

## **ADDRESS FORMS AND WELL-WISHING FORMS IN AMERICAN AND RUSSIAN COMMUNICATIVE CULTURES**

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### **Abstract**

The paper deals with both address forms and wishes in American and Russian linguocultures. It is evident that for effective intercultural communication the knowledge of language is not enough. Nevertheless, there are some rules which are shared by the majority of the cultural community and form a communicative ethnostyle (Larina 2015) distinguishing one communicative culture from the another one. One of the main reasons for failures in intercultural communication can be ignorance and misunderstanding of the peculiarities of the communicative behavior of the interlocutor. This is due to the fact that the representatives of different linguistic cultures not only speak different languages, but also use the language differently: in the same type of communicative situations, they perform different communicative actions, guided by different communicative strategies.

This paper studies the problem of cultural impact on address forms and well-wishing in American and Russian linguocultures and shows the comparative study of these linguocultures. We draw on G. Hofstede's cultural dimensions (1991), politeness theory (Brown and Levinson 1987, Leech 2014, Watts 2003), Intercultural pragmatics (Kecskes 2014, Wierzbicka 1991/2003) and address forms theory (Braun 1988, Clyne, Norrby & Warren 2009 and others). The data has been obtained through observation, questionnaires and interviews. This article represents both the results of the research and analyzes the use of address forms in AmE and Russian and well-wishing forms in different communicative situations.

The study focuses on the main tendencies which show lingvocultural impact on the use of address forms and well-wishing forms. As the result the effective communication is possible due to the proper usage of forms according to sociocultural peculiarities of the interlocutor.

**Keywords:** Address forms, Well-wishing forms, American English, the Russian language, Culture, Intercultural communication

"Address forms and well-wishing forms in American and Russian communicative cultures"

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

In recent decades, the interest in the problem of intercultural communication and the peculiarities of communicative behavior of the representatives of different cultures has increased greatly. The representatives not only exchange information in the process of communication, but the interlocutors' relations with each other are also demonstrated, which are expressed by various means.

Both address forms and well-wishing forms show the speaker's attitude to the addressee. The choice of address forms and well-wishing forms is determined by social and emotional context (status, age, the level of intimacy, etc). The choice of proper address forms is important for successful communication both between the representatives of the same culture and the representatives of another culture. The wishes reflect not only the peculiarities of the holidays in different cultures, but also the national peculiarities of communication.

This paper investigates address forms and wishes of the Russian and American communicative cultures. The corpus of requests, compiled during ethnographic observation, interviews with speakers of Russian and American culture, as well as attracting data from secondary sources, served as the research material. Our task was to highlight situations of the most frequent use of wishes, to determine their pragmatic significance and function and to consider wishes in the aspect of the theory of politeness, and also to try to explain their specificity through cultural characteristics. The study focuses on the usage of address forms in American and Russian communicative cultures. The aims and interdisciplinary approach to their solution determine the novelty of this study.

## **2. POLITENESS STRATEGIES, ADDRESS FORMS AND WELL-WISHING FORMS**

One of the most important components of successful communication is politeness; it allows you to maintain an atmosphere of mutual understanding and harmony during communication and expresses a positive attitude of the interlocutors towards each other. The category of politeness is particularly interesting to researchers, despite its universality, each culture has its own understanding of politeness and politeness strategies vary depending on the culture (4; five).

Considered from the standpoint of politeness of various speech acts (RA) seems to be relevant, since knowledge of the purpose for which a particular RA is performed, what its function and pragmatic meaning helps an adequate understanding of the communicative intentions of the representative of foreign culture and the prevention of communicative failures. Moreover, the ethnocultural specificity of speech acts is a vivid evidence of the reflection of culture in communication and the manifestation of ethnocultural identity in it (Besemeres & Wierzbicka 2007; four; Leech & Larina, 2014; Leontovich 2017).

Address forms are important for effective communication as they show immediately the attitude towards the interlocutor. Being universal, politeness system has a great impact on the usage of address forms having culturally specific characteristics. According to Fitch, address forms show personal identities, define relationships between the interlocutors (close/distant, peers/rank-differentiated, personal professional etc). (Fitch, 1998).

The choice of address forms clearly shows socio-cultural background. According to Hofstede's Cultural dimensions (1984, 1991) (individualism/collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity/femininity) American culture is highly individualistic and is characterized by small power distance (PD) index (40), which is a little bit higher than other Anglo-Saxon cultures have (Australia – 36, England – 35 etc) while Russian culture is characterized by high PD (93). American culture is characterized by low uncertainty avoidance (46), which is higher than in England (35) but lower than in Australia. Besides Russian culture has high index of uncertainty avoidance (95).

