

Critical Cultural Awareness

Critical Cultural Awareness:
Managing Stereotypes through Intercultural
(Language) Education

Edited by

Stephanie Ann Houghton, Yumiko Furumura,
Maria Lebedko and Song Li

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P U B L I S H I N G

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contributors.....	vii
Acknowledgements	x
Introduction	1
Stephanie Ann Houghton	
Part I: Defining, Eliciting and Illustrating Stereotypes	
Chapter One.....	4
Theory and Practice of Stereotypes in Intercultural Communication	
Maria Lebedko	
Chapter Two	24
Remedying Negative Stereotypes by Identifying the Origins	
of Stereotypes: From Semantic or Affective Learning?	
Yumiko Furumura	
Chapter Three	42
Uncovering Stereotypes: Intersections of Race and English	
Native-Speakerhood	
Damian J. Rivers and Andrew S. Ross	
Chapter Four.....	62
Comparing Stereotypes of Chinese, Japanese and Russian People:	
Mutual Perceptions of Students from Neighbouring Countries	
Stephanie Ann Houghton, Maria Lebedko and Song Li	
Chapter Five	86
Stereotyping and De-Stereotyping in the Chinese ELT Context	
Song Li	

Part II: Addressing Stereotypes through Intercultural (Language) Education

Chapter Six	114
Unmasking Stereotypes in Travel Guides: A Teaching Activity for Intercultural Foreign Language Education Claudia Borghetti	
Chapter Seven.....	135
Managing Stereotypes through Complex Cultural Dialogue and Transformative Processes Gerlind Vief-Schmidt	
Chapter Eight.....	158
Managing Stereotypes through Experiential Learning Stephanie Ann Houghton	
Chapter Nine.....	180
Developing Teachers' Critical Pedagogic Competence: From Teacher Autobiography to Teacher-Designed Intercultural Activities Ewa Bandura	
Chapter Ten	204
Critical Pedagogy: Stereotyping as Oppression Leticia Yulita	
Chapter Eleven	221
The Visual Representation: An Instrument for Research and Instruction on the Cultural Dimension of Foreign Language Reading Melina Porto	
Chapter Twelve	249
Stereotype Management in Intercultural Education through the Analysis of Critical Incidents Maria Lebedko	
Index.....	276

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Stephanie Ann Houghton, Yumiko Furumura, Maria Lebedko
and Song Li,
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INTRODUCTION

STEPHANIE ANN HOUGHTON

As teachers of foreign languages and/or intercultural communication attempt to facilitate communication across cultural barriers in a rapidly globalizing world, one of the most challenging barriers to be overcome is the stereotype. Given the nature of stereotyping as a natural cognitive process of categorization, stereotypes are ubiquitous and can undermine intercultural communication. For this reason, the proposed book aims to promote understanding of the nature of stereotypes and to suggest ways in which teachers can manage them by developing critical cultural awareness.

As a key component of intercultural communicative competence intrinsically linked to political education, critical cultural awareness has been defined as “an ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one’s own and other cultures and countries” (Byram 1997: p53). By contrast, evaluations can be made hastily as snap judgments are made about different others without careful consideration, often relying upon prejudicial stereotypes.

Addressing stereotypes is thus one of the ways through which critical cultural awareness can actively be developed through education as teachers take a stand against prejudice more generally. But what does this mean in practice? The contributions of scholars from many theoretical backgrounds have helped develop our understandings of stereotypes in recent years, yet teachers may be left wondering how they can manage stereotypes in practical ways as they attempt to develop the intercultural communicative competence of their students.

In 2009, the editors of this book started exploring how stereotype management in intercultural (language) education can contribute towards the development of students’ critical cultural awareness, and their general intercultural communicative competence more generally. This book, which has been compiled as an ongoing part of that broader project, contains contributions from Argentina, Japan, China, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland, and Russia. It is divided into two parts.

Part I “Defining, eliciting and illustrating stereotypes” includes five chapters ranging from an exploration of the origins of stereotypes and

stereotype research methodology to consideration of the elicitation and exploration of stereotypes in various contexts, not only of students towards others in general but also towards their teacher. Finally, three parallel studies of the mutual perceptions of Chinese, Japanese, and Russian students in the Far East are reported across two separate chapters to illustrate the kinds of stereotypes students may hold of each other, regardless of whether their teachers pay attention or not. The purpose of Part I of the book is thus to provide a theoretical background and foundations for understanding stereotypes, and to highlight the need to address them.

