

DOI 10.31483/r-169007

*Lyakhova Elena Georgievna**Ляхова Елена Георгиевна*

**CULTURAL CODE CRITERION
IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING/LEARNING**

**КРИТЕРИЙ КУЛЬТУРНОГО КОДА
В ПРЕПОДАВАНИИ/ИЗУЧЕНИИ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА**

Abstract: *this study examines the challenges of creating an effective textbook for teaching English at a non-linguistic university. The author proposes introducing a new criterion-the cultural code criterion. This criterion is fundamental in organizing the acquisition of linguistic phenomena that reflect the differences between the mindset of Russian-speaking students and the mindset described by the foreign language being studied. To achieve this goal, a theoretical analysis of psychological and pedagogical literature was conducted, and pedagogical experience was studied and summarized. Based on this analysis, the author concludes that it is necessary to consider the differences in the cultural codes of English and Russian communication in English classes at a non-linguistic university.*

Keywords: *cultural code of communication in Russian, cultural code of communication in English, criteria for an English language textbook, teaching English in a non-linguistic university, modalities of cultural code formation.*

Аннотация: *исследование посвящено проблематике создания эффективного учебника для обучения английскому языку в неязыковом вузе. Автор предлагает ввести новый критерий – критерий культурного кода. Этот критерий является основополагающим при организации усвоения языковых явлений, которые отражают в себе отличия картины мира русскоязычных студентов и картины мира, описываемой изучаемым иностранным языком. Для решения поставленной цели был проведен теоретический анализ психолого-педагогической литературы, изучен и обобщен педагогический опыт, на основании чего сделан*

вывод о необходимости учета отличий культурных кодов английской и русской коммуникации на занятиях по английскому языку в неязыковом вузе.

Ключевые слова: *культурный код коммуникации на русском языке, культурный код коммуникации на английском языке, критерии для учебника по английскому языку, преподавание английского языка в неязыковом вузе, модальности формирования культурного кода.*

A modern textbook on a foreign language for non-linguistic universities must meet certain requirements. Many researchers in this area name such criteria as compliance with the requirements of the Federal State Educational Standard, i.e. the social and professionally oriented nature of training, focus on age characteristics and level of education of students. An important role is played by the need to organize mastery of various functions of foreign language communication, such as regulatory, value-oriented, conventional and, of course, information function, which is accompanied by the interrelated mastery of all types of speech activity. A student-centered approach to learning allows taking into account the characteristics of students, and the didactic variety of materials is aimed at using various forms of presenting and practicing material using modern digital technologies and artificial intelligence. Important criteria include the creation of conditions for students' educational autonomy, the possibility of independent learning, and the formation and increase of educational motivation by maintaining a communicative atmosphere in foreign language classes [6; 13].

Modern researchers also highlight the information approach (the main criterion is the use of methods of examination, structuring, presentation and evaluation of professionally oriented information); axiological approach (the main criterion is the emphasis on the professionally oriented worldview of students through the mechanisms of orientation in the competitive field and professional motivation); competency-based approach (the main criterion is the emphasis on the formation of professionally oriented foreign language competence of students); synergetic approach (the main

criterion is the predominance of practice-oriented tasks of a professional nature and autonomy), etc. [11].

At the same time, it is already a well-known fact that practical-activity-based, cognitive-informational, and value-oriented approaches to teaching foreign languages and creating foreign language textbooks are combined into a comprehensive integrative cultural approach, in which culture, along with vocabulary and grammar, becomes a key component of the classroom [12].

The cultural approach includes linguacultural, sociocultural, intercultural, multicultural, and other approaches, united by the criterion of the need for the joint study of language and culture [3].

However, the criteria of the cultural approach to creating a foreign language textbook do not include a criterion for relying on the differences between the cultural code of students' native languages and the cultural code of the foreign language being studied. The purpose of this study is to substantiate the need for such a criterion.

Cultural code has many definitions. Ontologically, a cultural code is a universal category of existence, a value-significant formation for a specific group of people, arising in the process of understanding the surrounding reality as a result of receiving information. Each culture, language, and individual has its own system of cultural codes. A system of cultural codes refers to a set of information markers that determine how a person perceives and responds to spatiotemporal processes occurring in a communication situation [10; 14].

