

ИССЛЕДОВАТЕЛЬСКИЙ ПРОЕКТ

**Intercultural studies are the key to keeping tolerant to people from
different backgrounds, aren't they?**

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1. Introduction

The objective:

To prove that intercultural studies add to being tolerant to people of different backgrounds.

Goals for accomplishment:

1. To analyze my school (Gymnasium №25) intercultural cooperation experience.
2. To present Swedish special cultural spots.
3. To compare Russian people's, Swedes' and American people's attitude to special pieces of Swedish culture to find out if our cultures have much in common when it comes to Swedish cultural code and small talk.
4. To make a conclusion if culture studies make people closer, more tolerant to each other.

The objects of the research: my school intercultural studies experience, two BBC videos.

Research methods: comparison, doing a survey, interviewing.

2. Main body

2.1 Analysis of intercultural events held in Revda, Gymnasium №25

The best way for people who come from different backgrounds to become tolerant to each other is to study their cultures. Getting to know the culture which is very different from your own can prevent you from culture shock when you are in the foreign country. Besides, understanding the culture can help people to get on well. If we are united and interculturally cooperated then that might be the key to humanity survival, to keeping the peace in the world – the fundamental issues humanity faces. As for me, I like to study cultures. There is hardly anything much more interesting than that. There used to be a nice experience of intercultural studies (even intercultural cooperation) in my school. The idea of intercultural cooperation occurred to the students. They were running the project “Better world through understanding”. Thus, the English teacher and students invited Vice Consul of U. S. Consulate General in Ekaterinburg, to the town of Revda.



They invited Sarah Saperstein to tour the biggest and the most interesting museum – Demidov Center – for her to get to know the unique history of Revda. Students, like museum guides, presented the Dmidov’s family display. They told

about Akinfy Demidov and Grigory Demidov immense contribution to efficient manufacturing and high quality goods production.

They reported on Demidov's charity activity. To help poor people, sick people and orphans used to be their family moral principle.

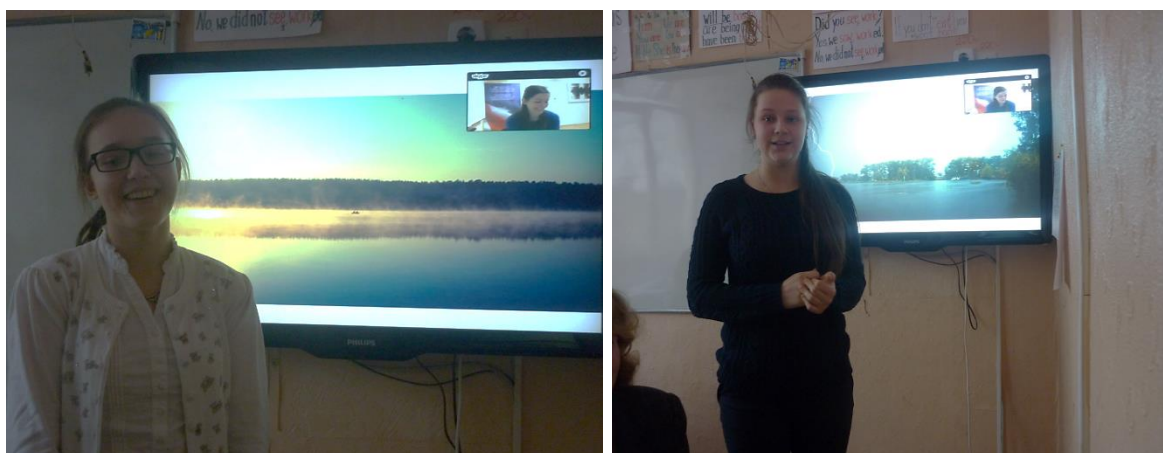
The history of Urals' small town impressed Sarah greatly. She called Lubov Mikhailovna and her students very enthusiastic learners.



After the excursion was over the students had a nice talk at the table drinking tea and eating Russian «блины» and «пирожки». Sarah thanked them for the wonderful spread at the museum.



They went on communicating. Sarah offered to speak via Skype. About 14 students spoke with Sarah about their favorite places in Revda and her favorite places back home.



So many people – so many favorite places in Revda. National Parks and tennis courts turned out to be Sarah’s favorite places. Wolf Trap national park is 2 kilometers from where she grew up. It is dedicated to the performing Arts. So, inside the park there is a theatre. Great Falls national park is called so because it has lots of waterfalls and rapids. In spring and summer, it is very popular and many families like to make up picnics in the park. The students and Sarah spoke very warmly about their native places. It is evident: if people feel the same way, they can understand each other very well. When at our school Sarah Saperstein lectured on American

schools. It is nice that they do a lot of sports after classes. Physical Education seems to be a core component in their schools.

Within Sarah’s second visit the following year in November, she presented the students with her exam strategies. She gave them some Tips on how to write personal letters, how to describe photos and how to get the highest score in English Exam.