Part II “Addressing stereotypes through intercultural (language) education” comprises seven chapters focusing on the three key interrelated concepts: the development of *critical cultural awareness* as one component of *intercultural communicative competence* that involves *stereotype management* through intercultural (language) education. Chapters apply a variety of analyses and interpretation of texts in various contexts based on diverse material sources: in travel guides, in dynamic classroom interaction, students’ interviews, through teacher-designed intercultural activities, experiential learning, critical incidents and visual representations of information. The purpose of Part II of the book is thus to provide to teachers with a firm platform for the practical application of their knowledge and skills, etc. when attempting to manage stereotypes in the intercultural (language) classroom.

Reference

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PART I:

**DEFINING, ELICITING
AND ILLUSTRATING STEREOTYPES**

CHAPTER ONE

THEORY AND PRACTICE OF STEREOTYPES IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

MARIA LEBEDKO

James Page had seen in the paper where somebody claimed it was wrong to have picture-cartoons of Uncle Sam, because America's the melting pot, and Uncle Sam was male and white. Lord God! You could not say nigger or Polack anymore, but you could still say WASP. (Gardner, 1976, p.333)

The typical stereotype of Russians in England is that they never smile or talk to each other. Having lived here on and off for almost five years I have to say that this is true at least in Moscow. (Abbot, 2005, p.4).

Introduction

This chapter explores fundamental theories in stereotype studies in intercultural communication to help readers to evaluate, develop or modify their approaches in their own research or teaching practice. The stereotype is the most complicated controversial category, a mental construct the attitude to which has changed several times since the 1920s when the concept was first introduced and scholarly research started. Though stereotypes were known in ancient times, theoretical interest toward stereotypes has dramatically increased in recent years.

Typologically, stereotypes vary greatly but include social, political, cultural, national, behavioral stereotypes as well as those based on territory/geography/region, profession, gender, age, race and ethnicity. Of great concern are racial and ethnic stereotypes, also known as ethnic slurs, ethnophaulisms and ethnic labeling for example. Due to their persistence and ubiquity, ethnic stereotypes present stumbling blocks in intercultural communication, and overcoming them requires a thorough study of diverse theoretical sources. Bearing in mind that theories are crucial both to scholarly research and practical application, it is important to regularize the terminology of various contiguous fields of studies. Intercultural

communication as a scholarly field and as an empirical practical subject draws and applies terminology from other fields in the social sciences. As a paradigm in itself, it is becoming more fundamental and multidisciplinary, and it needs to be constantly informed by the theories that are successfully used by scholars and teachers studying intercultural communication.

Structurally, the chapter is split into two sections focusing firstly on theoretical background, and secondly on the cognitive processes shaping stereotypes. The former considers ways of defining stereotypes across various disciplines and the nature of stereotypes, while the latter is dedicated to cognitive processes. The goal is twofold. In the first section of the chapter on theoretical background, the purpose is to define the approaches and to illustrate them in order to explore the relevance of these terms of different fields to the stereotype research. In the second section, the purpose is to give the reader an idea of how these cognitive mechanisms work, and how to reach deeper understandings of stereotypes and stereotyping.

Theoretical Background

Defining Stereotypes across Various Disciplines

Stereotype definitions vary depending on the trends in scholarly research and approaches. Since the intercultural communication paradigm is becoming more fundamental and multidisciplinary, and as scholars draw on findings from related disciplines in the humanities, it is essential to include views on stereotypes from a variety of these contiguous fields. Lippmann's (1922) basic definition of stereotypes as "pictures in our heads" (p.3) remains the generally accepted and classical sociological definition to date. They are reinforced in the following way:

In some measure, stimuli from the outside, especially when they are printed or spoken words, evoke some part of a system of stereotypes, so that the actual sensation and the preconception occupy consciousness at the same time... If what we are looking at corresponds successfully with what we anticipated, the stereotype is reinforced for the future, as it is in a man who knows in advance that the Japanese are cunning and has the bad luck to run across two dishonest Japanese (Lippmann, 1922, p.54).