One of the interesting objects of study is a speech act (RA), which we consider from the standpoint of linguistic pragmatics, intercultural pragmatics, discourse analysis (Alba-Juez 2016; Gladkova, Larina, Wierzbicka 2018; Kecskes 2013; Wierzbicka et al.). And theories of politeness (4; five; Brown & Levinson 1987; Leech, Larina et al.)

The speech act is a central category of pragmatics. It involves the performance of speech actions, the purpose of which is the impact of the speaker on the listener. J. Austin, who introduced the concept of a speech act into linguistic theory, noted that "to say something means to commit a certain act" (8, p. 27). Similarly, J. Searle asserts that "the basic unit of linguistic communication is not a symbol, not a word, not a sentence, or even a specific copy of a symbol, word or sentence, but the production of this particular instance during the performance of a speech act" (Searle 1986:151).

Such terms as speech act and illocutionary act are often used as synonymous, as they seem the

components of the speech act. The functions of the speech act are called illocutive forces. This concept expresses not only the purpose of the speech act, but also the way to achieve it, its intensity, degree of impact on the addressee, conditions of usage, etc. This implies the classification of speech acts, among which are representatives, directives, commissions, expressive and declarative. The wish refers to expressive speech acts. According to N.A. Trofimova, it "expresses the speaker's goodwill towards the addressee" (Trofimova 2008: 72). Wishes contribute to establishing or maintaining contact with the interlocutor, i.e. performs a phatic function and regulates interpersonal relations of communicants.

Nowadays RA is widely studied in different cultures. These works are based on the material of the Russian language (Vdovina 2007), the Kazakh language (Meirmanova 2009), German (Trofimova 2013), and the languages of the peoples living in the Russian Federation in Buryat (Babuev 1994), Kalmyk (Mikhailov 2013), Darginsky (Radjabova 2002) and others. These scientific studies are interesting because they show how the wishes reflect the mentality, religion, everyday life of people, cultural features, including communication. In these papers, the authors present a classification of wishes. It is noted that it is difficult to classify the wishes according to a strictly defined pattern in practice due to differences in the way of life of peoples. V.V. Dementieva indicated that the wishes were considered in detail as speech acts (N.A. Rannykh, D.F. Komarov), besides scientists are analyzing the goodwill (V.V. Pleshakova) and evil wishes (E.V. Vlasova).

### 3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The data were collected through interviews, ethnographic observations, questionnaires, which included different social contexts focused on everyday communication with strangers.

The aim of the study was to analyze the usage of well-wishing forms and address forms in American and Russian communicative cultures. The given situations were given in order to determine symmetrical and asymmetrical relationships between interlocutors. The corpus of requests, compiled during ethnographic observation, interviews with speakers of Russian and American culture, as well as attracting data from secondary sources, served as the research material. Our task was to highlight situations of the most frequent use of wishes, to determine their pragmatic significance and function and to consider wishes in the aspect of the theory of politeness, and also to try to explain their specificity through cultural characteristics.

Our research was based on G.Hofstede's Cultural dimensions (1984, 1991), Politeness theory (Brown & Levinson 1987, Leech 2014) and Intercultural pragmatics (Kecskes 2014, Wierzbicka 1991, 2003).

### 4. DATA ANALYSIS

The wishes reflect not only the peculiarities of the holidays in different cultures, but also the national peculiarities of communication in general, and above all those that are dominant. I.A. Sternin defines the dominant features of communication of a people as features of communication, which are manifested among representatives of a given people in all or most of communicative situations, regardless to the subject of communication, the composition of the communists, etc. (one).

Americans try to build communication so as not to affect personal topics, not to violate the "privacy" of the interlocutor. It is believed that every person has the right to the inviolability of his personal life, and it is impossible to touch upon the issues that may deprive him of this immunity.

While addressing a stranger the representatives of the American culture use zero address forms (90%). They, as well as the representatives of the British culture generally use attention-getters "Excuse me"

[1] **Excuse me.** I would like to know how to get to the bus station.

[2] **Excuse me!** I'm looking for the bus station.

[3] **Excuse me.** Could you please show me how to get to the bus station?

According to our study only 18% of American speakers used utterances containing any nominal address form. They were used while addressing an old man.

[4] **Excuse me, Sir!** I'm looking for the bus station. Would you be so kind to help me?

[5] **Excuse me, Sir.** I would like to know how I can get to the nearest bus station.

