

## THE COMPARISON OF SELF-ESTEEM AND SELF-PRESENTATION IN RUSSIAN AND AMERICAN CULTURES

**Shmelev Roman Vitalievich**, assistant, Foreign Languages Faculty,  
**Krasnoyarsk state pedagogical university named after V.P. Astafiev, Krasnoyarsk, Russia**  
*e-mail: [romao2000@mail.ru](mailto:romao2000@mail.ru)*

**Abstract.** In the article, the author, being a student of the pedagogical university, considers it interesting to study the differences between Russian and American self-esteem and self-presentation, as this material will facilitate the development of emotional intelligence, tolerance and cross-cultural competence among students who are learning English.

**Key words:** foreign language, self-esteem, self-presentation, culture, common features, differences, cross-cultural tolerance, cross-cultural competence, emotional intelligence, Russian and American culture.

## СРАВНЕНИЕ САМООЦЕНКИ И САМОПРЕЗЕНТАЦИИ В РУССКОЙ И АМЕРИКАНСКОЙ КУЛЬТУРАХ

**Шмелев Роман Витальевич**, ассистент, факультет иностранных языков,  
**Красноярский государственный педагогический университет им. В.П. Астафьева, Красноярск, Россия**  
*e-mail: [romao2000@mail.ru](mailto:romao2000@mail.ru)*

**Аннотация.** В статье автор, будучи студентом педагогического университета, считает интересным изучить различия между российской и американской самооценкой и само-презентацией, так как этот материал будет способствовать развитию эмоционального интеллекта, толерантности и межкультурной компетентности у студентов, изучающих английский язык.

**Ключевые слова:** иностранный язык, самооценка, само-презентация, культура, общие черты, различия, межкультурная толерантность, межкультурная компетентность, эмоциональный интеллект, русская и американская культура.

The relevance of the topic under study lies in the fact that Russian and American societies are experiencing rather a strong tension in their relationships. This is due to various internal and external factors. So, it seems to be cognitive to analyze the cultural differences of these two great nations in terms of their self-esteem and self-presentation. These phenomena being the elements of culture vividly represent the common features and differences between people from different continents.

First, it is logical to consider the term “culture” which is of Latin origin. Initially, it meant “cultivation, cultivation of the soil”, but later it received a more general meaning. There are up to 500 definitions of culture in the world scientific literature. In the most general sense, social scientists understand culture as all types of transformative activity of a person and society, as well as its results. Culture is an essential characteristic of the life of society, and, therefore, it is inseparable from man as a social being [30].

The American and Russian civilizations are the largest socio-cultural formations. On their basis, two great superpowers, two super-states, the USSR and the USA, were formed in the XX century, which determined the political, economic and cultural image of the world for almost the entire XX century. Modern Russia is the legal successor of the USSR. It goes without saying, that along with China, Russia and the United States play the role of the basic players on the world stage. Russians and Americans are both attracted and repelled from each other at the same time. This paradox is explained by the internal contradictions characteristic of our countries. The author, being a future teacher of English, considers it interesting to study the differences between Russian and American self-esteem and self-presentation, as this material will facilitate the development of emotional intelligence, tolerance and cross-cultural competence among students who are learning English [1-10].

So, the aim is to consider such phenomena of “self-esteem” and “self-presentation” in such different, and even, sometimes, polar to each other American and Russian cultures. In the course of writing the work, the following tasks are solved: to consider the concept of “self-esteem” and its levels; to compare the self-esteem of Russians and Americans; to consider the concept of “self-presentation” and to identify the similarities and differences of this phenomenon in the two cultures.

Talking about self-assessment, we should say that a person is a part of society, and the attitude of others, the assessment of his qualities, abilities, and attractiveness is important for him. But no less important for us is self-esteem, the attitude to oneself that is formed in a person throughout his life. The level of our own assessment of our advantages and disadvantages largely depends on the place we occupy in society, our self-confidence and the degree of social activity.

Let's turn to the definition of self-esteem. Self-esteem is the level of self-acceptance, the ability to critically analyze your own capabilities. It is inextricably linked with self-love [33]. A person with a lot of complexes will not be able to experience this feeling until he gets rid of them. Self-esteem affects how easy it is for an individual to communicate with others, fulfill goals, and develop. Those who have it underestimated, experience serious difficulties in all areas. The problem with low self-esteem is that its owners refuse to change. Often they are sure that this attitude to them persists for life. This is an erroneous opinion, because many factors affect self-perception; it cannot be the same throughout life.

