

Cross-Cultural View on Communicative Behaviours of English, German, Uzbek and Russian Language Speakers

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the communicative behavior of native speakers of English, German, Uzbek, and Russian. Through descriptive and comparative analyses of speech acts such as "address," "greeting," and "establishing contact," the study reveals the distinctive national characteristics and communicative behaviors of representatives from various linguistic cultures.

Keywords: Intercultural communication, communicative behavior, linguistic patterns, cultural influence, comparison, language universals and differences.

INTRODUCTION

In the conditions of strengthening the intercultural educational paradigm the matters of communicative behavior become relevant for study from pragmatic and linguo didactic points of view.

Ethnocultural communicative behavior has been shown to vary significantly across cultural groups. It was observed by Pekerti (2003) that East Asians tend to exhibit sociocentric communication behavior, whereas Anglo-European New Zealanders (Pakeha) display idiocentric behavior. These differences pose challenges in intercultural interactions, often requiring additional time for task completion. The pivotal role of culture in shaping communication dynamics has been

emphasized by Farah (1997), highlighting the importance of shared knowledge of linguistic codes and socio-cultural rules. Building upon this framework, a communication and cultural code approach to ethnonational conflicts was proposed by Ellis (2003), emphasizing the influence of culturally-based communication codes on conflict resolution. Additionally, gender differences in communication predispositions were identified by Lin (2003), with men reporting higher apprehension about intercultural communication, greater ethnocentrism, and less willingness to communicate intercultural. Collectively, these studies underscore the intricate interplay of culture, communication, and conflict resolution.

The complex interplay of verbal and nonverbal elements in the communicative behavior of Uzbek individuals was highlighted by Sabitova (2020). It was found that nonverbal communication, including facial expressions, spatial positioning, and emotional states, significantly enhances the communication process. This is further supported by Abidova (2023), who emphasized the importance of gratitude as a key component of verbal communication. Various types of oral communication acts in the Uzbek language and their societal significance were discussed by Saparbaeva (2020), further illustrating the multifaceted nature of communicative behavior in the Uzbek context.

The purpose of this article is to provide a contrastive description of the characteristics of communicative behavior among Uzbek, Russian, German, and English-speaking peoples. By identifying both general and ethnospecific features of their communication, this study aims to deepen the understanding of sociocultural relations and cultural values within linguistic and cultural communities. "Communicative behavior" is defined as a fundamental component of cultural identity and national behavior, contributing to a scientific understanding of the culture of the people.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this study, we employ a contrastive analysis methodology based on the two-way principle: English – Russian – Uzbek –

English – German; Russian/Uzbek – English – German. We recognize the evolving landscape of cross-cultural communication, where linguistic proficiency alone is insufficient for effective interaction. Mastery of ethnospecific norms and communication strategies is equally essential.

The chosen model for describing communicative behavior emphasizes verbal and non-verbal aspects, as well as social symbolism, guided by the principle of consistency. Within this framework, we adopt a contrastive approach, systematically comparing native communicative behavior with all possible expressions of similar meaning in the cultures under examination.

This contrasting principle enables us to identify and describe both commonalities and divergences in communicative behavior across the studied cultural groups. Additionally, it allows us to categorize the manifestations of national specificity using a range of descriptors: very high, high, noticeable, reduced, low, and absence.

Our focus is on everyday culture, manifested in the behavior and communication of individuals. Drawing on the operational definition of culture as "a way of life passed on from generation to generation" (Tubbs & Moss 1987), we acknowledge the inherent complexity of culture while prioritizing its practical utility for describing and shaping individual cultural behaviors.

To accurately delineate dominant cultural features among Russian, Uzbek, German, and American peoples, we draw upon established methods and techniques previously employed in studies of communicative behavior (Prokhorov & Sternin 2006; Essay on American communicative behavior 2001).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Understanding national character and communicative behavior

Understanding the communicatively relevant features of national characters is crucial for effective intercultural communication. In Table 1, we examine the main characteristics of the national characters of Uzbek, Russian, German, and American peoples and their implications for communicative behavior.

