

Районная конференция работ  
исследовательского характера учащихся  
«С наукой в будущее»

ИССЛЕДОВАТЕЛЬСКАЯ РАБОТА  
«Postcrossing as an international means of communication»

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## Introduction

As we know communication is the process by which messages or information is sent from one place to another or the message itself. Nowadays intercultural communication skills are like a requirement. It is so easy for people from different nations to meet and interact. People even interact daily through the medium of modern telecommunication like phones, Internet, teleconferencing. There are a lot of different ways that people engage in communication by social networks. But despite the convenience of social networks, many people prefer to send letters and it can be easily done with the help of postcrossing. Postcrossing is a kind of activity which is widespread all over the world.

Postcrossing allows anyone to send and receive postcards from all over the world. It brings many people together. There are countless reports of new friendships made, new language learned and numerous cultural facts about other countries that people knew through their exchanges in the project. The fact that through postcrossing you can learn interesting things about different countries caught my attention. I have been doing postcrossing for 5 years, so I decided to study the cards I received and conclude that with the help of postcrossing you can not only improve your language level, but also learn the patterns of different countries. I also believe that our study will be able to popularize postcrossing among students, which will help to intercultural interaction with other countries.

The object of the research is information about cards and postcrossing, study of the collection of postcards from different countries.

The subject of our work are postcards received from different countries.

The purpose of the study is to identify the positive characteristics of postcrossing, to prove that postcrossing can help not only the study of the language, but also the study of cultures of different countries.

Objectives to achieve this purpose are:

1. To study the literature on the subject;
2. to study postcards from different countries, to find common and distinctive characteristics;
3. to prove that through the cards it is possible to study the interests of residents of different countries, their cultural values, mentality;
4. to summarize the findings.

Hypothesis: in order to study the culture of other countries, it is not necessary to bother yourself with reading thick books, you can do postcrossing for your own pleasure and develop yourself at the same time.

To prove the hypothesis of the research we used such methods as theoretical analyses to look into the problem of the research; classification; systematisation of the results of practical studies.

Our work is divided into two parts: basic part and practical part. In basic part we include the information about the history of postcards and information about postcrossing. The second part presents the results of our research.

This work can be useful and interesting for people who are interested in learning English language, studying intercultural communication, want to find new friends or just want to start an interesting hobby.

## 1. Basic part

### 1.1. The history of postcards

On October 1, 2019, postcards celebrated their 150th anniversary! Introduced in 1869 as a way to send a simple message, postcards quickly evolved beyond their practical purpose to become an unusual souvenir that appears in every person's mailbox. After the popularization of printing presses, business cards, and other types of paper products, illustrations began to appear on them, often with delicate engravings and tasteful drawings.

Already in 1777, the French engraver Demaison published in Paris a sheet of postcards with congratulations on them, intended to be cut out and sent through the local mail, but people were wary of servants reading their messages ... so the idea was not well received. [1]

In 1869, Austria-Hungarian Dr. Emanuel Hermann (a professor of economics from Vienna) wrote an article for the New Free Press, pointing out that the time and effort involved in writing a letter was disproportionate to the size of the message sent. He suggested using a more practical and cheaper method to ensure shorter and more efficient communications. His recommendations impressed the Austrian Post Office, which put them into practice on October 1, 1869, resulting in the Correspondent Card, a light brown 8.5x12cm rectangle with space for an address on the front and space for a short message on the back. (Appendix 1). The postcard was imprinted with a special stamp in the upper right corner, costing half the price of a regular letter. And so, the card was born! In June 1897, the Kosmopolit World Association, a postcard collecting club with thousands of members, was founded in Nuremberg. [2] They sent Gutferngruß greeting cards to each other, asked for a return card to be sent to them, and thus collected postcards from all over the world. The association was active until the First World War, and at its peak had over 15,000 members in Germany alone. At the turn of the century, the golden era of postcards began. Scenic landscapes, portraits, exhibitions, royal visits, humorous scenes, or even current events were quickly printed on postcards soon after. Many surviving examples of such postcards tell a vivid picture of that time.

On July 14, 2005, Postcrossing was launched! The website platform was built by Paulo Magalhães, (Appendix 2) a Portuguese software engineer who loved receiving postcards but did not know many people with whom he could exchange them. So, he coded the website in his spare time for the purpose of connecting it to other people who also enjoyed sending and receiving postcards. [1] The project started initially as a hobby for Magalhães, but its unexpected success revealed that the idea was more popular than he ever predicted. He initially hosted the project on an old computer housed in a clothes closet at his home, which was shown to be insufficient. Based on word of mouth, the project quickly expanded over the Portuguese borders where the project was developed.