According to Bottom and Dejun (2007), however, there is evidence that by the start of the 20th century, and in the early 1920s, the words stereotype and stereotypic had been in use before the term was introduced by Lippmann (1922) in expressions metaphorically meaning "mental

process” such as *stereotyped* combinations, “*stereotypic*” thought, and *stereotyped* (p. 6). Lippmann redefined the term stereotype to mean “[a] preconceived and oversimplified idea of the characteristics which typify a person, situation, etc.; an attitude based on such a preconception and a person who appears to conform closely to the idea of a type” (cited from Bottom & Dejun, 2007, p.6). This definition is less well-known than the one presented above.

Sociology (studying society, individuals, groups and human social interaction) defines stereotypes as cognitions held by one social group about another social group (Elligan, 2008), or as oversimplified standardized images (Moore, 2006). Psycho-sociology focuses on psycho-sociological functions ascribing negative characteristics to the stereotype regarded as stable, reinforcing prejudices and stipulating the barriers in communication according to Bartmiński (2009), the head of the Ethno-linguistic School of Lublin (Poland), who also highlights the unstable and changeable character of stereotypes and the connection between hetero-stereotypes (perception of others) and the history of neighboring countries. For example, immediate neighbors perceive Poles negatively, but the farther away the country, the more positive is the stereotype. Wide-ranging, research-generated illustrations are presented below.

Lithuanians consider Poles cunning and arrogant; Belarusians think Poles are haughty and loving domination; Russians earlier saw them as rioters and later as trading Catholics; Germans viewed them as poor, retarded thieves... For French, Poles are hardworking Catholic-alcoholics; for Americans, they are silly, but industrious and hospitable traditionalists (Bartmiński, 2009, p.15).

Social psychology (studying aspects of individuals and people’s emotions, social perception and interactional behavior) treats stereotypes on the basis of the relationship between individuals and groups, considering them to be central factors of any society and of importance in inter-groups perceptions. “These perceptions of groups are called stereotypes” according to McGarty, Yzerbyt and Spears (2002, p.1), who developed three guiding principles for understanding stereotypes: (a) “stereotypes are aids to explanation” implying that their formation may help the perceiver make sense of a situation; (b) “stereotypes are energy saving devices,” implying that they may reduce the cognitive effort of the perceiver; and (c) “stereotypes are shared group beliefs” (p. 2), implying that norms of social groups and views are shared by the perceiver. Social psychology also treats stereotypes as units on which ethnocentric perception is based; a form of social perception or unique perceptual

experience (Stewart & Bennett, 1991). Generalizations ignoring subtle differences among members of groups, individuals in a society and the application of broad categories can all lead to stereotyping. Stewart and Bennett (1991) offer the following illustration:

It occurred in the Portland, Oregon Rose Parade, where a float was entered honoring Sapporo, Japan, Portland's sister city. Dignitaries flown from Japan were quite upset when they observed that some of the young women waving from the float were Chinese, not Japanese. The parade director, when questioned on the point, responded with a statement of stereotypic perception: "Japanese...Chinese—close enough" (p.164).

In linguistics, theoretical interest has recently turned to the study of language representations of stereotypes considered to be cognitive constructs. Stereotypes are often realized by ethnophaulisms/ethnic slurs (derogatory or disparaging words) creating negative mental images of alien groups in linguistically diverse patterns such as transformations, associations, metaphorical and metonymical transfer (e.g., *rom* 'gypsy' (from Romany); *acey* 'Englishman' (Russian from English 'I say'); *aizer* 'a person from Azerbaijan'; *cent* 'North American' (Fofin, 2008, pp. 46-49). Stereotypical invectives are often applied to minorities. Many stereotypes are linguistically represented in folklore by sayings, proverbs, and idioms such as 'to see Indians' meaning "to be in a delirium" and 'to be a regular Indian' meaning "to be an habitual drunkard" according to Mieder (1995).

Cognitive linguistics (studying the relationship between cognition and the human mind, linguistic behavior and cognitive abilities, and the way language reflects patterns of thought) regards the stereotype as a mental category that people easily apply to all members of that category. "A stereotype is, thus, a socially determined minimum set of data with regard to the extension of a category" (Geeraerts, 2006, p.157). Pinker (2003) assumes that "...people's ability to set aside stereotypes when judging an individual is accomplished by their conscious, deliberate reasoning" (p.205). However, being distracted or in need to respond quickly, people "... are more likely to judge that a member of an ethnic group has all stereotyped traits of the group" (p.205). Though stereotypes are relatively stable, they can also be reversed as illustrated below:

During World War II, when the Russians were allies of the United States and the Germans were enemies, Americans judged Russians to have more positive traits than Germans. Soon afterwards, when the alliances reversed, Americans judged Germans to have more positive traits than Russians (Pinker, 2003, p.205).