Native speaker Sarah Saperstein	Russian students
1.Unique history of Revda	1. Certain norms of interaction
2.Russian students’ favorite places in Revda	2. Sarah’s favorite places back home
3.Unified State Exam formats	3. Native speaker’s exam strategies

Therefore, within all intercultural communication events both – Russian students and Sarah Saperstein learned a lot from each other: Sarah learned about unique history of Revda from the museum tour, while the students got to know about certain norms of interaction from Sarah’s emails. Vice Consul learned about Russian students’ favorite places in Revda and they learned about Sarah’s favorite places back home. As Sarah is a head of education, mass media and culture, she got interested a lot in the Unified English Exam formats. It was interesting for students to learn about Sarah’s exam strategies. She tried to take the State English Exam and she passed. Congratulations!

2.2 Presentation of special Swedish cultural spots

Such wonderful experience of my schoolmates and my teacher appeared to be a real example for me to follow, at that I came across nice BBC videos on a cultural code (Jantelagen) in Sweden and a small talk. They impressed me a lot. I decided to compare Russian people's, Swedes' and American people's attitude to Jantelagen and small talk to find out if our cultures have much in common when it comes to special pieces of Swedish culture.

A high income is a badge of success in many countries but in Sweden a deep-rooted cultural code called Jantelagen stops many from talking about it.

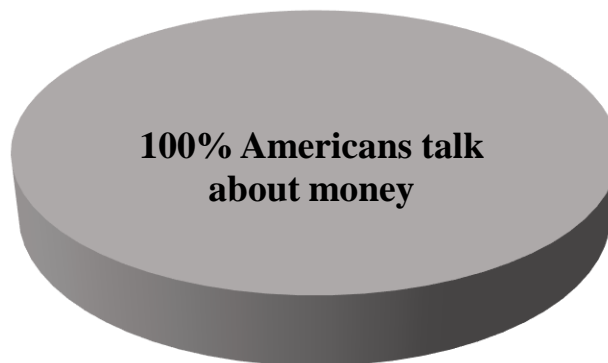
In Sweden there's a Taboo of talking about wealth. Swedes really do not ask about money and salary. They are of opinion that getting people to talk about money is tricky: "People are pretty uncomfortable talking about money." "You shouldn't talk about money because it's snobby and people are going to think that you are better than them." Swedish Taboo of talking about wealth linked to a historic Nordic cultural code called Jantelagen. Jantelagen is deeply rooted into Swedish psyche because it tries to keep balance within society; it tries to keep people from feeling uncomfortable. It is the way of trying to keep things very homogeneous. In the United States the things are quite different: very often Americans ask about how much money people earn, about salary. I decided to do the survey (Supplement 1) to find out if we are more like Americans or more like Swedes. In addition, both Russian and American people do not possess a cultural code like Jantelagen as Swedes do.

2.3 Comparison of Russian people's, Swedes' and American people's attitude to special pieces of Swedish culture

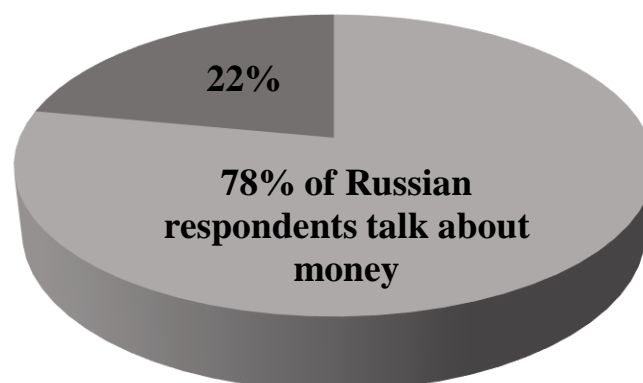
Swedish people



American people



Russian people



2.3 The results of the survey

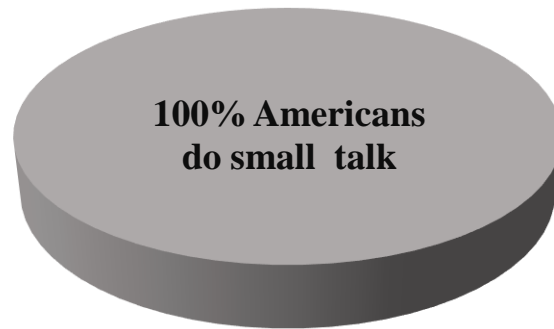
As you can see while Swedes never talk about wealth and salary American people do it always when they want. 78% of Russian respondents ask about the amount of money people earn, about salary stuff, as they think it's good to be proud of hard working results. 22% respondents' low income stops from talking about it. Actually, Russian people appear to be more like Americans than Swedes when it comes to talking about wealth.

One more peculiar feature of Swedish culture is the way they survive without small talk. In most cultures small talk acts as a social Lubricant. It connects people across demographic lines and creates a sense of belonging and companionship. However, in Sweden small talk does not come naturally to people. In most cultures small talk serves an important social purpose. Moments of idle chit-chat can help people feel connected and build the foundation for deeper conversation. Many see it as a light appetizer before the main course. Nevertheless, in Sweden people tend to avoid casual conversations; the Swedes refer to it as a "kallprat" meaning cold talk. Basically, Swedish people want to avoid small talk situations and in order to do that they avoid eye contact. Swedes have developed different strategies to do that. For example, when they see you coming towards them on the street, they just stare somewhere else, for example, the shopping window, or they take out their phone and stare at that. While they do that, they have actually mastered the skill of navigating through crowded places. Swedish people like to mind their own business. They do not go down the street and talk to everyone. They just want to go out and go to the place where they want to go without any distractions ideally.

