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Friendship in Russian and American cultures.

The problem of “Difference in Russian and American Friendship cultures” is not only an urgent issue but it is of great interest for everybody nowadays. The fact is that at present time the relationship between different countries leaves much to be desired. For solving this problem it is very important to communicate with people from different countries as much as possible to discuss improving the present situation.

The purpose of this article is analyzing the items in Russian and American culture which do not coincide, thus leading to misunderstanding and mistrustful relations.

The word *friend*, has different meaning in these two countries. Americans believe that every person who is not an enemy can be a friend. An American can become acquainted with a complete stranger who he or she begins to consider a friend after that. American friendships however center around colleagues in an office, neighbors in a residential community, or participants in recreational activities. Americans try to understand a deep position of their friends’ troubles. A friend in need may be a friend indeed, but an American is more likely to refer a needy friend to a professional for help rather than become involved in the friend’s personal troubles. [4]

But Russians have another position, for them friendship is all-encompassing and connotes a special relationship.

In Russian language there are different words for “friend” (*drug*, pronounced “*droog*”) and “acquaintance” (*znakomy*), these words should not be misused. A *drug* is more like a “bosom buddy,” somebody to trust, confide in, and treat like a member of the family. Such friendships are not made easily or quickly, it takes time to develop, but when it is made and nurtured, a Russian friendship will embrace the entire person. Russians will ask friends for time and favors that many Westerners would regard as impositions.

In Russia people rely on a close network of family, friends, and on workers as protection against the risks and unpredictability of daily life. In the village commune, Russians felt safe and secure in the company of family and neighbors. Today, in the city, they continue to value familiar faces and mistrust those they do not know.

Visitors who know a Russian from a previous encounter will have a big advantage. First-time travelers to Russia are advised to ask friends who already know the individuals they will be meeting to put in a good word for them in advance of their visits. And ideally the same traveler should return for subsequent visits and not be replaced by someone else from his or her firm or organization.

Despite its vast size, Russia is run on the basis of personal connections. In the workplace and private life, Russians depend on those they know—friends who owe their favors, former classmates, fellow military veterans, and others whom they trust.

The friendship network also extends to the business world. Business managers, short of essential parts or materials, will use their personal contacts to obtain the necessary items. Provide a spare part or commodity for someone, and receive something in return. Without such contacts, production would grind to a halt.

Westerners who want something from their government will approach the responsible official, state their case, and assume (or hope) that law and logic will prevail. Russians in the same situation, mistrustful of the state and its laws, will approach friends and acquaintances and ask them to put in a good word with the official who will decide.

Americans tend to be informal in their speech—candid, direct, and without the rituals, polite forms, and the indirect language common to many other cultures. Russians welcome and appreciate such informal talk but usually only after a certain stage in the relationship has been reached. [3]

Секция 12. Межкультурная коммуникация

Addressing an American or Briton presents a dilemma for Russians. Their language has equivalents for “Mr.” (*Gospodin*) and “Mrs.” (*Gospozha*).

Like most European languages, Russian has two forms of you. The more formal *vy* is used between strangers and acquaintances and in addressing people of higher position. The informal *ty*, akin to the old English *thou* is reserved for friends, family members, and children. [1,2]

Which of these forms should foreigners use in addressing Russians? That will depend on the state of the relationship, and it may differ in each case. When in doubt, let the Russians decide, and follow their lead.

Carry a good supply of business cards (*vizitnaya*, in Russian, from “visiting cards”). Have them printed in English on one side and Russian (in Cyrillic) on the other. Be sure to include your title, academic degrees, and anything else that might impress.

In conclusion, I would say though there is something in common in interpretation of such notions as friendship and relationship in Russian and American cultures nevertheless we must assume that there is a great number of differences. I see the solving of this problem is in considering the differences in our cultures and following the traditions of the country whose people you deal with.

The list of literature

1. Christoph Bertran. Europe in the Balance: Securing the Peace Won in the Cold War. W., 1997.
2. Christoph Bertran. Europe in the Balance..., London, 1997., June.
3. «American Public Opinion and U.S. Foreign Policy 1997». Ed. by John Reily. Chicago, 1997.
4. «Statistical Abstract of the United States 1996». W., 1997.