Researchers believe that a cultural code determines the ability to read information and construct a situation from incomplete data, and is part of inferential systems of thought. The process of encoding information allows a person to create a hypothetical reality around themselves, including not only their own reactions to events but also the reactions of those around them, through the use of so-called cultural memory. Cultural memory refers to the process during which each generation from a particular cultural strata of human society subconsciously uses the same set of markers, not memorizing the information, but reproducing it again and again. If living

conditions change, the paradigm of markers of inferential systems shifts slightly and, thus, the information reproduced by a person changes [10].

When communicating with others, people read information from gestures, facial expressions, and other code markers, constructing the behavior of others and interpreting their logic for them.

The formation of inferential markers, or cultural codes, occurs in various situations. Among them, the following social levels can be distinguished: individual-emotional, family, neighborhood, community, public, and universal coding. All channels of human perception of reality are involved in the formation of cultural codes. Perception is viewed here as a holistic reflection of objects and phenomena in the objective world around us as they directly impact the human senses at a given moment. Researchers suggest that both the perception and coding of information occurs through the senses [2].

In any communicative situation, eight modalities are always involved, which both perceive and encode information: visual, auditory, gustatory, olfactory, haptic (active touch), kinesthetic (perception of motor activity), visceral (perception of internal organs, systemic sensations, physical pain), and energy perception [1].

Thus, cultural codes can be divided into the following groups.

1. Visual codes.
2. Bodily codes (tactile).
3. Auditory (audio codes).
4. Olfactory codes.
5. Taste codes.
6. Motor codes.
7. Visceral codes.
8. Energy codes.

In real-life communication, all eight types of cultural codes function as a single psychological mechanism, creating a culturally specific communication environment. The influence of cultural codes on the course of communication occurs at a subconscious level, although, if necessary, communicants can consciously describe their

state during a conversation, i.e., bring a particular cultural code into the consciousness [9].

Researchers believe that information genetically encoded in a cultural code is culture-specific and determines people's behavior in society [15].

A historically conditioned set of cultural codes, or mentality, determines the specific worldview and behavior of a given nation [5].

Based on the above, a cultural code can be defined as a system of signs, values, and meanings through which, as through a prism, a people sees the world. The native language acts as the primary custodian and mirror of this code, transforming the usual set of words through the unique way of thinking characteristic of its speakers. A foreign language, in turn, contains the cultural code of the people who speak it. The cultural code of a foreign language is nationally specific and manifests itself in linguistic phenomena that have no direct analogues in other languages.

When teaching a foreign language, it is necessary to integrate the cultural code of the learners' native language with the cultural code of the foreign language being studied in their worldview. Without this code, the meaning and significance of communication in a foreign language cannot be deciphered, and therefore, communication will not be successful. This can be achieved by:

- firstly, developing in learners the skill of reflecting on their own cultural code, i.e., teaching them to bring their subconscious reactions during communication into the window of consciousness. Learning another language changes the focus of attention and allows one to view their native language from a different perspective;
- secondly, by incorporating into their Russian-language worldview elements of the foreign language worldview, reflected in the foreign language being studied, and most clearly representing the cultural code of the language being studied. Understanding the cultural code explains why native speakers of a given foreign language speak the way they do.

Among the linguistic information reflecting the cultural code of a foreign language, the following groups of phenomena can be identified.

1. Non-equivalent vocabulary, which includes words that cannot be translated literally because they are associated with a specific tradition.

2. Grammar and logic. The categories of gender, tense, and politeness reveal what is important to society – an emphasis on subordination, respect, or the gendered perception of objects.

3. Precedental phenomena. Quotes from books, films, historical references, and folklore that are understandable only to native speakers.

To understand linguistic phenomena related to these groups, it is not enough to know the meaning of individual words. A literal translation often sounds strange or can even offend someone unfamiliar with the hidden meaning and social norms of the foreign culture.

Native Russian speakers possess a certain national psychological type that distinguishes their behavior from native English speakers. Let's consider some of these.