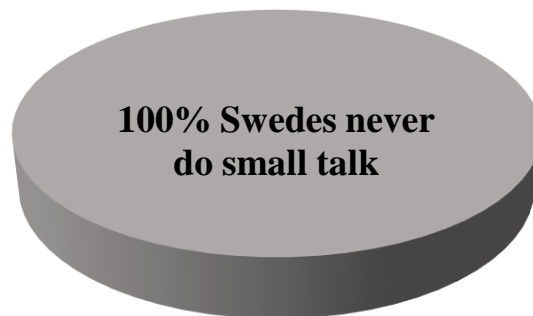
Sweden is a vast country and people have been living there more spread out. They are used to being alone, being just within their small group and maybe not having so much contact with other people. This kind of culture is from many hundreds of years ago. It still exists among those Swedish people living in cities. Sweden also had relatively little immigration until the 1960s. Lack of widespread exposure to other cultures that do small talk has made the Swedes less skilled in it.

In the United States the things are quite different: Americans very quickly get down to a certain level of trust; in fact, Americans are very chatty. They do small talk. I found it interesting to find out if Russian people are more like Americans or more like Swedes (like to do small talk or not). I did the survey (Supplement 2) on how Russian people refer to small talk.

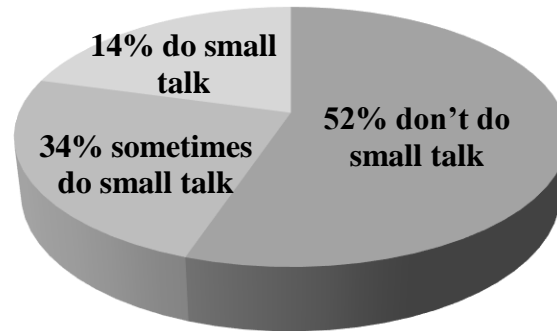
American people



Swedish people



Russian people



As you can see, American people always do small talk as they see it as a light appetizer before the main course, while Swedes refer to it as a cold talk. In fact, people in Sweden tend to avoid casual conversations. About 52% of Russian respondents do not do small talk since they refer to it as a waste of time, but small talk comes naturally to about 14% of respondents; and about 34% of respondents sometimes enjoy small talk as it helps feel connected. Thereby, the way Russian people get small talk is similar to both American and Swedish.

3. Conclusion

To conclude, Russian, American and Swedish cultures have certainly something in common when it comes to talking about wealth and money (Swedish cultural code) and doing small talk. Of course, studying and understanding our cultures can help us to get on well and feel connected. Sure, culture studies can help us to become tolerant to each other.

4. References

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5. Supplement 1

Why?	People feel uncomfortable talking about money	One shouldn't talk about money because it's snobby	Everyone should be equal
Russian people accept the concept of Jantelagen (never talk about money, salary)			
1. Nadya			+
2. Polina			+
3. Maria			+
4. Sasha			+
5. Nastya			+
6. Natasha	+		
7. Maria	+		
Why?	It's good to be proud of hard working results	It's good to celebrate your success	They are sure the concept of Jantelagen don't work
Russian people reject the concept of Jantelagen (talk about			

salary, money, people earn)			
1. Alyona	+		
2. Alyona	+		
3. Veronika	+		
4. Sonya	+	+	
5. Kirill	+	+	
6. Marina	+		
7. Danil	+	+	
8. Kolya	+	+	
9. Vitalina	+	+	
10. Maxim	+	+	
11. Vlad	+	+	
12. Stas	+	+	
13. Ann	+	+	
14. Egor	+	+	
15. Ivan	+	+	
16. Ulya	+	+	
17. Matvey	+	+	
18. Diana	+	+	
19. My aunt	+	+	
20. My granny	+	+	
21. My mum	+	+	

6. Supplement 2

Why?	Small talk helps feel connected	Small talk helps build the foundation for deeper conversation	Small talk creates a sense of belonging	Sometimes do small talk
Russian people do small talk				
1. Polina				+
2. Maria	+			
3. Nastya				+
4. Nadya	+			
5. Maria				+
6. Natasha	+			+
7. Danil				+
8. Alyona	+			+
9. Alyona		+		+
10. Veronika	+			+
11. Sonya		+		
12. Kirill	+			
13. Marina		+		
14. Danil	+			
15. Ivan			+	
16. Vlad			+	
Why?	Small talk- cold talk	Small talk- distraction	Small talk- a waste of time	

Russian people avoid small talk				
1. Kolya			+	
2. Vitalina			+	
3. Maxim			+	
4. Stas			+	
5. Ann			+	
6. Egor			+	
7. Ulya			+	
8. Matvey			+	
9. Diana			+	
10. My aunt			+	
11. My granny			+	
12. My mum			+	