Ethno-linguistics/ethnic linguistics (studying language as an aspect of culture, the influence of language on culture and vice-versa, and cultural/ethnic identity) understands the stereotype as a mental construct correlating with naïve worldview (Prokhorov, 2006). Bartmiński (2009) defines stereotypes as “stable, i.e., recurrent, but not accidentally emerging combination of [semantic and/or formal elements], fixed in collective memory on concrete level of corresponding lexemes” (p.13). In other works, ethnic stereotypes are regarded as a stable complex of naïve beliefs (assumptions, ideas) about a nation, reflecting specific features of folk “xenopsychology” (Berezovich, 2009, p.23). Ethnic stereotypes may serve as a kind of paragon to stereotypes since the mechanisms of stereotype formation manifest most vividly in ethnic stereotypes. This can be explained by the axiological assumption predetermining the opposition “self vs. other” which evokes an image strongly divergent from objective, rational knowledge. In Berezovich’s view, ethnic stereotypes possess diverse peculiarities functioning in various cultural codes. In superstitious beliefs, they may “predict” weather in expressions such as *gypsies’ rain* (rain with the bright sun). In phraseology, ethnic stereotypes may “warn” about the coming of stormy clouds: (Polish) *Švejdě jadu* (the Swedes are coming). In idioms, they have pejorative meaning decreasing the role of musical instruments: (Irish) *Irish harp* (a scraper with a long handle), etc. (Berezovich, 2009).

Berezovich (2009) notes that ethnic stereotypes are found in both natural language and in folk texts, rituals, beliefs, etc., and analyzes the image of gypsies in the legend connected with the crucifixion of Christ and the gypsy’s nail (which denotes “something false” and can be found in most Slavic languages and cultures). The legend about gypsies is interpreted in two versions (positive and negative) and runs as follows:

The gypsies forged false nails and hid them, when a fly set on Christ’s forehead a gypsy woman said: by heaven, this is a nail! That is why the gypsies are allowed to swear. According to the negative version, the gypsies forged more nails than it was required and were cursed by Christ; because of that they are roaming over the world since that time (pp.24 – 25).

Ethnic stereotypes are frequently highly rude, abusive and used deliberately to humiliate people (stereotyping people apply so-called “humiliation strategy”) as displayed in the following excerpt by Yunats’ka (2006):

“You Cuban?” one man asked my father, pointing at his name tag on the navy uniform...

“No”, my father had answered, looking past the finger into his adversary’s eyes.

“I’m Puerto Rican”. “Same shit”. And the door closed (p.106).

Psycholinguistics or psychology of language (studying the mental aspects of language and speech, linguistic ideologies and the influence of psychological factors that enable humans to acquire, understand and produce language) concentrates on speech perception and the peculiarities of various levels of language. “The study of the relationships between linguistic behaviour and psychological processes, including the process of language acquisition, popular etymology and so-called folk psychology testify to cognitive definitions. The study of the mental faculties involved in the perception, production, and acquisition of language” (Psycholinguistics, n.d.). Studying the paralanguage levels, psycholinguists show how stereotypes may emerge on the basis of wrong intonation. An indicative example from Gumperz’s (2005) studies is given below:

In a staff cafeteria at a major British airport, newly hired Indian and Pakistani women were perceived as surly and uncooperative by their supervisor as well as by the cargo handlers whom they served... [W]hen a cargo handler who had chosen meat was asked if he wanted gravy, a British assistant would say “Gravy?” using rising intonation. The Indian assistants, on the other hand, would say the word using falling intonation: “Gravy.” ... “Gravy,” said with a falling intonation, is likely to be interpreted as ‘This is gravy,’ i.e. not interpreted as an offer but rather as a statement, which in the context seems redundant and consequently rude (p.34).

Semiotics (studying signs and symbols, and their function in both artificial and natural languages as well as signs and symbols of communicative behavior expressed both in language and nonverbal communication) regards stereotypes as a kind of process and the result of communicative (behavior) in accordance with semiotic patterns, the list of which is closed, which depends on technical, semiotic principles accepted in a given society implemented in standards and norms. Scholars in the field of semiotics underscore the dynamism of stereotypes connected with the dynamism of signs: “they may be true to life for a certain period of time... but taking into account the dynamism of signs, stereotypes may also change” (Gu, 2009, p.111). Stereotypes may be expressed in a great variety of forms, for example, in ethnic jokes (clichés) where there are usually three participants from ethnic groups. The ethnic joke below displays two radically different signs of behavioral patterns:

The Englishman, the Irishman and the Scotsman went to a party together. The Englishman took six bottles of beer. The Irishman took six bottles of Guinness and the Scotsman took six of his friends. (There was an Englishman an Irishman and a Scotsman, n.d.)

