STEREOTYPES AS DISTORTING MIRROR OF REALITY

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The purpose of the study is to analyze the mechanisms and causes of social stereotypes formation in modern world. The problem of stability and variability of ethnic stereotypes, as well as heterostereotypes (external stereotypes formed by representatives of one culture about another) and autostereotypes (myths about themselves that exist within the framework of the given culture) are considered.

Modern society is characterized by stereotypical mindset. There are various stereotypes that exist at language level and may interfere in the process of intercultural communication. Intercultural perception is a key point in interaction of the representatives of different cultures, and ethnic stereotypes are an important component of intercultural perception. The mechanisms of forming stereotypes are connected with the peculiarities of human mindset and psyche. Mechanisms of stereotyping also include a person's tendency to draw conclusions based on one's own cultural experience.

Once formed, stereotypes acquire a high degree of stability. They are difficult to modify and become a "distorting mirror", in which the representatives of different groups are reflected in a blurred or distorted form.

Language plays a leading role in creating stereotypes. Constant repetition of the same phrases, which acquire stability on the level of language within a course of time, leads to the fact that their meaning settles in the subcortex of the brain, and their perception takes place automatically, without the participation of higher consciousness. Language carries in itself a huge influencing power. Modeling the worldview of native speakers, it defines their actions and behavior not only on the interpersonal, but also on the social levels.

Keywords: *ethnic stereotypes, heterostereotypes, autostereotypes, "the friend — foe" dichotomy, ethnophaulisms, derogatively marked ethnonyms.*

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Introduction

A person is prone to stereotypical thinking and behavior. Stereotyping is an anthropologically necessary cognitive process, since the formation of generalized images makes it easier for a person to navigate. When we deal with such a complex area as intercultural and interethnic relations, it becomes almost impossible to avoid stereotypes and their clashes. The linguistic embodiments of stereotypes can be used against ethnic groups to dehumanize and discredit them.

Thus, the relevance of the research topic is determined by the importance of studying the sociocultural and ethnic aspects of stereotypes, their place in the linguistic picture of the world and the peculiarities of using ethnic labels. Obviously, their study makes it possible to better understand the ethnic characteristics of people, the individual and social aspects of their culture.

Stereotypes and their role in intercultural communication

The concept of "stereotype" was first put into circulation by the famous American journalist Walter Lippman in 1922. In his book "Public Opinion", he defines a stereotype as a simplified, pre-accepted representation that does not follow from a person's own experience. The stereotype arises on the basis of the mediated perception of the object: "We are told about the world before we see it. We imagine most things before we experience them. And those preconceptions, unless education has made us acutely aware, govern deeply the whole process of perception.… In the great blooming, buzzing confusion of the outer world we pick out what our culture has already defined for us, and we tend to perceive what we have picked out in the form stereotyped for us by our culture" (Lippman, 2004). Stereotypes, according to W. Lippmann, contribute to the formation of traditions and habits. "The stereotypes are, therefore, highly charged with the feelings that are attached to them. They are the fortress of our tradition, and behind its defenses we can continue to feel ourselves safe in the position we occupy." (Lippman, 2004). The stereotype is unambiguous; it divides the world into two categories: "familiar" and "unfamiliar". The familiar becomes synonymous with good, and the unfamiliar becomes synonymous with bad.

As we accumulate life experience and encounter various stereotypes, we develop so-called *cognitive distortions* or unconscious beliefs that can greatly

influence our attitudes and views. Stereotypes lead to some distortion of reality and the inclusion of "autopilot" in the communication process. This implies a rigid perception scheme, which significantly complicates or even excludes feedback from communication partners and acts as an obstacle to effective intercultural interaction. As a result, the actual behavior of partners, as well as their intentions, remain unnoticed or cause misunderstanding, which affects the course of communication and can become a source of conflict.

The role of stereotypes is not unambiguous. On the one hand, they are necessary results of the work of the human psyche, which makes it possible to systematize the "alien" surrounding world, to streamline an unfamiliar and unpredictable reality. For the successful implementation of the process of intercultural communication, a stock of information about the nationally determined ideas of a particular linguocultural community is needed. Getting into a different, unfamiliar cultural and ethnic environment, a person often experiences a culture shock. In this situation, stereotypical ideas about other peoples, cultures and societies come to rescue. They broadcast the basic realities and background knowledge of a foreign culture, prepare for a collision with a different mentality, way of life and behavior of representatives of different cultures, and allow to level the process of culture shock. In such cases, excessive schematization and generalization of stereotypes, their simplified view of representatives of other cultures become an obstacle in intercultural contacts.

