THE ROLE OF STEREOTYPES IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

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The concept of stereotype is an interdisciplinary nowadays. From the very beginning, since 1920s the concept of stereotype had developed on the basis of sociology and social psychology, later it became the

subject of analysis in terms of communication theory, ethnology, history, literature and culture, the philosophy of language.

The stereotype as a concept is significant not only for the language but also the culture in general, in recent years it has become an object of cultural studies, which focuses on speech and mental stereotypes, forming the "image" of national cultures and ethnic and cultural identity [1, p.124].

Every language in its own way divides the world and has its own way of its conceptualization. Every nation has its own ideas about the world, about people and other cultures. There are certain stereotypes both about themselves, about the behavior and traditions within their cultural space, and about the representatives of the other linguistic and cultural space [2, p.90]. The relevance of the topic is caused by the interest of researchers in the interaction of language, culture and psychology of the people. Researchers draw much attention to the phenomenon and the concept of "stereotype", many scientists are studying the problem. The novelty of the study is that the phenomenon of stereotype is considered in the broadest sense – as a concept, which includes submission of one nation about the culture of another nation. The purpose is to investigate the interaction of concepts and intercultural character stereotype.

There are autostereotypes, reflecting what people think about their own people, and heterostereotypes, relating to other people. Both these types of ethnic and cultural stereotypes are formed and become rooted in society as well–known traditional views.

Autostereotypes is an important part of national identity. With their help common standards of behavior are formed which are to be followed by a person as a representative of his nation. It promotes unity and self–affirmation of the people. On the one hand, conforming to autostereotype nation in some way idealizes itself and arrogates to itself some positive traits (diligence, courage, mutual aid, etc.). On the other hand, through autostereotypes people try to justify disadvantages of their lifestyle. Experts of ethnic psychology, who is studying ethnocultural stereotypes, note that the nations with a higher level of economic development, tend to emphasize such their advantages as intelligence, initiative, efficiency, while the nation with more backward economies tend to emphasize such their traits as kindness, warmth, humanity and hospitality.

Heterostereotypes are much more critical than autostereotypes. They often serve as a source of national prejudices and preconceptions. While meeting with representatives of another nation, people have a natural tendency to perceive their behavior from the standpoint of their culture. Misunderstanding of their language, gestures symbolism, mimicry and other elements of their behavior during the communication leads to a distorted interpretation of the meaning of their actions, which can easily produce a number of negative feelings – apprehension, contempt, hostility."They do not like us" – they behave differently, strange, absurd, i.e bad [1,p. 126].

Stereotypes are often emotionally colored by likes and dislikes depending on which the same behavior receives different assessment. One people see mind manifestation, in what other people find cunning demonstration. What one in relation to himself calls persistence, is regarded as obstinacy by a "stranger". Conversely, for many people, a critical attitude to their own national culture and a positive assessment of foreign is typical.

In the process of communication between different cultures stereotypical views occupy a significant place.

The ethno–cultural stereotype is understood as a general idea of typical features that characterize a people. Man has created templates for unfamiliar areas of life. With the name of one or another country we have a certain associative array consisting of sights, main dishes or prominent figures of this state. America? – the Statue of Liberty, the hamburger, New York, the yellow taxi. France? – the Eiffel Tower, perfume, frogs. This list is endless. The existence of such representations is an undoubtful fact. There are templates even in case of people – foreigners and their character. "German accuracy ", "French gallantry", "Russian helter–skelter," "Chinese ceremonies ", "African temperament " – in these popular expressions common ethno–cultural stereotypes are embodied. Stereotyped opinions on temper of Italians, coldness of English, Finnish stubbornness , hospitality of Georgians, stealth of Latvians, generosity of spirit, kindness of Russian . Stereotypes are understood as the characteristics of the people in general, but at the same time they usually apply to any representative of the people and determine the image of their personality [2, p. 92].

The analysis of the issue of stereotypes role in intercultural communication reveals their importance in the interaction and understanding of cultures. Because of the broad problem field the question generates different views. The study developed two main approaches.

The first can be called "academic". It is represented in the works of British psychologist R. Stagner, who believes that in intergroup perception stereotypes facilitate intercultural interaction of strangers or unfamiliar, foreign culture, allowing quickly, easily and surely categorize and simplify a socio–cultural context of the individual.

Another approach analyzes the role of stereotypes in the context of social interaction. Here stereotypes are considered to be a manifestation of latent racism, ethnocentrism and discrimination.

Despite the differences these approaches both distinctly reflect the idea that intercultural communication stereotypes are the result of ethnocentric reaction – trying to judge other people and cultures solely from the standpoint of their culture. Often communicants are initially guided by pre–existing stereotypes in cross–cultural communication and evaluation of their communication partners. Obviously, no people is absolutely free from stereotypes, we can only talk about different degrees of stereotyping of communicants. Studies show that the level of stereotyping is inversely proportional to the degree of experience of intercultural interaction [3, p. 40].

Stereotypes are strongly "embedded" in our value system, they are a part of it and provide a kind of defense of our position in society. For this reason, stereotypes are used in each cross–cultural situation. Mechanisms of intercultural perception actuates selective application of norms and values of their culture. It is impossible to evaluate your native group and other cultural groups without the use of these common, culturally specific ways of evaluation. At the same time representatives of other groups are identified on such characteristics as sex, ethnicity, the features of the speech, appearance, color, marriage customs, religious beliefs, etc. [4, p. 43].

The problem of stereotypes as a factor of cross–cultural communication has been actual for a long time. Since the Middle Ages scientists conducted investigations, trying to define particular features, in other words to "draw a portrait" of one or another nation. Attempts to describe the ethno–cultural features peculiar to different nations were made in the XVIII century by Helvetius in France, Hume in England, S. Madariaga in Spain, Kant in Germany. Today importance of the concept of stereotype is caused by the process of globalization, continuous and compulsory interaction between nations. People keep their stereotypes, even if the reality and experience contradict them. Therefore, in a situation of intercultural communication it is important to be able to deal with stereotypes effectively, i.e. recognize and use them, and be able to give them up if they do not correspond to reality.

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