Table 1

Uzbek	Russian	German	Americans
<p>Characterized by hospitality, respect for elders, the concept of "ycra," patriotism, and attachment to family, among others. Uzbek culture values mobility, cohesion, and tolerance, while also demonstrating a tendency towards gullibility and naivety. Moreover, Uzbek communicative behavior is influenced by a belief in the power of words and respect for religion. These traits influence verbal and non-verbal communication patterns, shaping interactions within Uzbek society.</p>	<p>Notable features include conciliarity, sincerity of social relations, contemplative thinking, and a sense of historical patience. Everyday impulsiveness, imprudence, and a disregard for the average are also observed traits. Moreover, Russians exhibit a strong desire for justice and national self-criticism, contributing to their communicative style emphasizing sincerity and responsibility. (Formanovskaya 1998; Wierzbicka 1993)</p>	<p>Known for their seriousness (Emsthafi), adherence to rules, efficiency, organization, discipline, neatness, and punctuality. Germans uphold the concept of "Ordnung" (order) and the "categorical imperative," while also grappling with feelings of fear (Angst) and striving for perfection. These traits reflect in German communicative behavior, emphasizing organization and punctuality in interactions. (Hymes, 1977)</p>	<p>Characterized by individualism, time efficiency, practicality, and a belief in progressiveness. Americans value their exclusivity, demonstrating determination, social mobility, and a commitment to equality. Optimism and a hands-off approach to private life are also prevalent. These traits influence American communication styles, emphasizing efficiency and equality in interpersonal exchanges. (Hirsh 1987; Langacker 1994; Visson 2005)</p>

While individuals may not universally exhibit all listed traits, they are significant cultural markers shaping communicative behavior. As noted by Sternin, socio-historical and psychological conditions play a role in the manifestation of these characteristics (Sternin 2006).

Understanding the influence of national characters on communication, we turn to standard communicative situations that shed light on verbal and non-verbal manifestations of behavior: Establishing communication contact, which includes addressing, greeting, acquaintance, and others.

These situations form the basis for analyzing communicative behavior among the Uzbek, Russian, German, and American peoples, offering insights into the complexities of cross-cultural interaction.

In this study, we will examine the initial three recognized communicative scenarios as addressing, greetings, and initial contact communicative interaction.

Establishing communication contact: Addressing

Establishing communicative contact involves the act of addressing, which is a frequently employed communicative element aimed at capturing the interlocutor's attention to initiate interaction. The selection of addressing forms is contingent upon various communicative parameters such as the relational dynamics between participants (whether symmetrical or asymmetrical), their socio-psychological proximity, the prevailing communication setting, and additional contextual factors (Pekerti 2003).

Uzbeks demonstrate a distinctive approach to interpersonal communication, often refraining from unnecessary communication with strangers, and are perceived by representatives of other nationalities as less sociable. In their communication practices, Uzbeks constantly use expressions of respect that emphasize the status of a person, in particular, using terms of kinship in vocative roles. Conversely, in Russian culture, such family terms (for example, бабуль (babul'-grandma), дед (ded-grandpa), отец (otets-father)) are mainly used in colloquial speech, and not as signs of respect outside the family context ("Russian and Chinese communicative behavior" 2002). Addresses like sister and brother are not used outside the family sphere of communication by Americans. But we face addressing like BRO – typically used to address a male and SIS – female equivalent in informal conversation especially between

young people. As well as boy, young *fella* (fellow) young fella (fellow), mate – only man to man, *luv* (love), buddy, stranger – In informal communication: Young man, could you help me with my bags, please. Moreover the addressing Bro (Бро) is transferred to Russian language as well (Prokhorov & Sternin 2006).

