



ISSUES OF STUDYING STEREOTYPES IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Komilova Gulnoza Uzokovna

*Senior Teacher of the Department Uzbek language and literature of Tashkent
Institute of Chemical Technology. Uzbekistan.*

ANNOTATION

The article deals with questions about stereotypes and their role in teaching intercultural communication. It has been shown that stereotypes can lead to discrimination, which turns inaccurate and negative feelings into unfair actions towards certain individuals or groups. However, this can be prevented if the aspects of intercultural communication are correctly added to the curriculum in specialized schools and gymnasiums in order to avoid culture shock during subsequent communication with a native speaker.

KEYWORDS: *culture; intercultural communication; stereotype; ethnocentrism; communicative competence.*

ВОПРОСЫ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ СТЕРЕОТИПОВ В МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНОЙ КОМУНИКАЦИИ

Комилова Гулноза Узоковна

*Старший преподаватель кафедры
Узбекского языка и литературы Ташкентского
химико-технологического института.
Узбекистан.*

Аннотация

В статье рассмотрены вопросы о стереотипах и их роли в обучении межкультурной коммуникации. Показано, что стереотипы могут привести к дискриминации, которая превращает неточные и негативные чувства в несправедливые действия в отношении определенных лиц или групп. Однако это можно предотвратить, если грамотно добавить в программу обучения в специализированных школах и гимназиях аспекты межкультурной коммуникации во избежание культурного шока при последующем общении с носителем языка.

Ключевые слова: *культура; межкультурная коммуникация; стереотип; этноцентризм; коммуникативная компетенция.*

Culture is a way of life, the context in which we exist, think, feel and build relationships with others. We tend to perceive reality strictly in the context of our own culture, and there is still a

tendency to believe that our own reality is the correct perception. Using the norms of our own culture as standards when we judge the behavior of people from other groups is called ethnocentrism. In the bias of



our own worldview, we tend to depict other cultures too simplistically, and we view each person as having corresponding stereotypical traits. The point is that a stereotype may be correct in depicting a typical member of a culture, but it is imprecise for describing a specific person simply because each of us is unique, so characteristics cannot be predicted based on ethnic norms. In recent years, there has been more discussion and research on the importance of intercultural sensitivity and communicative competence. Teachers should not only draw the attention of students to facts about other cultures, but also point out that communication is not just an exchange of information, opinions, as well as stereotypical images about the culture of other peoples.[1]

Everyone knows some anecdotes about the stereotypes of the ethnic group. The most common is the one about Hell and Heaven. The joke goes like this: "Paradise is a place where: the police are British, the chefs are French, the lovers are Italians, and everything is organized by the Germans. Hell is a place where: police are French, chefs are British, lovers are Germans, and everything is organized by Italians." [2]

The fact that people in each of these countries can laugh suggests that there is some truth in the joke. After all, a stereotype is a fixed, too generalized idea about a specific group of people or a common culture. No matter how accurate a stereotype is, it is based on some reality. The moment we realize that we are making contact, people start looking for similarities. In general, it is a very natural tendency to strive to be close to those with whom we have common views, habits or languages. The more points we can connect, the more comfortable we feel and the faster we can establish new relationships. What is really important is that when we fail to find a common ground, do we have the courage to overcome the anxiety that has arisen and go forward, or do we all together refuse to interact with the unknown?

Regardless of our choice, when faced with uncertainty, stereotypes are likely to form as a result of this confrontation. We tend to think of them as a bad thing, that only racists and fanatics are out hunting others. However, we are all guilty of putting others in a box, even though our knowledge of them is only a grain of truth. Our minds have evolved to navigate this vital process - managing our lives, developing skills and conquering a world that is otherwise too large, complex and impossible to understand in all its details. In any case, stereotypes are created, since this is a universal process, both at the collective and at the individual level.[3]

However, the main problem with this seemingly natural process is that while our brains

may be skillful enough to classify inanimate objects, we run into problems in classifying people because humans are much more complex than objects.