The foundations of self-esteem are laid in childhood. After infancy, the child begins to realize the essence of comparisons; self-esteem appears in his system of concepts. Parents should be more careful with statements addressed to their son or daughter. A child / teenager should not think that he needs to deserve the love of loved ones or try to overtake his peers in a far-fetched race. First of all, he needs support and faith. On the contrary, unlimited praising also does not lead to the formation of an adequate assessment. Adults who inspire a child that he is the most talented, and the others are no match for him, are doing a disservice. Those brought up on praise, even those who have come out of puberty, are not capable of self-criticism. This prevents them from developing, eliminating their own shortcomings. Some of those who once received an "overdose" of compliments and flattery, in adulthood become downtrodden, unsociable. This model of behavior is the result of a combination of parental actions and harsh reality. Understanding that he is not unique in his own uniqueness leads a person to depression and other mental disorders.

In addition, a number of other factors affect self-esteem, including the environment (classmates, work colleagues, relatives), financial situation, education [11-17]. Many complexes come from school. Victims of bullying cope with fears for a long time; they are subject to phobias until the end of their lives. Comparing one's own financial situation with the incomes of more successful people greatly affects one's self-esteem. But self-assessment is not static; it changes throughout life, the level depends, among other things, on the efforts of its owner [18-23].

There are three main types of self-esteem. Their names are used not only in psychology, but also in everyday life. It is not uncommon to hear phrases like "he has inadequate self-esteem". Classification helps to understand how individuals evaluate themselves, how close their opinion is to objectivity. Adequate self-esteem is a type that, unfortunately, is characteristic of a minority of people. Its owners are able to treat their abilities sensibly, do not deny their shortcomings, trying to get rid of them. In addition, the emphasis is on the strengths that are actively developing. Few are capable of adequate self-criticism. Often you can observe two extremes – either too much self-flagellation, or excessive self-conceit.

Radical qualities are signs of the second type of self-esteem, which is commonly called distorted (inadequate). Its formation is almost always the result of complexes, explicit or hidden. Often, overestimated self-esteem hides uncertainty, attempts to appear better in the eyes of others. Understated differs in that its owner directly broadcasts his own complexes – he talks about them to others, behaves accordingly (stiffness, tightness, difficulties in communication). There is another type inherent in the majority – mixed. It means that at certain moments of life a person treats himself differently. He is able to adequately assess actions/actions, devote time to excessive self-criticism, while sometimes overestimating his own skills. Alas, most people do not manage to maintain a balance, and such "fluctuations" are fraught with mental problems.

There are three main levels of self-esteem, as well as types. They demonstrate a degree of self-love, the ability to see both positive and negative traits, and proximity to balance. The levels are related to the types, but there are still differences, which will be discussed further.

**Low.** It is the first and the most disliked by everyone. They try to get rid of low self-esteem by all available means. There are thousands of techniques that tell you how to deal with complexes, and some of them are effective. The level refers to a distorted perception; a person is characterized by an inability to praise himself, understating his merits, a high level of anxiety, and constant comparisons with others who are more successful. Those who have problems with self-esteem are easy to offend – it's enough just to make a joke about them or hint at a lack of appearance/knowledge. Low self-esteem creates a lot of inconveniences. It is really worth fighting with.

**Normal.** It is one of the indicators that a person does not have serious mental health problems. He knows how to listen to the inner voice, analyzes his own mistakes, he is able to make jokes in his address. At

the same time, such a person will not allow her to be insulted, forced to do useless tedious work, ignore her rights. It is worth striving for this level, because it is recognized as optimal.

**High.** The third level is inherent in those who focus on their strengths, losing sight of their shortcomings. It is no less dangerous than a low one. This type of self-perception does not belong to an adequate one. Owners of high self-esteem easily ignore constructive criticism. It is difficult for them to get out of their comfort zone; they resist it with all their might. The rigidity of beliefs, the rejection of others is a big problem. Its danger also lies in the difficulty of recognition. It is believed that a strong defender of his position is strong, confident, and reliable. But there is also a reverse side of the coin: unshakable beliefs hinder development, do not give the opportunity to learn, try something new. As a result, self-esteem directly depends on the living conditions, upbringing and environment. However, unfavorable factors are not a reason to give up. With a strong desire, the attitude towards oneself can be successfully adjusted, and there are many examples when downtrodden, indecisive men and women turned into liberated, strong personalities. It all starts with the awareness of problems, the desire to change for the better and, of course, efforts.