Moreover, unlike Russians, Uzbeks strictly adhere to norms prohibiting referring to people using gender-specific terms (such as "woman" and "man"), considering such practices to be impolite and disrespectful. Another contrasting aspect concerns professional titles; While Russians generally avoid referring to people by their profession, Uzbeks make an exception with the term *ustoz* (teacher), which is used with reverence in artistic and religious communities. Also in communications, such traits of national character as respect and devotion to religion are realized, which in turn is expressed in the presence of such an address as *Khuzhaka* – an address to a man with the signs of having completed a pilgrimage, *Oksakol* – elder” (literally: white-bearded, gray-bearded) which is completely absent in the addresses of Russian-speaking peoples (Saparbaeva 2020).

In Germany and the USA, customary forms of address include *Herr* and Mr./Sir - for men and *Frau* and Mrs./Madam - for women, respectively. In Russian society, there is a gender-neutral form of address for women in business communication – by position, a common form of address for men and women in informal communication is a reference by name and patronymic.

Germans emphasize significantly - titles, particularly in professional contexts where "Herr Doktor" (Mr. Doctor) is added to doctors and individuals holding doctoral degrees, a practice less common in Russian and Uzbek linguistic traditions. In American addressing titles are not obligatory and can be replaced by Name: My name is Dr. Sarah Smyth. You may call me either Sarah or Dr. Smyth. An intriguing form of address in German, "Gnadige" (e.g. was befehlengnädige Frau? – yes, Madam? or What can I do for you, Madam?), equivalent to "милостивая – merciful" or "высокочитимая – highly respected" in Russian etiquette, underscores a profound level of respect, organization, and discipline among Germans. Conversely, in Russian, this

address, as noted in the *Explanatory Dictionary of the Russian Language* edited by D. N. Ushakov (1935-1940), is antiquated and historically associated with formal addresses such as "Милостивый государь – Gracious Sovereign" or "Милостивая государыня – Gracious Empress" used in official pre-revolutionary contexts.

In American communication, formal nominative and appellative formulas are typically eschewed when addressing a group of people. Rather than employing formal titles such as "ladies and gentlemen," Americans often opt for a straightforward greeting like "good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen." Both empirical observations and academic research highlight a distinctive attribute of Americans—their ease in engaging with strangers. This trait is particularly evident in how Americans establish connections for cooperation and communication. Contrasting with the norms prevalent in Uzbek and Russian cultures, Americans demonstrate a notable indifference to "embarrassment," exhibiting confidence and a sense of familiarity in diverse social contexts.

For instance, when encountering a stranger, an American is likely to extend a handshake confidently and initiate the conversation with a warm greeting. The anticipated response is generally brief and positive, aligning with American social conventions. Furthermore, American communication is characterized by a minimal reliance on formal address formulas, favoring a more informal approach when addressing a group.

Additionally, the use of names in American addresses contrasts sharply with Russian practices. Russians employ a wide range of name variations (e.g. Alexander, Sasha, Sashenka) depending on the speaker's mood, relationship with the addressee, and other factors. For instance, a mother might affectionately call her son "Сашенька" *Sashenka*, while his friends call him "Саша" *Sasha*. This practice allows for nuanced expressions of familiarity and affection. Moreover, with the advent of digital communication, Russians frequently use text-based greetings such as "Привет" *Privet* and various emojis to convey greetings and emotions. It's common to see messages like "Привет 😊 Как дела?" (Hi 😊 How are you?) in text

conversations, reflecting a broader shift towards informal and versatile modes of communication.

Conversely, in American addresses, typically only one name from the existing paradigm is used. For example, if the abbreviated form "Alex" is adopted instead of the full name "Alexander," it becomes universally accepted by family members, friends, colleagues, and others. This name often becomes a tradition, sometimes entirely supplanting the official name, as exemplified by figures such as Bill Clinton and Tony Blair.

