on privacy, cultural norms demand a more distant system of behaviour. In Russian culture people are more available to each other, which implies less social distance and a smaller personal preserve.

Another reason is Power distance which is higher in Russian communication and in asymmetrical situations (parents – children, teachers – pupils etc.) allows those who have more rights to be more direct. In English communication those who are higher treat the subordinate as their equal emphasizing the cultural value of equality.

Communicative strategies dictate the choice of language means. Imperative utterances which are broadly used in Russian communication do not indicate to impoliteness of speakers. Polite usage in Russian permits many more direct imperatives than English does.

Culturally-specific politeness strategies form culturally distinct interactional communicative styles. In interpersonal communication English style is indirect in comparison with Russian one, it can be called Hearer-oriented. The main emphasis is put on the form of the utterance and on softening the imposition. Russian interlocutors are more concerned about the meaning rather than the form. They express their intention in a more direct way. Russian style of interpersonal communication is direct can be called message-oriented.

The success of intercultural communication

greatly depends on the understanding and appropriate use of politeness strategies. Although individuals may have their own personal styles of communication, personal values reflect group values to a great extent. The comparative analysis of English and Russian politeness systems demonstrates the fact that, despite stereotypes in the popular consciousness, it is not legitimate to classify one linguistic group as more or less polite than the other; each is equally polite in their own way. Differences in politeness systems reflect differences in social relationships and are determined by culture-specific values.

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WARTOŚCI KULTURALNE I GRZECZNOŚĆ NEGATYWNA W JĘZYKACH ANGIELSKIM I ROSYJSKIM

Streszczenie

Grzeczność jest zjawiskiem uniwersalnym, a jednocześnie zdeterminowanym kulturowo. Tradycyjnie określa się ją jako szacunek i uwagę dla innych osób. W aspekcie międzykulturowym określenie to nie jest jednak właściwe, gdyż pojęcia grzeczności, szacunku i uwagi są rozumiane w różny sposób, a wyrazy te mają nawet różne znaczenia. W niniejszej pracy grzeczność jest rozumiana jako zachowanie strategiczne, system strategii komunikacyjnych zdeterminowanych kulturowo i silnie zrytualizowanych, do którego funkcji należy zwiększenie harmonijnego współdziałania i zmniejszenie możliwości wystąpienia konfliktu. Niniejsze badanie zostało oparte na teorii grzeczności P. Browna i S. Levinsona (1978, 1987), przedstawiającej skuteczny mechanizm rozumienia zachowania komunikacyjnego rozmówców, jednak najwięcej uwagi poświęcono zasadniczym różnicom w strategiach wyrażania grzeczności negatywnej w językach angielskim i rosyjskim oraz próbie ich wyjaśnienia

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KULTŪRINĖS VERTYBĖS IR NEIGIAMAS MANDAGUMAS ANGLŲ IR RUSŲ KALBOSE

Santrauka

Mandagumo reiškiny yra universalus ir kartu veikiamas kultūros. Tradiciškai jis yra apibrėžiamas kaip pagarba ir dėmesys kitiems. Bet tarpkultūrinio aspekto šis apibrėžimas netinka, nes mandagumo, pagarbos ir dėmesio sąvokos yra skirtingai suprantamos, o ir patys žodžiai turi skirtingas reikšmes. Šiame darbe mandagumas yra suvokiamas kaip strateginis elgesys, kultūros apspręstų ir labai ritualizuotų komunikacinių strategijų sistema, kurios funkcijos yra harmonizuoti bendravimą ir sumažinti konflikto galimybę. Tyrimas yra grindžiamas P. Browno ir S. Levinsono mandagumo teorija (1978, 1987), kuri pateikia efektyvų kalbėtojų komunikacinio elgesio supratimo mechanizmą, tačiau didžiausias dėmesys skiriamas esminiams strateginiams anglų ir rusų kalbų skirtumams reiškiant neigiamą mandagumą ir bandymui paaiškinti tuos skirtumus socialine organizacija ir kultūrinėmis vertybėmis. Straipsnyje pateikiami empiriniai duomenys apie tokius kalbos aktus kaip liepimas ir pakvietimas. Lyginamoji analizė

poprzez różnice w organizacji społecznej i wartościach kulturalnych. W artykule zostały przedstawione dane empiryczne dotyczące takich aktów mowy jak rozkaz i zaproszenie. Analizę porównawczą przeprowadzono na podstawie obserwacji etnograficznych, kwestionariuszy i wywiadów.

SŁOWA KLUCZE: komunikacja międzykulturowa, język i kultura, wartości kulturalne, grzeczność, opcja semantyczna, opcja pragmatyczna, rozkaz, prośba, zaproszenie.

atlikta remiantis etnografiniu stebėjimu, klausimynais ir interviu.

REIKŠMINIAI ŽODŽIAI: tarpkultūrinė komunikacija, kalba ir kultūra, kultūrinės vertybės, mandagumas

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