### **Comparison of self-esteem in Russian and American cultures**

Having considered the levels and types of self-esteem, we will try to compare self-esteem in Russian and American cultures. It should be noted that the Russian national character has developed over the centuries under the influence of such factors as the harsh climate of Northern Eurasia with a cold winter and a clear change in the seasons, the vast expanses of Russia, the multi-ethnic nature of the state, the need to protect long external borders. A significant role in the formation of the national character was played by Orthodoxy – the most widespread religion and the basis of the worldview for centuries. The main features of Russian self-esteem include breadth of soul, perseverance, compassion, humility, the desire for justice, community, the ability to perform a feat, the ability not to give up. Russians do not have such traits as arrogance, hypocrisy; on the contrary, painful self-criticism is very common. Russians, as a rule, often experience emotional ups and downs, which are facilitated by the change of seasons, and although they may have difficulties with regular rhythmic work, they can work hard from time to time. Russians are good at finding a common language with representatives of other peoples.

In general, Russians are not so much different from other peoples. All peoples have their own characteristics, and the Russians are no exception. However, as in many other multinational states, here we can no longer talk about the nature of the Russians themselves as citizenship by blood, but about the prevailing culture of the country, of which many other nationalities have long been part of it. Therefore, we can talk about the Russian national character. Each of the character traits has its opposite side, moving from strength to weakness. One of the most important features of the Russian character, noted by both domestic and foreign researchers, is a “sense of revolutionary upsurge”, “heroic dominant”, readiness for heroism, the ability to mobilize forces at a certain moment.

Also, Russians often create difficulties for themselves, and then heroically overcome them. A remarkable feature of the Russian character is generosity, breadth of soul. Probably, the reason for this was the natural conditions: the breadth of the territory and the abundance of fresh water. Russians are one of the few who wash themselves under a stream of water. Russians are distinguished by kindness, hospitality, compassion, directness in communication; they are not distinguished by arrogance. Because of this, they can easily find a common language with other peoples. The reason for this is that the Russian state has been multi-ethnic from its very foundation to the present day. As a result, the Russians were able to develop vast areas from the Urals to Alaska.

The most important feature of Russians is the need for faith. This need is realized as a deep confidence in oneself, in the work, in the own country and its people, and, of course, as spirituality and religiosity. Among Russians, there are such traits as surprise, a desire for spiritual, not material benefits, kindness, responsiveness and Christian humility – a quality that manifests itself in the ability to act in all circumstances without arrogance and anger. The misunderstood virtue of humility in fact very often results in a low national self-esteem, an excessive tendency to self-criticism. False spirituality and destructive cults are also quite common.

The Russian person always feels like a part of something bigger than himself. Due to some aspects of its basic psychology, Russian is “not self-sufficient”. He always lacks himself. Satisfying one’s own needs is not enough. The Russian always needs a big common goal.

The Russian is very sensitive to moral assessments, he really wants to respect someone and he really needs respect. The moral purity of the Russian person, his initial need to believe in something significant, in goodness, in nobility, the need to serve something sublime, to help someone often makes him a victim of the most outright deception, hypocrisy, meanness.

Europeans and Americans, both in the past and in the present, are most amazed (and frightened) by the heroism and selflessness of the Russian people, their invincibility. Indeed, as history shows, it is impossible to defeat Russia. This is not blind fanaticism or thoughtless following orders. Due to the original features of his worldview, the Russian person, when dying, feels that he is not dying at all, because that great common and, above all, the Fatherland, the Motherland for which he lives and of which he is a part, is immortal. Indeed, it is impossible to defeat such a people.

If we talk about self-esteem in American culture, then most Americans would find it difficult to give a clear definition of what exactly are the values by which they live. Many people just never thought about it.

But even if they did, they will probably eventually refuse to answer this question by directly listing such values. And the reason for this refusal will be the conviction, which in itself is also a purely American value – the belief that each person is so unique that no single list of values can be applied to everyone without exception, or even to the absolute majority of fellow citizens.

And although Americans may consider themselves more unusual and unpredictable than they really are, it is still important that this is how they think about themselves [20], [27-32]. For example, Americans believe that family, church and school have had only a minor impact on them. Each of them is sure that he “chose the values with which he is going to live his own life”. Many people are convinced that self-esteem affects the state of a person's mental health, so it is not surprising that people try to increase it in any way. And the majority of Americans are sure that a high opinion of themselves is the key to success and prosperity, and vice versa-low self-esteem is the basis of many personal and, as a result, social problems.