Only 8 % of American speakers used zero informal address form while addressing a stranger who is older. Low figures show the maintenance of a distance when referring to a stranger who is older.

[6] **Hi**, is there a bus station near here.

[7] **Hi**, where is the bus station?

The most frequent (98%) address form used in the Russian culture, while addressing a stranger, is zero address form (Извините – “Excuse me”)

[8] **Извините**, Вы не подскажете? ( Excuse me, )

Secular communication in the American communicative culture represents mainly the exchange of brief emotional phrases, without the unfolding or deepening of thought.

The word "*may*" used for a polite request, for example, when a child asks its mother

*"May I have seconds please?"*.

On the wedding card, the newlyweds wish happiness on the special day of their life

*"May this special day bring you memories"*.

In a speech dedicated to graduates, you can hear the wishes to find your goal in life

*"May you find your purpose"*

or find out the price of hard work

*"May you always know the meaning of hard work."*

However, such wishes are not common in everyday life, they are formal, sentimental and are used in very important moments of life. To express wishes of good and good luck to family or friends, the less formal formulas are used:

*"I wish or good luck",*

*"Hey best of luck for that exam"*.

Wishes In The USA Are Accepted In The Following Cases: Day, Birth, Holiday, Graduation From School (University). In These Cases, Good Wishes In The Form Of "Happy" Are Appropriate. Oral Requests Are Allowed Only In Friendly Communication. Communication Of Friends Familiar From The Point Of View Of An American Should Be Easy And Enjoyable For Both Parties And Not Violate, Despite A Certain Degree Of Closeness, The Limits Of What Is Permitted, Not Be A Burden.

It Should Be Remembered That Everything In The Process Of Communication Depends On The Individual. There Is Another Feature Of The Russian Mentality, Which, According To N.I. Ufimtseva, Is The Constant Desire To Evaluate The Other And Point Out To Him The Result Of His Assessment, As Well As The Desire To Get A Similar Assessment In Relation To Himself (4). This Can Explain The Existence In The Russian Culture Of Such A Large Number Of Wishes For Various Reasons.

In Russian Speech Discourse, As A Rule, Non-Standard (Often Non-Clicked) Expanded Expressions Are Used; While In The American Wishes Are Often Clichéd.

In the Russian language, cliché wishes are used in the following situations:

- 1) In case of insufficient acquaintance between communicants;
- 2) When the speaker knows that the addressee is fully aware of the speaker's attitude towards him and does not need additional assurances of sympathy from the speaker;
- 3) When the speaker does not have enough time to prepare an individualized wish, but the implementation of the speech act of the wish is inevitable and necessary;
- 4) In situations of official communication (6).

Some authors have noted a preference for informal communication formal and business in Russian communicative behavior, which is also manifested in formal situations (7; eight).

Russian official wishes also contain wishes for the family:

*I wish you successful work in a responsible government post.*

*Health and happiness to you and your loved ones.*

*I sincerely wish you and your family, dear IM, good health, success and well-being.*

Moreover, it should be noted that the addressing of wishes and congratulations to the family of the interlocutor (s) is considered the norm and is widely used in the official business environment.

However, it is necessary to take into account the fact that the reason for expressing wishes in a particular situation of verbal communication causes wishes only on the one hand, and on the other hand, the social characteristics of communicators have a great influence on them.

Speech activity, like any other social activity, is governed by certain rules, which, in turn, are governed by the norms of speech etiquette.

In each individual situation, communicators have a limited number of behavioral responses that can individually vary depending on the context. The range of such behavioral operations is established and limited by the society itself, since the basic patterns that determine the course of actions of members of the linguistic collective are not interpersonal, but transpersonal, that is, social in nature.

Observing the rules of etiquette, we first of all have the opportunity to express our neutral or respectful attitude towards the interlocutor, which is extremely important in establishing contact and its further maintenance.

It follows that the functional specificity of units of speech etiquette is that through etiquette forms information is transmitted only about the very situation of communication. It is this that serves for the regulation of communication, because through this information a correspondence is established between the ideas of the participants of communication about the distribution of roles in it, as well as about the tone of the communication itself.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper we have analyzed address forms and well-wishing forms in American and Russian communicative cultures. According to the obtained results we have characterized and differentiated address forms and well-wishing forms in two different cultures.

We have presented the results taking into account cultural norms and politeness theories which need more detailed and complex research and analysis.

We tried to analyze peculiarities in the usage of address forms and well-wishing forms and to reveal peculiarities through socio-cultural context. The results of our research show how address forms and well-wishing forms are influenced by culture, community and social context.

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