1. The richness and uniqueness of cultural heritage, i.e., the objects of material and spiritual culture created by previous generations to be passed on to future residents of Russia. These objects are protected by the state in Russia. The Unified Register of the most valuable and significant of these includes over 145,000 cultural heritage objects, 29 of which are included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. Works of art, museum, archival and library collections, manuscripts, letters, personal archives, architectural and scientific monuments, etc., are the material embodiment of the Russian cultural code.

2. Among Russian-speakers, qualities associated with Orthodox values are respected, such as gratitude to others, love for one's neighbor, respect for truth, and others. It is also logical to note the 'sobornost' (communal unity) of Russians, where the general prevails over the personal.

3. At the same time, love for one's neighbor often manifests itself only as an exaltation of the individual as a whole. At the same time, a specific individual may be subject to humiliation and disrespect.

4. Russians are often romantics or martyrs, constantly searching for the meaning of life. They endure suffering themselves and involve their loved ones in this search.

5. Humanism without borders. Russians typically consider themselves equal to any other person and are willing to accept any stranger as one of their own. For this reason, the image of «absolute evil» is absent from Russian culture.

6. The practical interests of the individual and the collective are placed below justice, which is the highest and independent value. This is the source of the desire to «live by the truth».

7. Russians are more warm-hearted and sincere than rational. Excessive smiling and politeness can be perceived as insincerity.

8. Emotionality. A love of debate on global, general philosophical issues is a prominent feature of Russian communicative behavior [7].

Researchers note that native English speakers also possess a unique cultural code, defining the following specific traits [8].

1. Richness and uniqueness of cultural heritage. The list of cultural heritage sites of Great Britain and Ireland contains 1,273 names, 31 of which are included in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

2. Distance or personal autonomy. This is the source of so-called passive politeness, which consists of non-interference in the lives of others and respect for their boundaries.

3. Equality and tolerance. All people have the right to be understood and heard.

4. Calmness. They do not show their emotions, regardless of the situation. They condemn uninhibitedness and emotionality in their interlocutors. They believe that displays of emotion put the interlocutor in an awkward position.

5. Frugality, a love of saving on small things in everyday life.

6. Conservatism, stability of character. They prefer to maintain everything familiar and do not like change.

7. Strongly expressed class affiliation. A person's social class can be determined by their profession, education, habits, and even accent.

8. A distinctive sense of humor, often understood only by the English themselves.

Drawing parallels, Russian culture values warmth, openness, and impulsiveness, while English culture values restraint, self-control, and a focus on others. These behavioral codes determine the distinctive features of national communication styles, which must be taken into account when teaching Russian-speaking students to communicate in English.

The characteristics of the English cultural code are expressed in the following communicative traits [8].

Recognition of the interlocutor's independence and personal autonomy leads English-speaking communicators to avoid violating each other's personal boundaries during conversation. To this end, they use various indirect constructions, avoid direct and categorical statements, and maintain a certain distance from their interlocutor. When offering something, the speaker immediately gives the interlocutor the opportunity to decline the offer or doubts the recipient's ability to perform this action: «I don't know if you will want to send this today or tomorrow». A popular strategy is pessimism regarding the possibility of receiving a response: «I am not sure you know what time it is».

To alleviate pressure on the interlocutor, they use means of minimizing the degree of intrusion: «I just want to ask you if you could possibly do a tiny part of it». To enhance the indirectness of the message, they address the interlocutor indirectly: «This is to inform the pupils about the new schedule». When addressing someone, it's customary to apologize: «I'm sorry to trouble you, could you tell me the time?» The gist of the message should be expressed as briefly and concisely as possible.

To implement this communication strategy, the following grammatical and lexical tools are used: indirect speech, direct and indirect questions, modal verbs, the subjunctive mood, the passive voice, and temporal shifts.