What started as a small side project quickly became a worldwide hobby shared by many postcard enthusiasts. To date, over 55 million postcards have been exchanged through the platform, with thousands more on the way. Over time the project received

attention from the media, which contributed to its growth and popularity. The popularity of the site has led to the academic community exploring what makes Postcrossing so successful and what other digital communication technologies can learn from that success.

## **1.2. What is postcrossing?**

Postcrossing is an online project which allows its members to send and receive postcards with fellow members from around the world. The person or the place from where you'll be receiving is always a surprise. The members of Postcrossing are referred to as Postcrossers.

Postcrossing is the union of the words «postcard» and «crossing». Here, “crossing” refers to the exchange of postcards. Although direct swaps between members happen, they are not part of the official happenings on the site. The project is completely free and anyone with an address can create an account. However, the postcards and postage fees to mail them are the responsibility of each user.

If a member sends a postcard, they will receive at least one postcard back from a random postcrosser somewhere in the world. The first step is to request to send a postcard. The website will display and send the member an email with the address of another postcrosser and a Postcard ID which uniquely identifies that postcard in the system. The member then writes the postcard ID on it and mails the postcard to that postcrosser. The postcrosser receives the postcard and registers it using the Postcard ID that is on the postcard. At this point, the sender is eligible to receive a postcard from a different postcrosser. (Appendix 4)

Each member can write a profile text which will be visible to the postcrosser who requested an address. This profile can contain personal information about the recipient or postcard preferences. The Postcrossing system allows for the same two members to exchange postcards only once.

To start postcrossing all you need is a Postcard, a stamp and a pen. Postcards are normally available in bookstores. Now, you've got to write a message for the receiver. A message to the receiver is usually written on the left side of the postcard. The stamp is to be stuck on the top right corner of the postcard. If you're unsure of the postage to be used, you could check the correct amount with your post office. The recipient's address should be written on the bottom right corner of the postcard. If you're exchanging through Postcrossing, you will have to write the Postcard ID on it too. Now that the postcard is ready to be sent, you can drop it in the nearest postbox you can find. [3], (Appendix 5)

Some of us may have doubts about having our mailing address up and available for strangers, and that is completely understandable. Postcrossing has been very particular about safety and has taken a lot of precautionary measures to keep our data private. Therefore, as long as we stick to the rules (i.e., not to share ANY personal details at any time), then we should be pretty secured. I personally have not encountered any unfavorable events from this community thus far.

The information that you write on your profile is all dependent on you. There are options in one's Postcrossing profile settings that allow you to stay more “anonymous”

(not giving your date of birth, profile picture, etc.). There is always an option to use a pseudonym instead of your name.

Your mailing address is only visible to the person who is randomly assigned to send you a postcard and only used to exchange postcards in the project. Not just anyone on the website can see it. [3]

## 2. Practical part

### 2.1. Statistics about postcrossing

The relevance of Postcrossing is determined by the fact that every year more and more people are interested in this modern project. The aim of my research is to involve all the participants of the educational process in the project and to increase their motivation of international and intercultural communication with native speakers and to improve their English writing skills.

I have been doing postcrossing for 5 years and it became interesting for me to study the statistics of this project. It turned out that today 803,329 people from 208 countries are registered on this site. The most numerous users are residents of Russia (14.3%), Taiwan (13.7%) and China (9%). If we consider the participants by gender, then the female gender is 64.8%, male - 13.6% (Appendix 6).

The highest number of users does not mean that these countries send more emails. An interesting fact is that Germany (17%), the USA (12%) and only then Russia (11.8%) are the most active users. From my own experience I can say that I really received a very large number of postcards from these countries (Appendix 7).

If we speak about postcrossing activity by years, then starting from 2012 to the present day, activity has not been going down. However, in 2020 there was a temporary decline in the use of postcrossing, this fact can be connected to the outbreak of coronavirus. However, in general, statistics show that to this day a large number of people from different countries are interested in postcrossing. This fact proves that this is a great opportunity to develop intercultural communication and improve the level of English. (Appendix 8)

Having studied the statistics of the postcrossing site, I understand and once again I am convinced that today this is an option where I can find new foreign friends, practice English and improve my creativity. Moreover, this is a sign of altruism, because when I write a message, I want to bring warmth and positive emotions to a stranger. I believe that each of us can try this activity and make sure of it.