In discourse analysis, stereotyping is regarded as “cultural ideological statements” and overgeneralization (Scollon & Scollon, 2000, p.155). The authors assume that “stereotyping often arises when someone comes to believe that any ... two discourse systems, can be treated as if they were polar opposites” (p.155). Discussing what is known as key (the tone of communication), Scollon and Scollon (2000) alert interlocutors to the potential misreading of key, and demonstrate possible communication challenges in reading the key explicating interaction between Asians, Americans and Australians:

It is well known and, perhaps, even stereotypical that Asians tend to smile or laugh when they are embarrassed. While it is true that many others including Americans and Australians “laugh nervously,” it is equally stereotypical that Americans and Australians are always laughing or joking with each other or with their business partners... A key of embarrassment or difficulty might be expressed by Asians in such a way that their counterparts would read it as indicating a key of relaxation or enjoyment... Asians might misread a relaxed, joking tone as hiding embarrassment (p.26).

Memetics (studying the concepts of memes and the way they are imitated and transmitted in culture. The meme is the term metaphorically analogous to the gene in genetics (Dawkins, 1976), and memes are seen as behavioral rules (Hales, 2004). Blackmore (1998) suggested defining memes as the concept of imitation only considering those things that are passed through imitation. She distinguished true imitation, which involves learning by copying a new form of behaviour, from other kinds of social learning which do not. Her approach excluded other mechanisms like perceptions, cognitive maps and emotions. Being a unit of cultural information, memes may replicate cultural phenomena. Hales (2004) created a memetic model to investigate the relationships between stereotyping, group formation and cooperative group interaction. He defines stereotypes as generalisations of certain (positive or negative) opinions that are attached to individuals whom a stereotyping person has never encountered. His model captures stereotyping based on culturally-learned behavioral rules ignoring fixed, assumed, deduced or imagined characteristics. An illustrative example is given below:

Since imitation is an inherent human characteristic, people easily copy others through spreading of memes. Since the major property of memes is replication, it is possible to affirm that stereotype formation is based on the spreading of memes, as scholars assumed (Gudykunst, cited from Gu Jiazun, 2009, p.112).

The range of theoretical approaches to the study of stereotypes and the wide-ranging issues related to their definition and associated problem is by no means exhaustive, but for the sake of clarity, the key points presented above have been summarised in Table 1 to show how each field orients to stereotypes and the aspects they highlight.

Having analyzed various approaches to the study of stereotypes in a variety of scholarly fields, we see that definitions depend on the aspects the authors focus on. Definitions show that stereotypes may exist on diverse levels and each field contributes to our knowledge of stereotypes. Thus, one can find that in linguistic studies, for example, researchers focus not only representations of stereotypes, but also on the formation of stereotypes: language can become the basis on which stereotypes emerge; language may generate stereotypes.

Of the various definitions presented above, it is difficult to decide which is best. I personally prefer to apply the approach based primarily on cognitive foundations that treat stereotypes as mental constructs/categories that integrate cultural, cognitive, affective, axiological and behavioral components of attitudes in to the analysis. This will be considered further below in relation to the ways in which cognitive processes shape stereotypes.

Field	Definition of stereotypes	Key aspects
Classical (sociological) definition	Pictures in our heads	Stimuli from the outside, especially when they are printed or spoken words, evoke some part of a system of stereotypes
Sociology	Cognitions held by one social group about another social group; oversimplified standardized images	Human social interaction
Psycho- sociology	Stable, reinforcing prejudices and stipulating the barriers in communication	Psycho-sociological functions ascribing negative aspects