At the same time, the English cultural code of equality and tolerance manifests itself in the attempt of English-speaking interlocutors to satisfy each other's desire to be understood, heard, and loved. This results in a constant demonstration of attention to the interlocutor. Interlocutors often greet each other, apologize, and thank each other with or without reason. Approval of the interlocutor is greatly exaggerated, es-

pecially in the view of Russian-speaking communicators. This is achieved through the use of lexical hyperbole (e.g., «It's absolutely unbelievable»), repetitions, intensifiers, and expressive evaluative adjectives in the most mundane situations. When communicating, English speakers actively demonstrate interest in their interlocutors and avoid arguing, even when they disagree. It's common to view events optimistically. Communication in English is characterized by numerous communicative gifts, i.e., an abundance of emotionally evaluative phrases that emphasize the strengths of the interlocutor, their words, and actions. Moreover, unlike Russian communication, the interlocutor doesn't need to earn praise; in English communication, it's customary to thank the interlocutor simply for the act of communication, for the fact that they are with you now. English communication is distinguished by its verbosity, specifically in terms of mutual compliments and support for each other as interlocutors.

From a linguistic perspective, the following lexical units support the strategy of focusing attention on the interlocutor.

- first of all, the most common formulas in English communication: «Thank you» and «Sorry»;

- adjectives that emphasize your concern for the interlocutor are quite often used: thoughtful, helpful, supportive, welcoming. For example: «Thank you very much. It was thoughtful of you to call» (gratitude for the call);

- expressions: «Have a nice day!» «Have a relaxing afternoon!» etc. «Take care»/«Take it easy» are usually used when saying goodbye;

- intensifiers such as «such», «so», «very», «really», «terribly», «awfully», «frightfully», «absolutely», and «extremely» are traditionally used. For example: «I'm terribly sorry about that»;

- emotionally evaluative statements are dominated by expressive emotionally evaluative units: great, excellent, perfect, gorgeous, wonderful, brilliant, superb, fantastic, fabulous, marvelous, divine, ravishing, enjoyable, delighted. For example: I am delighted to welcome you as a new customer.

As a result, English speech is saturated with expressive, verbose compliments. For example, excerpts from letters from friends.

1. Take care. Much love. A.

2. Hope all is well with you all and thank you once again for your very generous hospitality. G.

3. Still thinking of you and hoping all is well with you all. Best wishes. D.

4. Sending you my very best wishes. Take care. Lots of love. H [8].

When teaching English to Russian-speaking students, focusing on the differences between the English and Russian cultural codes, it is useful to use the following table, which describes the nationally specific manifestations of the English cultural code in various communicative situations. (Cultural Code – CC).

Table 1

<i>Request-Situation English CC:</i> – recognition of the interlocutor's independence – minimization of the impact on the interlocutor	<i>Request-situation in English for speakers of Russian CC:</i> – keep your distance and be emphatically polite – avoid the imperative mood – don't use intensifiers – the more verbose and indirect your request, the more polite you are.	<i>Grammatical and lexical tools:</i> 1) Requesting questions instead of imperative mood. Interrogative statements with modal verbs. Could you possibly pass the salt, please? 2) Giving the other person the option to refuse. It would be nice to have tea together, but I am sure you are very busy. 3) Take the recipient out of the conversation. Could I have your book? instead of Could you give me the book? 4) Be pessimistic. Use the subjunctive mood. Could you possibly give me your book? 5) Express yourself indirectly. Use indirect questions and tense shifts. I was just wondering whether I could possibly have your book?
<i>Explicit Invitation Situation English CC:</i> – recognition of the interlocutor's independence – minimizing the impact on the interlocutor; – giving the interlocutor the opportunity to refuse; – expressed indirectly – using interrogative or expanded statements	<i>Explicit Invitation Situation in English for speakers of Russian CC:</i> An indirect English invitation can be perceived by Russian speakers as insincerity rather than respect for the recipient: – Don't put pressure on the recipient; – Focus on the recipient's wishes, not your own.	<i>Grammatical and lexical tools: High degree of implicitness.</i> 1) Questions. Would you like to dance? 2) Indirect questions. Just wondering if you'd like to come over on Saturday. 3) Be pessimistic. I'd enjoy going out for coffee, but I imagine you are very busy. 4) Inquire about your