It seems that an inflated self-esteem has been formed in the United States of America, because, since the time of the development of this continent, a version was invented that Americans are a God-chosen people, that they are special. The exclusivity that was invented for themselves by those who once set foot on the American continent (the “discoverers”) in this way wanted to avoid unnecessary clashes with the local population, to subjugate it to themselves. As a result, the idea became a national idea. This is easily explained from the point of view of psychology: if you say something for a long time, you can achieve the effect of getting used to this thought and in the end there is a belief that it was so. Therefore, modern Americans were born with a myth that has existed for centuries-about their selectivity and exclusivity. To destroy this myth is a whole tragedy for them – to such an extent they believed in it. Moreover, everything is put on a religious basis. Every nation has its own national pride. And within acceptable limits, this is good. But when some leaders and countries cross the red line (we well remember the collapse of Hitler's ideas about the purest Aryan race), this is considered an unacceptable fact all over the world. The “exclusivity” of the United States causes far from the best feelings among the majority of the peoples of the world. Will the United States ever think about this? There are some wise Americans who are trying to focus the attention of politicians on reducing their ambitions, leaving the notorious exclusivity alone, and taking into account the interests of other states not in words, but in deeds.

So, we can say that Russian culture has a somewhat low self-esteem, the nature of which has historical and religious roots, while Americans have an inflated, not always adequate self-esteem, based on a belief in their own exclusivity.

While considering self-presentation, it should be noted that self-presentation is very little studied, especially in our country. The main part of the theoretical developments belongs to foreign scientists. The concept of self-presentation comes from the Latin word, which means “self-giving”, that is, presenting oneself to other people. We define self-presentation as the ability to present one, to attract attention to oneself by focusing on one's qualities, which are actualized through the use of special technologies and strategies. Self-presentation combines three attitudes, as it were: 1) the real Self is an attitude associated with the fact that the subject perceives his actual abilities, roles, his actual status, that is, his ideas about what he really is; 2) mirror (social) I - attitudes related to the subject's idea of how others see him; 3) ideal I - attitudes related to the subject's ideas of what he would like to become.

Finally, let's compare the self-presentation in Russian and American cultures and see how representatives of Russian and American cultures present themselves to the world and people. It is necessary to analyze how we are similar and how we differ from each other. Are there any facts that indicate to the commonality of the two nations?

The following can be attributed to the general characteristics of cultures:

1. Both powers are poly-ethnic and unite many nationalities living on their territories.
2. America and Russia are historical expansionists: the United States moved to the west, and Russia-to the east.
3. Both countries are nuclear powers, which cannot but affect their attitude towards other members of the world community.

4. Huge territories have contributed to the development of our peoples' thinking on a large scale.
5. Our peoples are distinguished by a direct, somewhat rude style of communication. Both nations do not approve of the officialdom characteristic of many Western European countries.
6. Both Russians and Americans show hospitality when meeting foreign guests.
7. The spirit of Messianism is inherent in both countries.
8. Russians and Americans love technical innovations and inventions.
9. There is no aristocratic class in both countries [27-32].

The differences between national characters are shown in the table.

**Table – The main differences between Russians and Americans**

<b>Russia</b>	<b>USA</b>
Collectivists	Individualists
Russians prefer to make collective decisions and focus on the group	In American culture, a person solves his own problems and defends his own opinion
Mixed European and Asian roots	Western European cultural roots
The wars were mostly fought on their own territory	Wars were fought, as a rule, on foreign territory
They are being careful	They like to take risks
Tendency to pessimism and fatalism	An optimistic view of life
Emotional	Pragmatic
Public property can quickly become private, and vice versa	A clear separation between public and private property
Sincere and deep friendship	Friendly relations rarely turn into a deep friendship
Private life and work have a great influence on each other	Work and social life are differentiated
Spiritual values occupy a more important place in the life of Russians	Material values are more important than spiritual ones
The pace of life of Russians is slower than that of Americans	For Americans, time is money. They highly appreciate and take care of time

The comparison of the main features of the communicative behavior of Americans and Russians allows us to state the main differences between these two communicative cultures.

Both peoples demonstrate sociability and communicative democracy, which brings the two described communicative cultures closer together. However, Americans at the same time demonstrate greater communicative friendliness, smiling, cheerfulness and noisy in communication compared to Russians [31].