First, stereotypes lure us into a trap that filters out all information that does not match our assumptions. People tend to neglect or ignore facts that call into question a belief, especially when there are no resources to confront this information. Stereotypes are very stable and difficult to change. Even when faced with cases that contradict them, we tend to believe that this is just an exception to the rule. For example, if you have a common stereotype that all Americans are arrogant, so when you meet a friendly, smiling American, you're more likely to conclude that this is just a first impression and that this person is not who he wants to appear at first. acquaintance. In addition, this selective filter will only amplify information that matches your assumptions. In short, you only see what you want to see. Hence, you are misled when making decisions based on lies.[4]

Second, stereotypes can create self-fulfilling prophecies because of the connection between belief and behavior. Basically, your profile in society will be influenced by what people usually think of your group, and therefore indirectly think of you. For example, when Europeans are reminded that they have lower athletic ability than, for example, African Americans, they also perform worse than those who were not aware of this stereotype. Likewise, women think about be less capable than men in technical and mathematical work, but this is a myth that has proven to be erroneous, since women can act on an equal basis with men. This stereotyping effect is so harmful in the sense that it may lead us not to invest more effort in solving the problem. Instead, he questions us about our own abilities and attributes this weakness to our age, race, gender, nationality, etc.[5]

Finally, there are also positive stereotypes. If you think logically, then if a negative stereotype makes people work worse than their real abilities, then a positive one makes them work better. This is partly true. However, as positive as they are, stereotypes remain the same, and you will always be unable to understand the whole picture using them. In a broader perspective, especially in a multicultural society, maintaining positive stereotypes for one particular group highlights the negative stereotypes of others (eg, they are lazy; they depend on wealth; they are criminals, etc.). In fact, it can contribute to legal injustice, social hostility, racial hatred, creating platforms for accusing other groups of not being a model, which is not consistent with their level of contribution. But what if we consider the stereotype as opposed to the concept of cultural fact. At this point, the critical person will ask the question: "How can I distinguish a stereotype from a fact?" There is a



huge difference between a stereotype and an accurate description of a culture. It is helpful to remember that bias is based on perception and accurate cultural descriptions are based on research. There are four criteria for determining whether some cultural information is valid. This is descriptive, not evaluative, can be verified from more than one independent source, applies, if not to all members of the population, at least to the statistical majority, and also indicates the characteristics in which this population differs from others.[6]

Now let's consider the following statement: "The Dutch are tall." The first criterion is marked because the statement is descriptive and non-evaluative, it does not impart moral connotation, good or bad. The second criterion is missing, but it can be derived from at least two studies showing that Dutch people are above the world average. The third criterion is also not met, but can be represented by statistics confirming that this height applies to most Dutch people and not to all. The fourth criterion is vague, since "being tall" is useless without a comparison system, we do not know if the Dutch are "higher than whom?"

Conclusion: The statement in its original form is more of a stereotype than an accurate cultural observation. But how then to be? How to be aware of all these nuances without ever visiting other countries? It is very important, firstly, to raise students' awareness of their culture and at the same time to interpret and understand other ethnic groups. Raising intercultural awareness means developing successful communication skills, that is, competent and peaceful interaction with people who are different from us. This approach assigns another important role of the teacher / student of a foreign language: the role of "intercultural mediator", that is, a person who is able to critically comprehend the relationship between two cultures.[7] Obviously, it is not always easy to pause and collect all the information to determine if a piece of information is fact or a stereotype. However, we know that with some conscious effort this is possible. After all, stereotypes and prejudices are everywhere, and we cannot avoid them. We cannot even avoid its direct impact. Nevertheless, we have a choice not to act on them, and even better, to regulate our own behavior and change the natural tendency, and training in intercultural communication can directly contribute to this. Indeed, as practice shows, effective intercultural communication requires sympathy, respect, openness and sensitivity.

Teachers, in turn, must create opportunities for communication based on the values, cultural norms and needs of learners, rather than curricula and texts / textbooks developed in communities of native speakers.[8]

Most importantly, an intercultural language learning program should help students develop "ethnic awareness" in order to comprehend people in their own context.

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