		interlocutor's desires. Are you interested in coming?
<i>Implicit Invitation Situation English CC:</i> – demonstration of sympathy and respect for the interlocutor; – does not imply a mandatory continuation of contact; – does not contain any obligations to the interlocutor; – represent etiquette formulas (communicative gifts); – are the usual way to terminate contact; – expressed more directly (less indirectly) than an explicit invitation.	<i>Implicit invitations in English for native speakers of Russian CC:</i> Can be interpreted as explicit invitations and cause negative emotions if not followed: – respond to an implicit invitation with at least two lines, be verbose; – remember that exaggeration is the norm in English invitations and responses.	<i>Grammatical and lexical tools:</i> 1) Use less indirect constructions than with an explicit invitation. Come again soon. You should come to lunch one day. 2) If it's difficult to understand whether the invitation is genuine or false, politely thank them. – You really must come and see us one of these days. – Thank you very much. It's so kind of you. If your thanks are followed by clarification of the place and time, the invitation is explicit. 3) Use false invitations when saying goodbye. It was lovely. Drop in any time.
<i>Situation-response to an invitation in English CC:</i> – demonstration of emphasized interest in the listener; – excessive communicative gifts for the interlocutor; – support for the interlocutor in the form of expressive evaluative etiquette formulas; – expression of sincere sympathy for the interlocutor in the form of a verbose exchange of expressive remarks.	<i>Situation: Responding to an invitation in English for native speakers of Russian CC:</i> – respond to the invitation with exaggerated and verbose words, expressing your positive emotional response; – remember that exaggeration will NOT be perceived as insincerity, but as politeness; – try to use several phrases to express gratitude and give a longer response than in Russian communication.	<i>Grammatical and lexical tools:</i> 1) In response to an invitation, express gratitude with at least two evaluative phrases: You are so kind. I'd be delighted to come. 2) Follow the evaluative remark with a thankful one. That sounds great. Thank you very much. 3) Maintain an expressive and verbose exchange of pleasantries. Respond to thanks with thanks and reciprocate praise with praise. – Would you like to come to my birthday party? – I'd love to. That would be great. Thank you very much. – Great. See you around seven then.
<i>Situation-gratitude English CC:</i> – gratitude as a national style of communication, with or without reason; – gratitude as maintaining harmony between interlocutors; – gratitude as an etiquette formula for completing a contact.	<i>Expressing gratitude in English for native speakers of Russian CC:</i> – express your gratitude more frequently, expressively, and verbosely than in Russian communication; – thank the person not only for services rendered or for the result, but simply for being your interlocutor; – when thanking, offer appreciative compliments to	<i>Grammatical and lexical means:</i> 1) Use intensifiers to enhance gratitude: Thank you ever so much. Thank you awfully. Thanks a lot. Many thanks. A million thanks. I am very (so) appreciative. I have no words to express my gratitude. I don't know how I can thank you enough.

	your interlocutor; – express your gratitude at the end of the communication.	2) Use expressive adjectives for emotional-evaluative remarks: great, excellent, perfect, gorgeous, wonderful, brilliant, superb, fantastic, fabulous, marvelous, divine, ravishing, enjoyable, delighted. You've been most helpful and supportive. That's terribly kind. 3) Enhance gratitude by using multiple cues with different intensifiers. I want to thank you both very much indeed for coming to say goodbye. It's so nice of you. I really do appreciate that (gratitude for the visit). 4) Give communication gifts: praise, encourage, say pleasant phrases for the interlocutor. 5) Give thanks in return. You are very welcome. You are always welcome. You are always very welcome. You are more than welcome. You are most welcome. Exchange of remarks after assistance provided: – You're a star. Thank you very much. – Don't mention it. I'm delighted to be able to help.
--	---	---

Conclusions.

A modern foreign language textbook must meet a large number of criteria. One of the fundamental criteria is the consideration of the cultural characteristics of the students' native language and the cultural code of the foreign language being studied. Only at the intersection of cultures it is possible to understand the similarities and differences in communicative behavior in the native and foreign languages and master the lexical and grammatical tools that support this communication.

Список литературы

1. Бандурка Т.Н. Экспериментальное исследование полимодальности восприятия у субъектов образовательного процесса / Т.Н. Бандурка // Экспериментальная психология в России: традиции и перспективы. – URL:

https://psyjournals.ru/nonserialpublications/exp_collection/contents/exp_collection_33420.pdf (дата обращения: 07.08.2026).