On the other hand, when studying the role of stereotypes in intercultural communication, it is necessary to remember that stereotypes are always national and it is natural for people to draw conclusions based on their own cultural experience. Sometimes you can find equivalents in different cultures, but these stereotypes may differ in details that are of great importance for successful intercultural communication. Differences in stereotypes that exist in various cultures relate to such aspects as topics of conversation, attitudes towards time, wealth, food, guests and neighbors, the behavior of representatives of different cultures in public places and many others.

Let us look at some examples. The question "*How are you?"* in England should be answered quickly and briefly: "*I'm fine, thank you! How are you?*" because the question "how are you?" is rhetorical, not requiring a detailed answer. However, in Germany it is customary to give an exhaustive answer, without missing a single detail about your problems, health, children, and so

on. Germans, when answering a phone call, give their names, which seems strange to representatives of many other cultures. In Germany, it is not common to advertise one's wealth, especially among young people, as it is considered indecent. At the same time, older Germans do not save much, spending up to 75% of their income. In our country, as in many post-Soviet countries, just the opposite is true. The young boast of material values, while the elderly live modestly and pinch pennies. In English-speaking culture, humor is built on irony, sarcasm, and ambiguity. The Germans do not understand irony at all and generally do not really like to joke. Italians take a shower before dinner, and not in the morning or before going to bed like many Europeans.

Stereotypes-representations also manifest themselves in different ways. For example, a Korean proverb says "A wife should be like a fox, and a husband like a bear", meaning that the wife should be smart, flexible in communication and cunning, and the husband (bear) should be strong. At first glance, it seems that Russians have similar associations, but in their culture, the fox is the standard of cunning, and the bear is a strong but clumsy animal. In Russian national consciousness both symbols are more negative than positive.

Despite the fact that stereotypes imply stable images, they are not static, and their content is evolved in the process of their production, distribution and perception. As a result of changes in such external factors as economic, political, social conditions of people's lives, social stereotypes are also subject to changes and disappearances. Therefore, new stereotypes may emerge when new groups and new boundaries become relevant. For example, four centuries ago, the typical Briton was very different from the current stereotype. In his book "Weeping Britannia: Portrait of a Nation in Tears" (2015), Thomas Dixon describes the Britons of Shakespeare's time as sweating, drunken, meaty, angry, violent, simple-minded and melancholy. In the 18th century, and more precisely during the war between Britain and France, a new British mentality and the concept of a "stiff upper lip" began to take shape. Charles Darwin in his book "On the Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals" (1872) noted: "Englishmen rarely cry, except under the pressure of the acutest grief" (p. 79).

Even today, in English, there are many language constructions that imply a steadfast attitude to any adversity: *be able to control oneself, keep calm and carry on, muddle through, plug away, soldier on, insular nation, insular pride* (insular in expressions is used in the meaning - closed, reserved, limited, full of prejudice). The new multicultural Britain of the 21st century has become more

emotional and despite the fact that the considered stereotype about traditional British stoicism is still alive, it is already perceived as something archaic and obsolete.

Another British stereotype "On Sundays go to church" has changed as religiosity has sharply declined in recent years. On Sunday more and more Britons prefer to stay at home in front of the TV or computer (45%), visit relatives (15%), go to a café or restaurant (25%).

Ethnic stereotypes and their verbalization

In the modern multicultural world, ethno-stereotypes are especially relevant for an adequate perception of the cultural characteristics of another ethnic group. The basis of the ethnic stereotype is the dichotomy "we - they", which, in turn, is based on the signs of "friend — foe" relevant for each culture and determines the nature of intercultural interaction. A pre-formed opinion about ethnic character traits, behavior, representatives of another nation facilitates communication, smooths out distortions in the perception of a different linguistic and cultural reality and contributes to the creation of a dialogue of cultures.

The American psychologist O. Kleinberg defined an ethnic stereotype as a picture in the minds of people regarding their own or other national groups. Such images or representations are usually widespread in society; as a rule, they are extremely primitive and immune to objective reality (Kleinberg, 1950).

