

Cross-Cultural Communications

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This column will deal with cross-cultural issues. Topics covered will include teaching culture through language, cross-cultural communication in business environment and cross-cultural communication in academic settings. Any suggestions are welcomed. Please contact Elena Denisova-Schmidt (elena.denisova-schmidt@unisg.ch)

Please check your cultural awareness. Imagine you are an exchange student visiting a university in Russia.

1. You are supposed to talk with a young professor. His name is Anton Petrovič Stepanov. The conversation will be in Russian. How would you address him?

- a. Anton
- b. Professor Stepanov
- c. Anton Petrovič

2. Your first impressions about Russian students and lecturers – they do not smile. You assume:

- a. they do not like you
- b. they are just very serious
- c. they are concerned about the world financial crisis

3. Several classes are different from your home university; for example some professors do not use any visual support or provide scripts of their lectures. Instead, they expect students to write everything down and it seems to you very close to a dictate and it is difficult to follow. You guess:

- a. these professors are atypical
- b. your Russian skills are not satisfactory
- c. they just use different teaching techniques

4. Some classes are very close to your home university, there are many interesting discussions. But you notice that your Russian fellow students do not cite sources properly in their presentations and lecturers accept this. You think:

- a. your fellow students and lecturers have a different concept of the term 'copyright'
- b. your lecturers just do not see it
- c. your fellow students have unfortunately forgotten to cite

5. You socialize with your new Russian friends. You learn a large number of toasts: for women, for friendship between the peoples. But once before leaving, somebody suggests to you to drink for 'pososhok'. What does it mean?

- a. this is the special drink between students
- b. this is the special drink between Americans and Russians
- c. this is the final drink before going home

Answers:

1c. Russian students usually call their lecturers by his/her first name and patronymic.

2b. Russians do not smile so often because in the Russian culture 'laughter without any reason is considered as a sign of foolishness'. Russians are really very serious.

3c. The Russian educational system stipulates a different curriculum, including other teaching methods as well as requirements for the graduates. The course of classes, as a rule, is straightforward and not interactive.

4a. Many Russians really think that copyrighted materials belong to the common knowledge. Even Vladimir Putin's PhD thesis was plagiarized from the Western point of view, but not in Russia.

5c. Pososhok – this is the final drink before going home. NB: Experienced visitors to Russia know: it could be Pososhok No. 1, Pososhok No. 2 etc.

Recent Publications Continued

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Richmond, Yale. 2008. *From Nyet to Da: Understanding the New Russia*. Intercultural Press.

Economics

Burakovsky, Ihor, Handrich, Lars, & Hoffman, Lutz. 2008. *Ukraine's WTO Accession: Challenge for Domestic Economic Reforms*. Physica-Verlag, Heidelberg.

Linguistics

Bermel, Neil. 2007. *Linguistic Authority, Language Ideology, and Metaphor: The Czech Orthography Wars*. Mouton de Gruyter.

Mladenova, Olga M. 2008. *Definiteness in Bulgarian: Modelling the Processes of Language Change*. Mouton de Gruyter.

Pereltsvaig, Asya. 2008. *Copular Sentences in Russian: A Theory of Intra-Clausal Relations*. Springer.

Sturgeon, Anne. 2008. *The Left Periphery: The Interaction of Syntax, Pragmatics and Prosody in Czech*. Johns Benjamins Publishing Company.

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