Greetings

In Uzbek culture, greetings reflect the "vertical" hierarchy of relations as defined by I. A. Sternin. This hierarchy emphasizes oppositions such as "young-old," "man-woman," "friend-foe," and "familiar-unfamiliar" (Prokhorov & Sternin 2006). According to Uzbek etiquette, the youngest always greets the elder first, regardless of gender. For instance, a young person will greet an older person, one person will greet two, a walker will greet a standing person, and an enterer will greet a seated person. The seated person must quickly stand to respond to the greeting, except for elderly individuals who, due to their respected age, are allowed to remain seated (Sabitova 2020).

Even today, Uzbeks strive to follow these traditions. A younger person greets an elder first, and if a young man is in a car, he must stop and get out of the car. To show respect, he should be the first to extend both hands and shake the elder's hand two or three times (Saparbaeva 2020). Uzbeks have a variety of greetings, such as:

- **Assalomualaykum:** This traditional greeting remains widely used, especially in formal or religious contexts, and when addressing someone unfamiliar or of higher status.
- **Salom:** A shortened and more casual version of "Assalomualaykum," often used among friends, peers, and acquaintances in informal settings.

- **Qalaysiz? or Qalay? (How are you?):** A common and informal inquiry into someone's well-being, often used among friends, family, and acquaintances.
- **Nima gap?:** A casual greeting meaning "What's up?" or "What's happening?"
- **Salom, qalaysiz?:** Combining the traditional greeting "Salom" with the common inquiry *Qalaysiz?* to create a personalized and friendly greeting, often used among peers and acquaintances.

Daughters-in-law bow to the elders in the family as a sign of greeting, receiving blessings in return. The wording of greetings also varies based on age and status. The Uzbek language includes polite variants of second-person pronouns: *siz* (singular) and *sizlar* (plural), which are translated into Russian by the single word “вы” (you), and their semantics are determined by context. Incorrect use of these pronouns is regarded as bad manners and can even lead to conflicts (Abidova 2023).

Phatic communication formulas in Uzbek such as “*Yakhshimisiz?* (Is everything going well with you?),” “*Ishlaryakhshimi?* (Are you doing well?),” and “*Oilangiztuzukmi?* (Is everything okay in your family?)” serve to establish rapport, express friendliness, and maintain social relationships (Sabitova 2020).

In Russian culture, greetings vary significantly in formality depending on the context and the relationship between interlocutors (Ellis 2003). Formal greetings such as *Здравствуйте* (*Zdravstvuyte*) and *Добрый день* (*Dobryy den'*) are common in professional settings and when addressing unfamiliar individuals. For instance, a student entering a professor's office might say, *Здравствуйте* (Hello). Informal greetings like *Привет* (*Privet*) and *Здорово* (*Zdorovo*) are used among friends and peers, reflecting a flexible approach to formality based on social context. A group of friends meeting at a café might greet each other with *Привет, ребята!* (Hey, guys!).

With digital communication, Russians frequently use text-based greetings such as *Привет* (*Privet*) and various emojis to convey greetings and emotions. It's common to see messages like

ПриветКакдела? (Hi How are you?) in text conversations (Farah 1997). Phatic communication formulas like “Какдела? (How are you?)” and “Чтонового? (What’s new?)” are much less common and usually reserved for close relationships after a significant period of separation.

In German culture, formal greetings such as *Guten Tag* are still widely used, especially in professional or formal settings, and when addressing someone unfamiliar (Hobday & Norbury 1999). A German employee might say, *Guten Tag, Herr Müller* (Good day, Mr. Müller) upon entering a meeting. *Guten Morgen* is used in the morning to wish someone a good morning, and *Guten Abend* is used in the evening. Informal greetings like *Hallo* and *Hi* are used among friends, peers, and acquaintances in informal settings. A student might greet a friend with "Hallo, wiegeht's?" (Hello, how are you?).