According to I. S. Kon, ethnic stereotypes are the embodiment of ideas about one's own people and others, and this idea is not just a sum of information, it necessarily reflects an emotional attitude towards the subject; these are some schemes that fix the features of phenomena and in which the whole history of interethnic relations is condensed in a peculiar way (Kon, 1968). Ethnic stereotypes are more likely to indicate feelings of enmity or friendship than to be a fair reflection of the people.

Ethnic stereotypes have a different mechanism of emergence, consolidation and manifestation, according to which they can be divided into two groups. According to S. V. Gladkikh, the first group — *ethnic stereotypes of behavior* — has been formed over many centuries, they have passed into the rank of the mythologized and are stable, not amenable to cultural change. The second group — *ethnic stereotypes of thinking* — is formed spontaneously in

the process of intercultural communication, ethnic clashes, with the help of mass media, etc. (1999, pp. 59-60).

The stereotypes of the first group are rigidly fixed formations that are not influenced by external influences. The second group of stereotypes is formed under the influence of cultural, political and economic factors that characterize the living conditions of an ethnic group. Those ethnic stereotypes that are imposed on the individual by the media, with the aim of influencing the ethnic group, are very changeable and dynamic.

Ethnic stereotypes are also subdivided into *autostereotypes* and *heterostereotypes*. *Autostereotypes* (i.e., the perception of "one's own" ethnic group) are opinions, judgments, and assessments attributed to a given ethnic community by its representatives. Most of them are formed under the influence of national literature, mass media, traditional and modern folklore. *Heterostereotypes* (the perception of an "alien" ethnic group) is a set of value judgments about other peoples by representatives of a particular ethnic community.

One way or another, all stereotypes find their expression in language, since they consist of a mental image and its verbal shell. They find their embodiment in such emotionally marked lexical units as *anthroponyms* that convey a generalized image of the people (*Paddy (Pat)* — Irish; *Jock* — Scot; *Taffy (Taff)* – Welsh; *Yankee (Yank)* —American) and *ethnonyms* (*Chinese* —a topsy-turvy, unsuccessful (Am.slang); *Dutch barn* — barn without walls for storing hay; *Scotch* —stingy, stingy (am. colloquial); *Turk* — tough, rude person, tyrant; etc.).

Stereotypical ethnic attitudes are often verbalized with the help of *ethnophaulisms* based on the binary opposition "friend or foe". They reflect a generalized image created by the collective activity of the consciousness of an ethnos based on the experience of many generations in observing and evaluating friendly and enemy ethnic groups. Let us consider some ethnophaulisms of the English linguoculture: *Fog-Breather* — British person; *Cheesehead* – people who are Dutch; *Pancake Face, Pancake* – an Asian person; *Yellow-belly /Slant-eye* — *Chinese; Kiltie* — *Scottish; Cheese-eating surrender monkey* – a Frenchman from the defeat of the French against the Germans in 1940, and the huge variety of cheeses originating from France (UK, US); *Wooden shoes* — Dutchman; *Eagle-beak* — Jew; *Curry-muncher* — a person of Indian origin; *Herring snapper* – Norwegian and Swede; *Potato-*

eater — Irish; Reaseball / Greaser – a person of Italian descent, *Kraut —an insulting word for a German* (from *sauerkraut*); *Wetback —* an offensive word for someone from Mexico who goes to live in the US, etc.

The binary opposition "*friend — foe*" is inextricably linked with the concept of ethnic identity, and the source of this opposition is ethnocentrism. In order to prove the connection of language with such a process of the external world as ethnocentrism, it is necessary to bring into consideration the ethno-marked communicative idioms of the language. In every linguistic culture there are idioms, proverbs, sayings, aphorisms, ethnic jokes and anecdotes, ethnophaulisms, derogatively marked ethnonyms, epithets and metaphors in which one can see a very specific stereotypical image of one's own people and a stereotyped idea of "alien" ethnic groups. Consider some of them in various linguistic cultures:

