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ENGLISH WEDDING CEREMONY AND ITS LEXICON

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Abstract –This article deals with the wedding ceremony terms in English, their semantic meanings, wedding rituals that clearly characterize the customs and traditions of British people.

Key words: clergy, aisle, church, wedding, ceremony, reception, framework of the wedding ritual, customs and traditions.

First of all, a groom in Britain makes a proposal to the bride. “**Proposal**” means asking another person to marry them. This is an event over which the prospective groom has almost complete control. Most take considerable trouble to make the event special, arranging an evening at a favourite restaurant, often on a significant date. Two grooms proposed at big social events, with other people present. Given the widespread understanding that it is his job to propose, the prospective bride simply has to wait for it to happen, even where the couple has discussed the possibility of getting married and has a general intention to do so.

The wedding day is framed by correspondence. Guests are invited to the wedding formally, by written, usually specially printed **invitation**. Cheaper, ready printed invitations are sometimes used, with the couple filling in the details of their wedding by hand. Printed invitations are one item from a potentially much longer list of wedding related stationery, including service sheets and name cards for places at the reception, invitations for guests only invited to the evening reception and thank you cards. The wedding day is a set piece ritual in contemporary England, as elsewhere. The groom travels to the church with his **best man**, they wait at the front for the church. The bride arrives at the church last, with her father, who leads her down the aisle. The contemporary bride is distinguished from her attendants by her clothes.

English wedding **ceremony** is planned beforehand. Fantastically high-priced meals, drink, garments, transport and pictures are all part of a contemporary English wedding ceremony. As a rule, it starts with a prayer, emphasizing the marriage as an act of worship. Then a pastoral introduction follows.

“**Page-boys**”, sometimes called “**ring bearers**”, may be children under the age of eight. The groom and bride together choose clothes for pageboys. With one exception, dressed in a kilt, they wear scaled down versions of the groom’s outfit, sometimes without the jacket. Bridesmaids’ outfits are chosen by the bride, in consultation with the bridesmaids, taking into account styles and colours that would „suit“ them. Bridesmaids under the age of ten are dressed in white or cream dresses, matching the bride, sometimes in an A-line style and sometimes with big, netted skirts. Shoes and bouquets carried by bridesmaids consolidate this group effect. Rather smaller and often in different colours than the **bridal bouquet**, there were usually similarities in flower, style of arrangement and colour. Little girls often carry baskets of flowers, and have flowers in their hair. The bride and bridesmaids form a very distinctive group. So do the groom and his best man, though in a rather different way.

The clothing in an English wedding is temptingly easy to interpret: the bride is an unmistakable and iconic figure. The groom, in contrast, in formal daywear, as might be worn for other formal daytime events, including other peoples` weddings, encoded in conventional wedding clothes are notions of the feminine decorative helplessness contrasted with masculine practicality, and of the wedding as an event that principally concerns the transformation of the status of the bride. The groom hires suit to be married in, from national chains or local firms, one in particular enjoying a very favorable reputation. Some of the grooms choose morning suits with tailcoats and others suits with long four buttoned jackets.

Hiring wedding cars became customary at a time when private car ownership was rare. It persists with hired cars being prestige models in immaculate condition and appears to serve two purposes. On the one hand, it is another opportunity to enjoy, for the day of the wedding,

luxurious commodities impossible in ordinary life. On the other hand, the incongruity of groom or bride driving themselves to their wedding or getting there by bus merits attention.

The wedding **reception** follows the wedding, and consists of a special meal, followed by speeches by various persons and **toasts**. The general practice is to leave a considerable interlude between the wedding and the reception, to allow for photographs at the church, travel to the reception and possibly more photographs there before the reception starts. Weddings can legally take place in England between 8 am and 6 pm.

Wedding speeches conform to predetermined patterns. There are numerous books on the subject, giving instructions about what should be included in a speech by the different speakers, how to structure a speech and even suggesting suitable forms of words or jokes. Many of the couples buy such a book, usually for their best man. The conventions, followed by these most couples are as follows. The bride's father speaks about the bride, recounting incidents from her childhood and past life, before proposing a toast to the bride and groom. Where the bride's father is not present, this role is fulfilled by whoever gave the bride away in the ceremony. The groom speaks next, thanking the bride's father for his good wishes, giving some account of the course of his relationship with the bride and concluding with a toast to the bridesmaids. The last speech is given by the best man, who replies to the groom's toast on behalf of the bridesmaids, says something ideally funny about the groom, reads out cards from people who have not attended and concludes with another toast to the bride and groom. For the toasts, guests can be given champagne, or other sparkling white wine. The speaker introduces the toast, everyone stands up, the speaker says „to the bride and groom“, the guests repeat “the bride and groom” and everyone takes a sip of their drink.

A more informal, relaxed atmosphere prevails as the couple leave the church as a couple, followed by their close relatives and friends, ritually integrated in the wedding procession out of church. The reception both continues this more relaxed mood. Couples arrive first at the reception venue and with their parents and greet guests as they arrive. A formal meal is followed by speeches that consolidate the ritual achievement of the wedding service; the ritual action of the wedding is, in the speeches incorporated into the collective narratives of family and friendship groups. After the cake is cut, a relaxed and informal atmosphere prevails until the departure of the couple.

Wedding ceremony is an essential event in human life. The terms used in this ceremony differs from nation to nation, language to language and culture to culture. Semantic properties of wedding ceremony terms will be closely connected with history, religion, rituals, customs, lifestyle and the language of people living in that society.

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