Social psychology	Group perceptions relationship between individuals and groups; units on which ethnocentric perception is based	Aspects of individuals and people's emotions, social perception
Linguistics	Negative mental images of alien groups in linguistically diverse patterns	Verbal representations of stereotypes; language bases of stereotypes
Cognitive linguistics	A mental category that people easily transfer to all the members of this category	Linguistic behavior; cognitive abilities; the way language reflects patterns of thought
Ethno-linguistics	A mental construct correlating with naïve worldview; a stable complex of naïve beliefs about a nation, reflecting specific features of folk xenopsychology	Language as an aspect of culture; language influence on culture and of culture on language; cultural / ethnic identity
Psycholinguistics	Based on different levels of language, including paralanguage	The mental aspects of language and speech; speech perception and peculiarities of various levels of language
Semiotics	Signs and symbols, their function in both artificial and natural languages; communicative behavior expressed both in language and nonverbal communication	Process and result of communicative (behavior) in accordance with semiotic patterns
Discourse analysis	Cultural ideological statements and overgeneralization	Reading key (the tone of communication)
Memetics	Memes as behavioral rules; generalisations of certain (positive or negative) opinions attached to individuals	Stereotyping based on culturally learned behavioral rules ignoring fixed, assumed, deduced or imagined characteristics

Table 1. A comparison of various approaches to the study of stereotypes

The Nature of Stereotypes

Historically speaking, the study of stereotypes has witnessed many changes in attempts made to manage them: a widespread tradition in linguistics once held that ethnic slurs should be excluded from dictionaries, but realization of this project led to oral usage of stereotypes, so they were not erased from the collective consciousness (Mechkovskaya, 2002). The political correctness movement that started in the USA and spread to other countries was regarded as panacea in stereotype management in relation to other issues like proper language expressions, policies and behaviors, but it led to frequent renewal of politically correct words. Political correctness is thus still a disputable issue.

Researchers explain the controversial nature of stereotypes from a variety of angles. In Bartmiński's (2009) view, stereotypes are basically neutral, but they are also dynamic and can be used for good or bad purposes. In his opinion, one cannot get rid of stereotypes, but there are ways of using stereotypes to solve problems and enhance understanding in communication. Other scholars such as Vasilyeva (2009), however, describe the nature of stereotypes as being simplified and emotional. In the literature, most scholars regard the nature of stereotypes as emotionally-charged axiological entities based on evaluative mechanisms of stereotype formation (Volf, 1985). Their highly evaluative nature distinctly places them both in the system of natural language and folklore texts, rituals, beliefs, etc. That is why the reconstruction of stereotype content requires consideration of all formats of their representation (Berezovich, 2009). This especially refers to ethnic stereotypes. "Most ethnic stereotypes are negatively charged" (Berezovich, 2009, p.27). Racial stereotypes (Amodio, 2009) are highly negative too. The terms 'race' and 'ethnicity' are very often confused, carelessly used or sometimes regarded as synonyms. Being of biological origin, race is inherited, while ethnicity, being of cultural heritage, is learned (Adler, 1993). Stereotype traits include objective and subjective factors of evaluation (Volf, 1985). This idea is confirmed by studies in the neural correlates of social stereotypes where the cognitive and emotional components of stereotypical thinking can be found (Quadflieg, Turk, Waiter, Mitchell, Jenkins & Macrae, 2008). The dangerous nature of stereotypes is displayed more vividly with reference to marginalized communities than to stereotypes of communities having a higher status in the culture (Elligan, 2008).

In terms of evaluation, auto-stereotypes (self-perception) reflect the ideas of a group about themselves, and as a rule, they tend to involve positive evaluations, while hetero-stereotypes (perception of 'others')

reflect the ideas of a group about ‘others,’ as alien groups, which are very often negatively evaluated (Rösh, 1998).

But not all auto-stereotypes are positive and not all hetero-stereotypes are negative. The paradox is that while we prejudge others, we involuntarily strip (uncover) our own merits and deficiencies. In other words, stereotypes reveal not only those whom we stereotype, but also ourselves. This idea was further developed by Bartmiński (2009) who found an interesting mutual dependence between hetero-stereotypes and auto-stereotypes that suggests they may be regarded as mirror images of each other, or as “acceptance of enforced perspective of other” (p.14). A summary of the views on the nature of stereotypes presented above is given in Table 2.