2. Букина Н.В. Культурные коды как элемент пространства культуры / Н.В. Букина // Вестн. Чит. гос. ун-та. – 2008. – №14. – С. 69–73. EDN JUBXPV

3. Ветчинова М.Н. Подготовка будущего преподавателя к реализации культурологического подхода в обучении иностранным языкам / М.Н. Ветчинова, М.В. Рыбак // Вестник Московского университета. Серия 20: Педагогическое образование. – 2023. – Т. 21. №4. – С. 175–195. DOI 10.55959/MSU2073-2635-2023-21-3-175-195. EDN CFJWUV

4. Кафанова О.Б. Национально-культурные коды: дефиниции и границы / О.Б. Кафанова // Филологическое образование: современные стратегии и практики: сб. науч.-метод. ст. – Вып. 1. – СПб., 2011. – С. 284–293.

5. Кравцова О.А. Современный аутентичный учебник иностранного языка для вуза: проблемы и пути решения / О.А. Кравцова, Е.Б. Ястребова // Филологические науки в МГИМО. – 2019. – №2(18). – С. 48–57. DOI 10.24833/2410-2423-2019-2-18-48-57. EDN ZQZZTD

6. Ктитаров В.Л. О культурном коде России / В.Л. Ктитаров // Аграрное и земельное право. – 2025. – №8. – С. 89–93. DOI 10.47643/1815-1329_2025_8_89. EDN BNDSAE

7. Ларина Т.В. Категория вежливости и стиль коммуникации. Сопоставление английских и русских лингвокультурных традиций / Т.В. Ларина. – М.: Рукописные памятники Древней Руси, 2009. – 260 с. EDN SUQIKR

8. Ляхова Е.Г. Полиmodalность восприятия в коммуникативных гештальт-ситуациях при обучении устной речи на английском языке будущих специалистов интеллектуальных транспортных систем / Е.Г. Ляхова, Е.В. Федоткина // Интеллектуальные транспортные системы: материалы III Международной научно-практической конференции (Москва, 30 мая 2024 г.). – М.: Российский университет транспорта (МИИТ), 2024. – С. 892–899. DOI 10.30932/9785002446094-2024-892-899. EDN DFOEWQ

9. Михайлин В.Ю. Тропа звериных слов: пространственно ориентированные культурные коды в индоевропейской традиции / В.Ю. Михайлин. – М.: Новое литературное обозрение, 2005. – С. 540. EDN QRXJTF

10. Концепция современного учебника по иностранному языку для студентов вузов спорта и туризма / П.В. Пустошило, О.В. Пустошило, Е.В. Быстрицкая, А.А. Иванцов // Ученые записки университета им. П.Ф. Лесгафта. – 2023. – №6(220). – С. 322–329. DOI 10.34835/issn.2308-1961.2023.06.p322-329. EDN YDTBHQ

11. Турбина Е.П. Роль культурологического подхода в процессе обучения иностранным языкам / Е.П. Турбина // Вестник Шадринского государственного педагогического университета. – 2018. – №1(37). – С. 111–116. EDN URIBEW

12. Ястребова Е.Б. Инновационный учебник иностранного языка. Каким он может быть? / Е.Б. Ястребова // Вестник Московского государственного лингвистического университета. Образование и педагогические науки. – 2019. – №1(830). – С. 166–185. EDN FSLVCP

13. Liakhova E. Russian culture code research educational game as a tool to enhance professional English language training of future PR specialists / E. Liakhova, N. Moroz // INTED2020 Proceedings. – 2020. – P. 140–149. EDN XYEWDJ

14. Rapaille C. The culture code: An ingenious way to understand why people around the world live and buy as they do / C. Rapaille. – New York: Broadway Books, 2006. – 407 p.

Lyakhova Elena Georgievna – candidate of pedagogic sciences, associate professor, associate professor at the Department of Foreign Languages, Russian University of Transport, Moscow, Russia.

Ляхова Елена Георгиевна – канд. пед. наук, доцент, доцент кафедры Иностранный язык, ФГАОУ ВО «Российский университет транспорта», Москва, Россия.
