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Scientific supervisor V.Y. Mironova, senior lecturer of TPU

Volf V.I., Durnov A.I.

National Research Tomsk Polytechnic University

UNUSUAL ENGLISH COMPETITIONS IN SPORTS AND CUISINE

England is famous for its customs and traditions in sports and national cuisine. Knowledge about cultural peculiarities of the UK is highly important for those who learn the English language because it allows for better understanding of the English culture and, being a form of interlinguistic and intercultural contact, raises motivation to continue studies of the language.

We conducted a poll among Russian speaking students to find out what do they know about English traditional competitions in both sports and in cuisine. We wanted to estimate the awareness about such competitions as snail race, racing rubber ducks, grimacing, throwing eggs and eating nettles and etc. These are all events that are traditional grass-rooted pastime and are gaining popularity and fame among the modern-day Britons. The vast majority of respondents knew absolutely nothing of British competitions different from football and cricket.

Rubber ducks' race is obviously one of the more recently launched events. You choose a rubber duck, write your name on it and after the judge's signal all the ducks fall into the water. Ducks «swim», encouraged by cheers of fans. The duck, which comes to the finish line first will be the winner. The rubber duck races are often organized by charity funds, some of the races may boast more than 25 years of history.

Another spectator's sport while known for centuries on the continent, was imported from France only in the 1960s. Now annually a small English village Congham in Norfolk welcomes guests from all over the country to a world's biggest snails' race. During the competition, snails are placed in the center of the circle and their owners wait until one of them crawled out of it. The aim of this Snails' race is to choose the quickest snail. The winner gets a silver beer mug full of lettuce.

One of the oldest traditional British competitions is gurning, i. e. making distorted and unnatural facial expressions. The oldest continuous event is held annually since 1267 at the Egremont Crab Fair. Participants have to make the most unique face to win it. The most famous of present

winners is Tommy Mattinson, who won the competition more than 15 times (1986–1987, and then from 1999 to 2008). This series of victories made him the Guinness Book of Records representative. Four-times winner Peter Jackman became a TV celebrity.

Worm charming is a set of techniques to attract earthworms from the ground. Practiced for centuries by fishermen with secrets passed through generations, this activity started to be practiced competitively about 35 years ago. The record belongs to the teenager Tom Shufflebotham who collected 551 worms in 30 minutes [1]. This is an example of a practical skill becoming leisure activity and game after losing most of its practical value.

Egg relay is another sport born of practical needs of everyday farming activities. Farmers need dexterity and sleight while working with eggs and this need gave rise to the following competition. Each team consists of 11 people. They form a circle of 100 m. Each player is outlined 5-meter area which he or she can not go out. First participant is awarded a cage with 12 eggs. The judge gives the signal, and the eggs begin to be transferred one by one, until the last player gets all of them. Each broken egg is 3 seconds penalty. To win the competition you need to perform the task as quickly as possible. Another championship defines the egg sniper. To do this judges choose brave volunteers from the audience who play as target. After that the participants take four eggs. Sniper will be the one who runs all shells in the head of live target [2].

Another competition of this type is Cooper's Hill Cheese Rolling. Every year it is held in the village of Cooper's Hill in England and a lot of people try to participate in it to catch the rolling cheese. Obvious source of this competition lays in cheese making, where catching a wheel of cheese rolling aside was as valuable a skill, as ability to roll the wheels instead of carrying them.

Some competitions arise from memorable bets, thus illustrating Englishmen love for betting. The history of the nettle eating competition, for example, began in 1986, when two farmers came to a bar and began to argue about the quality of their nettle and its height. Bar owner got tired of hearing the dispute and he suggested a competition. As the result the next day the same farmers with nettles in their hands came to the bar. They began to measure plants. The winner was Alex Williams. His nettle was 4.7 meters in length. The proud winner said that he would eat his plant if someone's nettle was bigger. The crowd quickly found a farmer who had a nettle with a length of 4.9 meters. Alex was compelled to keep his promise by eating nettle immediately. Now this competition is held annually and gathers hundreds of people [3].

Englishmen are proud of their history, even of those moments that may look foolish to some. According to the legend, when in the 15th century York and Lancaster faced in the battlefield, they ran out throwing food into each other. In honor of the battle people throw Lancaster's pudding in Yorkshire's pudding annually. This is the World Black Pudding Throwing Competition. The meaning of the competition is to score as many points as you can by throwing cakes at opponents from a distance about two meters. The maximum number of points – six – you can get it if you throw a cake right in the face to the opponent. In this case cakes are permitted to throw with left hand only. The World Championship of Throwing Cakes is held in the UK since 1967. Originally only men were allowed to participate in the competition, but later the rules were changed and teams started to recruit women. In 1987 the tradition of the Championship has interrupted, but resumed in 2007.

Olney Pancake Race is another competition with history measured in hundreds of years. It is for the local ladies assemble dressed in traditional housewife attire (including skirt, apron and scarf) and run 415 yards through the streets of Olney carrying a frying pan. The pancakes are tossed at the start of the race and the winner must toss her pancake again at the finish. The race has been an Olney tradition since 1445 [4].

These unusual competitions illustrate significant traits of British national character, such as fondness for betting and history, individuality, dry humor, as well as more rural peculiarities. The British are very proud of their traditions and are eager to tell about them all over the world, which is also a characteristic trait, showing that they are not afraid of being thought of as crazy and laughable by outsiders.

These examples may be used in classroom and in independent work of students to raise awareness of cultural differences, especially in comparison with traditional competitions held at local fairs in Russia as well as for sheer distraction.

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Scientific supervisor N.V. Aksenova, senior lecturer of TPU

Rybyanets P.S.

National Research Tomsk Polytechnic University

CULTURE EXCHANGE – FROM CULTURE SHOCK TO DELIGHT

Today we have lots of opportunities to travel. Various countries annually receive thousands of tourists. The majority of people prefer to visit some well-known places, another people choose their own travelling routes. But what waits for us in other countries and why is it so fascinating?

While traveling, the person feels a set of various emotions, but the purpose of travel is positive emotions, aspiration to learn more and to remember places which he happened to visit.

There is rich variety of customs around the world. Each country has its unique traditions which can differ from ours. If you come to others country with interesting traditions and customs, to accept these traditions means to show respect for history and culture of these people. Some customs can shock us, some of them may cause our delight. In such situations appears a concept which is well-known as «*Cultural shock*».

Cultural shock is the feeling of emotional or physical discomfort, the disorientation of the individual caused by other cultural environment, collision with other culture, an unfamiliar place. Accustoming to a new environment can be exciting, amusing, stressful, can deceive expectations, or simply confuse [1].

The person has a conflict of old and new cultural norms and orientations; old to which he got used, and new, characterizing society new to him. It is the conflict of two cultures at the level of own consciousness. Cultural shock arises when familiar psychological factors which helped the person to adapt to some society, disappear, and instead appear unknown and unclear ones, coming from other cultural environment [2]. Such experience of new culture is unpleasant. Within someone's own culture permanent illusion of peculiar vision of the world, a way of life, certain mentality as unique and the only one admissible is created. The overwhelming number of people doesn't realize themselves as a product of separate culture, even in those