idioms: English (*build castles in Spain* — to form unattainable projects; *Chinese fire drill* — 1. a state of great confusion or disorder, 2. a prank in which a number of people jump out of an automobile stopped at a red traffic light, run around to the opposite side, and jump back in, often in a different seat before the light changes to green; *Double Dutch* — talk or writing that is nonsense or that you cannot understand; *mad Greek* — used to describe something as "classic"; *Mexican standoff* — is a confrontation where no strategy exists that allows any party to achieve victory; *Irish bull* – a ludicrously illogical statement; *Chinese whispers* — a situation in which a piece of information is passed from one person to the other and is changed slightly each time it is told, *to assist in the French* — to be present anywhere without providing any help, *to weep Irish* — to cry insincerely or in an exaggerated manner, *Jewish Princess* — spoiled girl), Italian (*parlare arabo* — to explain badly, to say something difficult to understand, means "to speak Arabic"; *fare il portoghese* — act like a Portuguese, that is, do not pay for an entrance ticket; *una americanata* — window dressing, that is, something made specially for show to surprise), Spanish (*celoso como un turco* — jealous as a Turk, *hacerse el sueco* — pretend not to understand or know anything about something), French (*aux calendes grecques* — to postpone indefinitely, *tête de Turc* — whipping boy, *être la douche écossaise* — to come as quite a shock), etc.

aphorisms: "*It   was difficult to get   money from   a Frenchman,   that he knew. More difficult than from a Jew. The Jew sees the deal, but the French*

sees only money to part with" (Erich Maria Remarque); *"Italians have only two things on their mind: the other is spaghetti."* (Catherine Deneuve); *"The Swiss capital Bern is five times larger than the cemetery in Naples, but the cemetery in Naples is five times more cheerful than the one in the Swiss capital"* (Luciano de Crescenzo); *"The Germans, like no other nation, combine the qualities of an exemplary warrior and an exemplary slave"* (Winston Churchill)

• *jokes*:

  1.
  — Why did Germany give the world so many philosophers?
  — Have you seen German women?

  2.
  — Italians and Jews have one common point of contact — the bank.
  — Some own it, others rob it.
  3.
  —   To prepare a French dish, you need to take anything, cover with mushrooms and a cheese cap. Bon appetite.
  4.
  — When Indian girls fall asleep, the dot on their forehead goes off.

Our analysis of English proverbs revealed the attitude of the English towards other nationalities: *Nothing ill in Spain, but that which speaks; The older the Welshman, the more madman; Do not trust a Hungarian unless he has a third eye on his forehead; The only good Indian is a dead Indian; After shaking hands with a Greek, count your fingers; The Spaniard is a bad servant but a worse master; Jealous as Spaniard; The Frenchman is a scoundrel; One Englishman can beat three Frenchmen; To assist in the French sense; There are three kinds of Dutch: the Dutch, the damned Dutch and the hog Dutch*; *The Neapolitan is wide-mouthed and narrow-handed,* etc.

Ethnic stereotypes also exist in relations between peoples who know each other quite well due to their geographical location and have a common historical past. Thus, the British newspaper "*The Guardian*" conducted a study to identify the opinions of the French, British, Italians, Spaniards about each

other. According to the results the French are *cowardly, arrogant, chauvinistic, erotomaniacs*; English — *drunken, semi-clad hooligans or else snobbish stiff free-marketeers', binge drinking*; Italians – *tax-dogging, Berlusconi style Latin lovers** and mama's boys incapable of bravery, are hypocritical, pay a lot of attention (especially compared to other Europeans) to their appearance, talk a lot and at the same time do not listen very carefully to their interlocutor*; Spaniards — *macho men and fiery women prone to regular siestas and fiestas, so that nothing ever gets done*.

In the book "French Toast: An American in Paris Celebrates the Maddening Mysteries of the French" (2010), Harriet Rochefort, an American living in France, gives a list of typical American stereotypes about the French: *lazy, smug, impolite, very difficult to get close to, they are unscrupulous, eat snails and frogs and do not know how to fight* (Rochefort, 2010).

The evaluative component of ethnocultural stereotypes is indeed dominated by a negative attitude towards representatives of other ethnic groups and confessions, which is caused not only by ethnocentrism and xenophobia, but also by the phenomenon of self-aggrandizement, which is characteristic of all peoples at a certain stage of their historical development and constitutes a necessary element of national self-awareness.