### 2.2. My «postcrossing» experience and statistics

For me, postcrossing is a hobby. I have been doing it for 5 years. I really enjoy choosing postcards, writing letters, and receiving letters from different countries. It helps me to improve my English level and I can also make new friends.

Studying postcrossing, I decided to identify similar and different features of the design and writing of letters. The first thing I can notice in my postcrossing experience is that one of the most active countries is Germany. I received the most letters from this country. The people of this country also differ from other countries in the design of postcards: they prefer to decorate postcards with stickers and drawings. The least active countries were Algeria, Hungary, Bulgaria, Brazil.

Firstly, my goal in postcrossing was to communicate in English, however, some representatives of different countries prefer to write in their native language. So, for example, I received a sufficient number of letters, in Russian, from Russia. If Russians use English, then they usually do not write much, sometimes with mistakes.

But what is very interesting is that US residents often write letters in Russian, apparently also trying to improve the level of the language. However, these letters contain a sufficient number of errors. The main topic for the letter is the weather.

It is very interesting to study the handwriting of people from different countries. Residents of the United States write very casually, quickly, merging letters beyond recognition. The British, on the contrary, write very carefully, separating words and letters. The English always ask how you feel, which characterizes them as very caring people.

Some postcards are characterized by maximalism: a lot of text, a lot of pictures, stickers, stamps. For example, this trend was noticed in the postcards of Hong Kong, Spain. In Bulgarian postcards, on the contrary, there is always a minimum amount of decorations and a small amount of text. Sometimes I try to guess which country a postcard came from without reading the address. And indeed, very often I can guess.

It is also very interesting what is shown on the postcards. Almost all postcards from Canada have an image of the sights of the country, as if in this way Canadians want to get to know their homeland better. Portuguese and French postcards usually have the pictures of the interests that the author of this letter loves.

Each postcard from different countries introduces me the mentality of these peoples, I understand what people prefer what they value. Postcrossing is a good option for international communication, live communication. I have collected a large collection of postcards, and each postcard is valuable to me in its own way.

## Conclusion

So, the modern world cannot exist without intercultural communication. In the context of the coronavirus and the unfavorable situation in the world, not everyone can afford to travel. Social networks help undoubtedly in this matter, but sometimes we want a more emotional message. Postcrossing helps us to express ourselves from different points, show our interests, our creativity. Postcrossing allows you to communicate with people from different countries and cultures that you might not have had the chance to interact with otherwise. By sending and receiving postcards, you can learn about different cultures, traditions, and ways of life. Creating and sending postcards can be a fun and creative way to express yourself and experiment with different art styles. Sending postcards requires writing skills, and it can be a great way to practice and improve your writing abilities.

So, summing up, it can be noted that the hypothesis posed at the beginning of the work was confirmed: really carefully studying similar moments in postcards of certain countries can be taken as a hallmark of a whole culture, a country. Postcrossing is indeed an effective activity for language practice, intercultural and international communication. Now a large number of people from different countries are engaged in postcrossing and this is a good alternative to social networks. With the help of postcrossing, you can improve and develop your creativity and imagination.

Who doesn't love getting mail that isn't bills or junk mail? Postcrossing lets you receive fun and unexpected postcards from all over the world.

## Reference list

1. <https://150yearsofpostcards.com/history>
2. Приветствие из Берлина. — Колер и Амеланг, 1987 г.
3. <https://www.postcrossing.com>
4. <https://medium.com/@mr.ryujino116/why-postcrossing-174dab9eb4fc>

The first correspondent card (1869 г.)



