

Cross-Cultural Communication

This column deals 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)

Russians are very superstitious, regardless of their gender, age, education or a social status; they consciously or unconsciously pay attention to the omens and this may have an influence on their behavior in both professional and social situations. Here are some of the superstitions that Russians often take very seriously:

If a black cat crosses your path, it will bring misfortune or at least it is a very bad sign.

It is bad luck to break a mirror.

Russians do not shake hands or talk over the threshold (на пороге не здороваются); it may lead to misfortune or a quarrel.

They remove the empty bottles from the table.

The forty-year anniversary is not celebrated.

It is considered unlucky to get married in May – the marriage will suffer (свадьба в мае – всю жизнь маяться).

Russians try not to disclose their future plans, so as not to put the evil eye on the situation (чтобы не сглазить).

When going on a long journey, they will briefly 'sit down for the road' (присесть на дорожку), i.e. they will sit down for a few minutes before leaving so as to have a lucky trip.

They try not to return to a house they just left, but if they have to, then they should by all means look in the mirror, otherwise they will have bad luck (возвращаться – плохая примета).

They do not whistle at home or in the office, otherwise they fear they will lose their money; Russians used to say: 'Do not whistle indoors: it will blow your money away'.

It is bad luck to meet a woman who is carrying empty buckets.

If a fork or a spoon falls on the floor, expect a female visitor; if a knife falls on the floor, expect a male visitor (вилка – женский род, нож – мужской род).

It is a bad luck to give away money in the evening – it means you will never have enough.

If you spill salt, it is bad luck.

If any acquaintance of yours calls and you do not recognize the voice, you will become rich soon (Не узнал/не узнала – богатым/богатой будешь!).

A burning or tingling feeling in your ears or face means that someone is talking about you.

*Editor: Elena Denisova-Schmidt
University of St. Gallen (HSG), Switzerland*

If you visit a Russian's home, bring an odd number of flowers – an even number is only given at funerals. Also, yellow is the color of separation.

If you say something that you do not want to happen, knock three times on a piece of wood to keep it from occurring; this goes back to the dark ages, when people believed that powerful spirits inhabited the wood.

Recent Publications Continued

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Offord, D. 2010. *Journeys to a graveyard: Perceptions of Europe in classical Russian travel writing*. Springer.

Rytönen, M., et al. 2010. *Mapping experience in Polish and Russian women's writing*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Simic, C. 2010. *The horse has six legs: An anthology of Serbian poetry*. Graywolf Press.

Turner, C. E. 2010. *Studies in Russian literature*. Academic Studies Press.

Vaschenko, A., & Smith, C. C., eds. 2010. *The way of kinship: An anthology of native Siberian literature*. MN: The University of Minnesota Press.

Pedagogy, SLA, and Textbooks

Demirbulak, D., ed. 2010. *Practising the use of instructional technology: Material development*. Germany: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller.

Hinkel E. 2011. *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning: Volume 2*. London: Routledge.

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