In digital communication, *Hallo* is often used in text messages, emails, or social media chats. Emojis and emoticons are also commonly used to convey greetings and emotions (Niemeier 1997). Phrases like *Hallo, wiegeht's?* (Hello, how are you?) combine a casual greeting with a common inquiry about someone's well-being, often used among friends and acquaintances.

In American communication, greetings are typically informal and egalitarian (“Essay on American Communicative Behavior” 2001). Americans are generally comfortable engaging with strangers, evident when someone walks into a coffee shop and says, "Hi, how's it going?" The expected response is brief and positive, like "Great, thanks for asking!" This practice aligns with American social norms favoring direct and amiable exchanges.

With the rise of digital communication, text-based greetings such as *Hey* or *Hi* are commonly used in messaging apps, social media, and emails. Emojis are often incorporated into digital greetings to convey emotion and tone, such as using 🙌 as a friendly greeting. Virtual greetings like "Good to see you" or "Nice to virtually meet you" have become more common with video calls (Fielder et al. 1990).

Informal greetings like "What's up?" or "How's it going?" remain popular, especially among younger generations in casual

settings. Phrases like "Hey, how are you?" or "What's going on?" are frequently used as casual greetings, often followed by a brief exchange of pleasantries. American phatic communication formulas like "How are you?" "How are you getting on?" and "What's new?" are conventional and semantically empty. It is assumed that the answer will be positive ("Fine," "Well," "Great," "I'm all right," "I'm very well," "I'm very well indeed") regardless of the actual state of the interlocutor (Guirdham 1999).

The hierarchical nature of Uzbek greetings, emphasizing respect and deference based on age and social status, contrasts sharply with the egalitarian approach in American greetings, which promotes a sense of equality and casual interaction. Both Russian and Uzbek greetings exhibit a higher degree of formality and context dependence compared to American greetings, particularly in professional and formal settings. The linguistic complexity of Russian and Uzbek greetings, with their multiple name variations and polite pronouns, contrasts with the simplicity of American naming conventions, allowing for a richer expression of social relationships and emotions in Russian and Uzbek interactions (Scollon & Scollon 2001). German greetings, while formal, also show flexibility in informal settings, similar to Russian practices but distinct from the American emphasis on uniform informality.

Understanding these differences enhances cross-cultural communication and provides insights into the societal values that shape interpersonal interactions in these diverse cultural contexts. Russian, similar to German, differentiates between formal and informal inquiries ("Какты?" vs. "Каквы?"). Uzbek inquiries like "Qalaysiz?" are formal but can be softened depending on context. American English generally uses the same phrases regardless of formality, relying on tone and context for formality. German and American English include casual inquiries like "Allesklar?" and "What's up?" Russian and Uzbek inquiries are more straightforward without the casual equivalents (Triandis 1994).

Initial contact

The process of initial contact in different cultures reveals significant differences in social norms and behaviors. This

section examines the distinctive approaches to initial contact in Uzbek, Russian, German, and American cultures, with a focus on the underlying values and etiquette that shape these interactions.

In Uzbek culture, initial contact is characterized by a reluctance to spontaneously initiate interactions. Uzbeks do not typically take the initiative to get to know each other but are highly responsive when approached with a question or request. They demonstrate a willingness to sacrifice their time to assist others (Abidova 2023).

Historically, Uzbeks did not verbally express their joy when meeting each other. The phrase *Tanishgandanxursandman* (glad to meet you) has long been part of the Uzbek language, but as a set expression, it may have solidified more recently due to global communication patterns and the introduction of modern polite expressions.

Asking about age during initial contact is common in Uzbek culture, as it allows for appropriate treatment based on age and status, helping individuals avoid losing face in front of others (Sabitova 2020). When making acquaintances, Uzbeks adhere to specific hierarchical norms: younger people, regardless of gender, are introduced to elders, and men introduce themselves to women. Elders can ask any questions to those presented, while the younger ones are deprived of this right. The Uzbek proverb *Kattanihurmatqil, kichikniizzatqil* (respect the elder, honor the younger) reflects the importance of showing respect to elders and honoring younger individuals during communication (Saparbaeva 2020).