Many of these stereotypes categorically do not correspond to reality, however, they are deeply rooted in the consciousness of certain peoples. One cannot but agree with the opinion of American scientists D. Katz and K. Braly (1933), who developed a method for determining an ethnic stereotype. According to them an ethnic stereotype is a stable idea that does not agree well with the realities that it seeks to represent, and stems from the property inherent in a person to first determine the phenomenon, and then observe it (p. 96).

As a result of the global transformation processes taking place in the world, the role and meaning of various characteristics and functions of a stereotype are also subject to change, with constant continuity of the basic mechanisms of traditional culture and ideas about "we" and "they".

Today, such a complexly controlled information space as a social network creates stereotypes and spreads them around the world in no time. Modern stereotypes are mobile and not durable. If earlier they were formed and existed for years, then in the modern world the availability and uncontrollability of information leads to the fact that stereotypes spread rapidly through the virtual

space. They have become an instrument of power, control of the masses of people, transformation of consciousness, imposition of certain rules for reading social relations that serve the existing order.

Conclusion

People are prone to stereotyped thinking and behavior, and so far no one has invented a tool or method that would help them get rid of stereotypes. The only thing that can be recommended, is to filter information about another ethnic culture and increase intercultural competence, to analyze the traditions and stereotypes used by the representatives of different cultures, avoid manifestations of racism, xenophobia, interethnic hatred, intolerance, emphasize universal human values and establish an intercultural dialogue.

In the process of intercultural communication, it is desirable to use only unambiguously positive stereotypes that do not cause strong opposition. Negative or ambiguous stereotypes tend to re-actualize the fundamental for the development of an ethnos and national culture dichotomy of "one's own — someone else's", and reinforce antagonisms.

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Նարինե Հարությունյան
Արմինե Խաչատրյան

Ուսումնասիրության նպատակն է վերլուծել ժամանակակից աշ-խարհում սոցիալական կարծրատիպերի ձևավորման մեխանիզմներն ու պատճառները: Դիտարկվում են էթնիկ կարծրատիպերի, ինչպես նաև հետերոկարծրատիպերի (մեկ մշակույթի ներկայացուցիչների կողմից ձևավորված արտաքին կարծրատիպերը մյուսի մասին) և ավտոկարծրատիպերի (իրենց մասին առասպելներ, որոնք գոյություն ունեն տվյալ մշակույթի շրջանակներում) կայունության և փոփոխա-կանության խնդիրները:

Ժամանակակից հասարակությանը բնորոշ է կարծրատիպային մտածելակերպը: Կան տարբեր կարծրատիպեր, որոնք առկա են լեզվական մակարդակում և կարող են խոչընդոտել միջմշակութային հաղորդակցությունը: Կարծրատիպերի ձևավորման մեխանիզմները կապված են մարդու մտածելակերպի և հոգեկան առանձնահատկու-թյունների հետ: Դրանցից է մարդու՝ սեփական մշակութային փորձի հիման վրա եզրակացություններ անելու միտումը:

Ձևավորվելուց հետո կարծրատիպերը ձեռք են բերում կայունու-թյան բարձր աստիճան, դժվար են փոփոխվում և դառնում են մի տեսակ «խեղաթյուրող հայելի», որտեղ տարբեր խմբերի ներկայացու-ցիչներ արտացոլված են աղոտ կամ աղավաղված ձևով:

Լեզուն առաջատար դեր է խաղում կարծրատիպերի ձևավորման հարցում: Նույն արտահայտությունների անընդհատ կրկնությունը, որոնք ժամանակի ընթացքում կայունություն են ձեռք բերում լեզվի մակարդակում, հանգեցնում է նրան, որ դրանց իմաստը տեղա-վորվում է ուղեղի ենթակեղևում, և ընկալումը տեղի է ունենում

ինքնաբերաբար, առանց բարձրագույն գիտակցության մասնակցու
թյան։ Լեզուն ինքնին իր մեջ կրում է հսկայական ազդեցիկ ուժ և,
մոդելավորելով լեզվակիրների աշխարհայացքը, սահմանում է նրանց
գործողություններն ու վարքը ոչ միայն միջանձնային, այլև նաև
սոցիալական մակարդակներում։

Բանալի բառեր՝ *էթնիկ կարծրատիպեր, հետերոկարծրատիպեր,
ավտոկարծրատիպեր, «ընկեր-թշնամի» երկատվածություն, էթնոֆո-
լիզմներ, նվաստացնող էթնոնիմներ։*