The nature of stereotypes	The reflection in culture
Neutral yet dynamic	Can be used for good or bad purposes
Negative, based on prejudice and discrimination	Are extremely abusive
Simplified and emotional	Simplified knowledge and emotional attitude
Emotionally charged and axiological	Based on evaluative mechanisms of stereotype formation
Coherent and consistent	High degree of stereotypical assumption among the stereotyping group.
Stable	Rigidity to new information
Emotional and evaluative	Placed into the system of natural language and folklore texts
Dangerous	Vividly refers to marginalized communities. Ethnic stereotypes are unavoidable
Positive stereotypes may also be dangerous	Create an impression of objectivity and support the system of stereotypes
Changeable	Depend on situation (e.g., international, historical)

Table 2. The nature of stereotypes reflected in culture

Summing up the nature of the stereotypes underscores the diversity of traits that are characterized in culture. Description of the features is most often negatively charged (negative, dangerous, based on prejudice and discrimination, etc.). Due to the nature of stereotypes, the concept of the stereotype is debatable, and requires sensitivity, caution and discretion on the part of teachers of intercultural communication studies.

Cognitive Processes Shaping Stereotypes

To understand the formation of stereotypes, it is important to know the cognitive processes shaping them. Applying an interdisciplinary approach to the mechanisms of stereotyping, I address cognitive linguistics and social and cognitive psychology findings in this section. One of the key notions is worldview (*Weltanschauung*) introduced by Humboldt (1984) in his seminal works, which drew attention to a great variety of worldviews depending on *ethnos*. Worldview is understood here in cognitive terms based on Humboldt's theory and present-day cognitive theory. Worldview as a fundamental mental construct is a sum total of all human cultural assumptions, the result of human activity and experience, their perception and contact with the surrounding world organized into a hierarchy system of knowledge of all members of an ethnic society. Any mental representation of a culture is inexhaustible in its content and cannot be complete, but the prototype is known to all the members of a given society, and worldview is inseparable from cognitive processes.

Most scholars presently accept the view of stereotyping as a cognitively normal categorization process (Brislin, 1993; Pinker, 2003; Stewart & Bennett, 1991; Ting-Toomey, 1999). This idea entailed much discussion: if it is natural to stereotype, consequently, it is natural to use them; stereotyped people should not be offended. However, stereotypes are dangerous for racial, ethnic, and other categories since they can be used for the purposes of oppression and discrimination (Pinker, 2003). There are two conflicting views in attitudes toward stereotypes: 1) they are true to life (because they correspond to something in the real world); 2) they do not exist in reality (because they exist in our imagination).

In other findings, differences between worldviews are explained in terms of perception. Perceivers belonging to different cultures have different perceptual experiences, so one of the basic cognitive mechanisms is *perception* as a specific form of knowledge about the world that is performed through all the human channels. What is considered a positive stereotype in one culture may be considered negative in another (Brislin, 1993; Kohls, 1984). Perception as part of a cognitive activity is the cognitive basis of behavior. According to Neisser (1998), perception reveals what the environment is and how humans adjust to it.

While conceptualizing and categorizing their experiences, people classify not only objects, but also people referring them to different groups and classes. Unique perceptual experience creates stereotypes which in turn cause specific emotions (Adler, 1993). The three cognitive processes *perception*, *conceptualization* and *categorization* cause asymmetry in

mental categories. These processes can be explained in cognitive terms: when people categorize they “perceive some traits of a new object, place it in a mental category, and infer that it is likely to have the other traits typical of that category, ones we cannot perceive” (Pinker, 2003, p.203). This citation is of methodological value in this research in connection with the reasons why people generalize, why stereotypes are based on one or two traits, why stereotypes are ubiquitous, why and what cognitive processes work when people stereotype. Of greater importance is the social perception that may lead to stereotyping. Perception is selective and as such it is accompanied by many factors, including anticipation categories, prejudices and overgeneralization. This may be illustrated with the following example from fiction:

“What was Mr. Pinder’s sin?”

“Just overall general Jewishness.” (Grisham, 1995, p.676)

In this short dialogue, selective perception is accompanied by an *anticipation category* (the speaker anticipated that Mr. Pinder should be evaluated negatively just because he was a Jew); *overgeneralization* (the speaker explicitly expressed his attitude) and prejudice (about Jews) leading to stereotyping about Mr. Pinder. Other positive traits of Mr. Pinder are completely ignored by the speaker.