In social gatherings, it is customary for Uzbeks not to immediately question guests, especially those who arrive unannounced. Guests are first offered tea, and only after some time does the host begin to talk about themselves and their family, prompting the guests to introduce themselves and explain the purpose of their visit. An Uzbek does not like to talk about himself in front of strangers, he waits for someone to introduce him to others for fear of not finding a “golden mean” (if you say a lot, they will decide that you are bragging; if little, they will think that there is nothing to say).

In Russian culture, expressions of joy during initial contact are well-established and can range from formal to informal. A formal expression might be *Очень рад познакомиться* (very pleased to meet you). Russians are more reserved about personal questions during initial contact, preferring to start with formal introductions and gradually moving to more personal topics (Prokhorov & Sternin 2006). The introduction procedure does not play a significant role in making acquaintances, and self-introduction is allowed.

German expressions of joy during initial contact are typically formal, reflecting a reserved yet polite demeanor. For example, *Es freut mich, Sie kennenzulernen* (it's a pleasure to meet you) is commonly used. Germans are more reserved with personal questions initially, focusing on neutral topics such as *Woher kommen Sie?* (where are you from?) (Gumperz 1982).

American greetings are generally casual and friendly. Phrases like "Nice to meet you" or "How's it going?" are common. Americans avoid personal questions early in the interaction, instead focusing on general topics like "What do you do?" (Farah 1997). Initial contact often starts with small talk, quickly moving to more personal topics if there is mutual interest. The concept of uninvited guests is generally unacceptable, and meetings are typically arranged in advance.

The hierarchical nature of Uzbek greetings contrasts with the more egalitarian approach in American greetings. Both Russian and Uzbek greetings exhibit a higher degree of formality and context dependence compared to American greetings. German greetings, while formal, also show flexibility in informal settings, similar to Russian practices but distinct from the American emphasis on uniform informality.

Understanding these differences enhances cross-cultural communication and provides insights into the societal values that shape interpersonal interactions in these diverse cultural contexts.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The comparative analysis of communicative behaviors among Uzbek, Russian, German, and English language speakers unveils

significant cultural and linguistic distinctions that shape interpersonal interactions. By examining these diverse language backgrounds, this study provides a deeper understanding of how cultural values and social norms influence communication styles. Understanding the nuanced communicative behaviors across these cultural groups is crucial for fostering effective intercultural interactions. Recognizing the importance of cultural hierarchies, respect, and context-specific communication styles can aid in navigating social exchanges and mitigating potential misunderstandings. Furthermore, awareness of these differences enhances cross-cultural competence, promoting more meaningful and respectful interactions in diverse linguistic and cultural settings.

Based on these conclusions, the following suggestions are offered to enhance cross-cultural communication and understanding:

- **Cultural sensitivity training:** Implement cultural sensitivity training programs for individuals engaging in cross-cultural interactions, focusing on understanding and respecting the hierarchical and formal structures of different cultures.
- **Contextual awareness:** Create syllabuses based on the materials that educate learners to be mindful of the cultural context when initiating contact.
- **Adaptation strategies:** Develop strategies for adapting communication styles to align with different cultural expectations.
- **Handling personal questions:** elaborate educational materials for students on the varying norms regarding personal questions. In contexts where asking personal questions is acceptable or avoiding personal questions can help maintain comfort and respect.
- **Planning and spontaneity:** Create and implement materials to teach to recognize and respect the cultural norms regarding planned and unplanned visits.
- **Promoting inclusivity:** Create practices that promote inclusivity and respect for all participants in an interaction. Understanding the cultural importance of specific greetings and introduction procedures can help create a more welcoming and respectful environment for everyone involved.

By incorporating these suggestions, individuals and learners can foster more effective and respectful cross-cultural interactions, leading to better communication and stronger relationships across diverse cultural settings.

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