Russians show greater communicative dominance, sincerity and emotionality in communication compared to Americans, do not like pauses, like a heart-to-heart conversation, express a lot of assessments, like to argue, raise serious issues in everyday communication, are better informed on many of them. Russians do not like non-emotionality, restraint, small talk; they ask deeply personal questions to strangers or unfamiliar people and tell personal information about themselves.

Russians tend to be modest when self-presenting and to communicative pessimism (the question "How are you?" is usually answered with "So-so", and not "Fine", as Americans usually answer), they are not inclined to boast of their success; Americans prefer aggressive self-presentation, they are characterized by communicative optimism and demonstration of their success.

American communication is more businesslike, pragmatic, Americans are more truthful in the information they give to the interlocutor. At the same time, they are not curious, less informed about issues that do not affect them personally. Official communication in the American communicative culture is much more effective than in Russian, in business communication, officials demonstrate friendliness and goodwill.

Arthur Miller, the world-famous American playwright, comparing Americans and Russians, said that Americans, unlike Russians, are not interested in what you really feel and think.

Russians tend to regulate the behavior of others, Americans try to avoid it. Humor in Russian communicative behavior is not part of everyday communication, as in Americans, but is included in entertainment communication. Americans have a much longer communication distance than Russians,

Americans are less likely to have physical contact with the interlocutor than Russians, Russian facial expressions and gestures are more intense and diverse than Americans.

In conclusion, we will once again summarize all of the above, pointing out the difference between Russian and American cultures in terms of self-esteem and self-presentation.

1. Self-assessment. Russian culture is characterized by a decrease in self-esteem, in American culture, an overestimated (not always justified) self-esteem.

2. Self-presentation. Russians tend to be modest in self-presentation and to communicative pessimism are not inclined to brag about their successes; Americans prefer aggressive self-presentation, they are characterized by communicative optimism and demonstration of their success.

3. The perception of individuality and oneself. In American culture, human existence is perceived as isolated, and the Russian person exists in the context of a group. In American culture, autonomy is encouraged, a person solves his own problems, defends his opinion, is responsible for himself, in Russian-he is guided by a group, responsibility is distributed to everyone and to no one in particular.

4. Perception of the surrounding world. In American culture, man is separated from nature; in Russian, he is dependent on it. In American culture, there is a clear division between public and private property, in Russian-common property passes into private hands without much remorse. In assessing the world around us, Americans emphasize positive aspects, Russians – on negative ones (the result is always considered as mediocre). Russians believe that everything that is not American is bad, and Russians believe that everything that is Russian is bad.

5. Motivation of achievements. For Americans, competition is one of the leading methods of motivation. For Russians, competition within a group is not welcome. However, competition between groups and especially between countries significantly increases motivation. Americans attribute their achievements entirely to their own efforts, while Russians consider their achievements to be equally dependent on their own efforts and on the confluence of circumstances.

6. Relationships with other people. Americans have numerous friendships, but they are shallow and fickle, social obligations are avoided. Russians are looking for deep and permanent relationships. They have a network of social obligations: "Help me, and I will help you; I will help you today, and someone will help me tomorrow."

7. Forms of activity. Action and activity are highly valued in American culture. Americans believe that the result justifies the means. In Russia, activity is valued less than reflection; the process is more important than the result.

8. Activity planning. American firms spend millions of dollars on drawing up various plans for several years ahead – from strategic to very detailed. Americans believe that personality can influence the future. Russians are of the opinion that life follows a predetermined course. A person can make a choice only within the framework of fate, fate.

9. Organizational environment, morale and productivity. Americans believe that an individual can change and improve his environment. Russians believe that people should live in accordance with the environment, and not change it.

10. Setting goals and career development. The American value is that a person should be realistic in his aspirations. The Russian value is the opposite: ideals (the meaning of life, the absolute truth) must be achieved, despite common sense.

11. Motivation and incentive system. Americans say: "We have to work hard to achieve our goals." The prevailing opinion among Russians is that success requires not only hard work, but also luck, luck and time.

12. Attitude to time. Time runs fast for Americans, and slowly for Russians.

13. Loyalty and motivation. The main meaning of the life of an American employee is an organization (firm, company, institution). For a Russian employee, the main thing is not the organization, but the group with which he identifies himself.

The results of this research will be helpful for people learning English and planning to travel to foreign countries or to work in the international companies [24-26], [34-36].

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