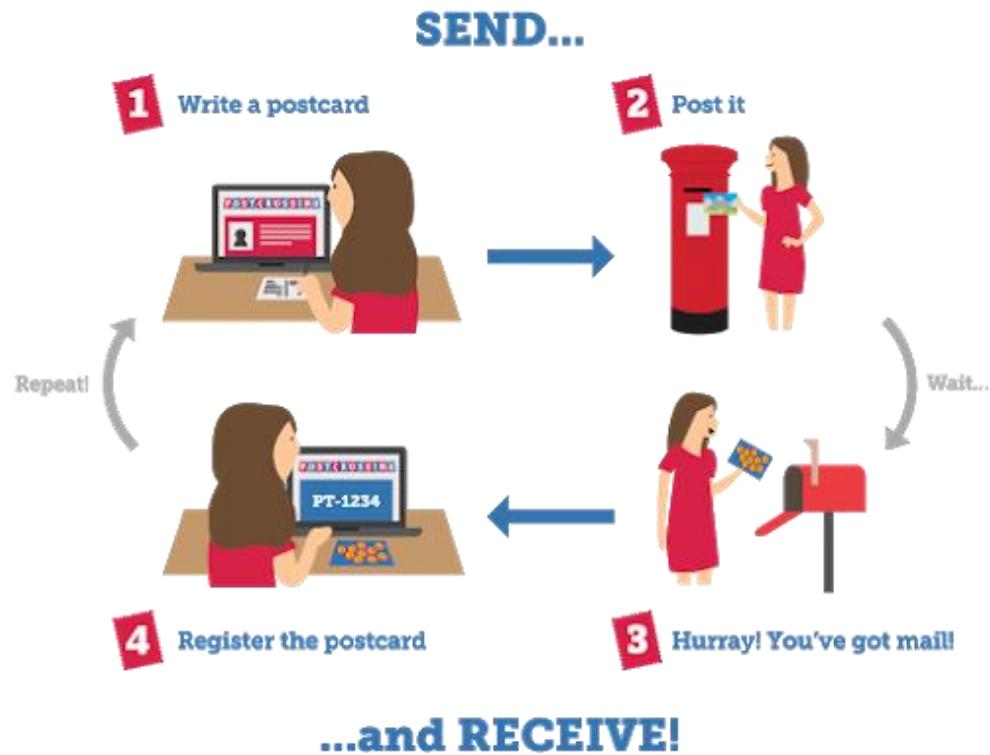
**Emmanuel Guerman**



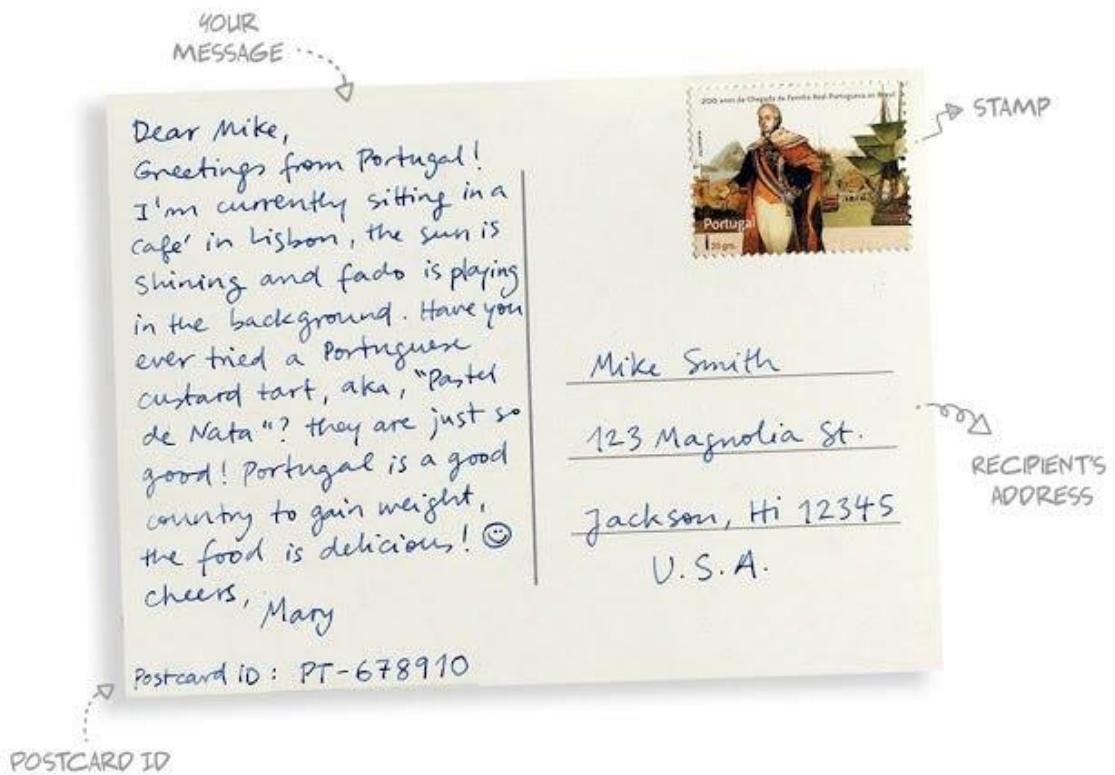
**Paulo Magalhaes**



## Postcrossing process



## The rules of writing postcards

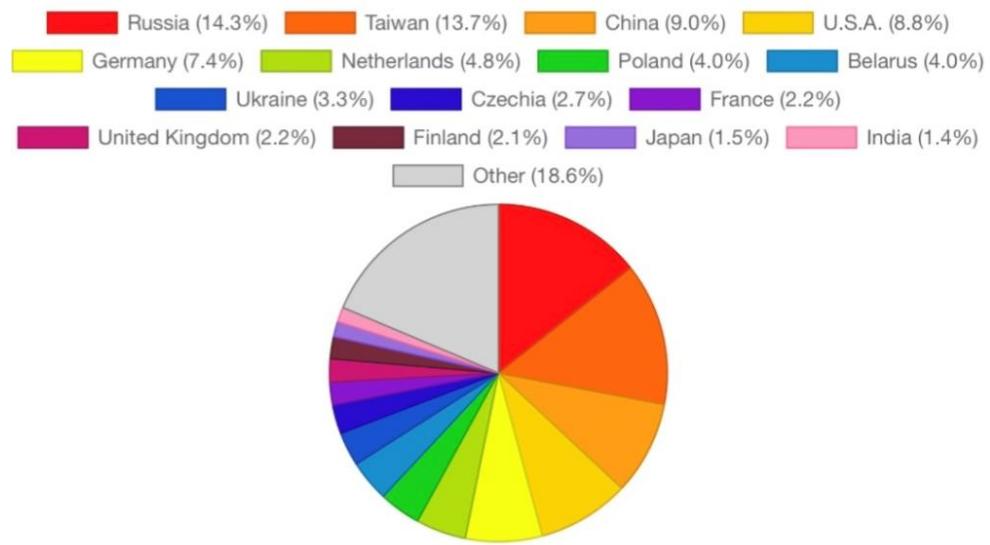


## Geographical distribution of postcrossing

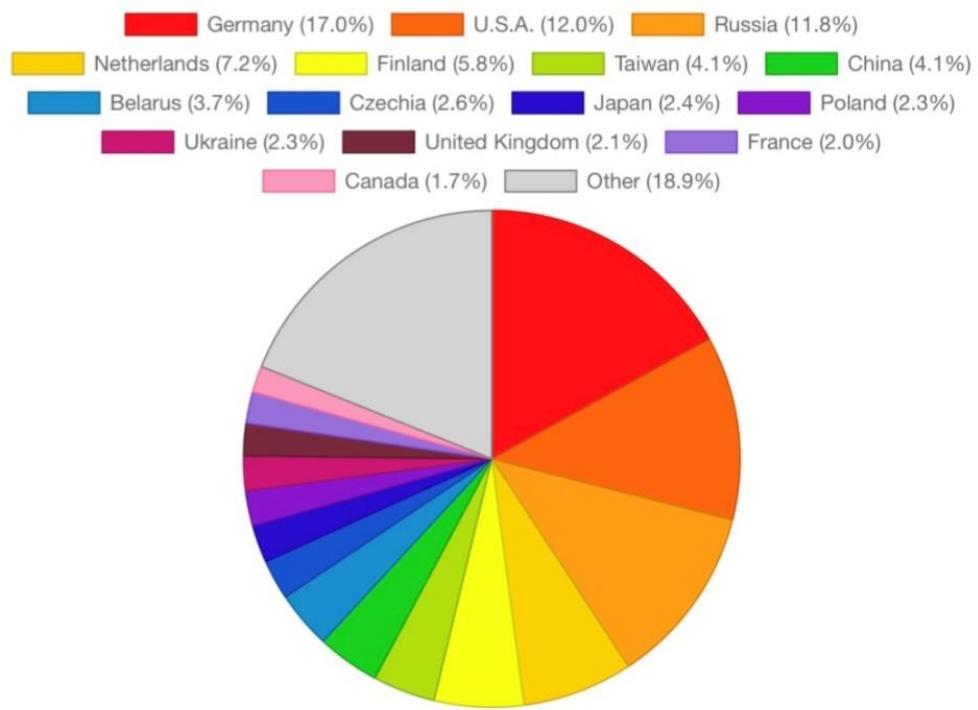
803,329 registered members in 208 different countries.

Gender pronouns: 64.8% female, 13.6% male, 0.4% neutral, 1.6% group accounts (19.6% do not say).

### Geographical distribution



### Total postcards sent per country



## Postcards exchange per month

71,133,668 postcards have been received because of this project

375,687 postcards are traveling at this exact moment

51,007,104 (72%) postcard images were uploaded to Postcrossing

18.0 days is the median postcard travel time. 26.5 days is the average.

358,650,957,667 km (or 222,855,373,077 miles) traveled — that's 8,949,493 laps around the earth or 466,503 return trips to the moon or 1,198 return trips to the sun!