The cognitive process of *anchoring* also shapes stereotypes due to their ability to create associations connected with some stimulus. Anchoring may be regarded as the result of frequent reference to the same trait (stimulus) highlighting the same stereotype: during this process the stereotype is reified. To understand ethnic stereotypes formation, it seems expedient to address one more cognitive process – judgmental anchoring, which often refers to social judgments (Mussweiler, 2001). The effect of *judgmental anchoring* cognitively explicates the durability of stereotypes. To illustrate it, we address a situation where an American professor invited a Russian professor to his home. Offering a glass of good wine, the host apologized saying “We wish we had vodka! You prefer vodka to wine, don’t you?” As a rule, most stereotypes confirm the statistics (Pinker, 2003) and while it is true that many Russians drink vodka, not all Russians are drinkers. Frequent reference to the trait of Russians as drinkers is the anchor. The American professor did not suspect that there were Russians who were different, which led him to stereotype, which in turn may have offended the Russian professor.

Judgmental anchoring is accompanied by the *Lake Wobegon effect* also known as ‘the above average effect’. The name goes to the namesake News from Lake Wobegon reported by Garrison Keillor on a radio show

A Prairie Home Companion, where all the humorous pieces end with the words *That's the news from Lake Wobegon where all the women are strong, all the men are good-looking, and all the children are above average*. In cognitive psychology, the term denotes the situation when a person is convinced that he or she is superior to others. It is "a natural tendency to overestimate one's capabilities and see oneself as better than others. Research psychologists refer to this tendency as *self-enhancement bias*" (White & Jackson, 2012, para 2). This cognitive mechanism explains why stereotyping people cannot get rid of their stereotypes in spite of numerous attempts. Here is a conversation between a convict (Sam) and a lawyer (his grandson):

"...Same for niggers and women."

"Look, Sam, can we lay off the slurs? How about we refer to them as blacks?"

"Ooops. Sorry. How about we do the right thing and call them African-Americans and Jewish-Americans and Female-Americans? You and I will be Irish-American, and also White-Male-American...Gee, that'll be nice, won't it? We'll be real proper and multicultural and politically correct, won't we?"

"Whatever. I feel better already."

"Damned right you will, if you want an agreement. Just keep the minorities out of my life." (Grisham, 1995, p.105)

Sam has stereotypical assumptions represented in derogatory language expressions; he knows what is politically correct but cannot avoid stereotypical thinking that he is superior. This illusory superiority is regarded as a cognitive bias (i.e. Sam experiences a self-enhancement bias).

Cognitive dissonance is closely connected with stereotypes. Cognitive dissonance introduced by social psychologist Festinger (1999) is understood as a state of discomfort, a mental conflict when two cognitions (e.g., ideas, beliefs, new information) contradict a person's assumptions about the self and the world. Illustrative of this mechanism is the following dialogue between Mr. Hernandez, a Mexican-American, and Sally, an American from New England:

S.: "I hope you haven't met with any racial prejudice

H.: "Oh no," he said, and laughed...

S.: "We are backward, here in Vermont," she confided. "...I suppose it's only natural for people to be afraid of the unfamiliar – the 'intruder,' as they think."

H.: That's natural, yes."

...S.: "They're wonderfully colorful, the minorities. What would we do without our Italians and Jews, or the coloreds with their beautiful, queer speech?"....

H.: "Exactly," Mr. Hernandez said happily, "or these wonderful tight-mouthed New Englanders." (Gardner, 1976, p.264).

Analysis of their conversation reveals Sally's stereotyping when she asked a question about racial prejudice, thinking she was polite and showing her positive attitude to a Mexican-American. Hearing Hernandez's laugh, she experienced cognitive dissonance in a feeling of discomfort because she thought stereotypes and prejudices were alien to her. She tried to reduce her dissonance: her belief about herself (cognition) and new information (cognition of her as a stereotyping person perceived by Hernandez) were not compatible. She struggled to find ways to lessen the threat to the self-image and, once again, tried to reduce the cognitive dissonance by belittling the North-West co-culture. She exaggerated, over-generalized and betrayed her stereotypical assumptions about others, "the intruders." Speaking about minorities, Sally believed that she displayed her prejudice-free perception of minorities but was actually unconsciously stereotyping. The inference from Sally's behavior speaks of her attempt to reconcile the two cognitions that caused this dissonance. Sally was shocked to hear explicitly expressed stereotype of a New Englanders as *tight-mouthed minorities*, but Hernandez saved her by referring to the language barrier. She could reach some cognitive consonance when she heard Hernandez's apology. Thus, we can observe the incompatibility of two cognitions and the process of cognitive dissonance.

One more cognitive category adds to the formation of stereotypes: the *affective and behavioral components of attitudes* which form an integral part of the nature of stereotypes. These components can be seen in the following context from fiction:

Sterling Bintz arrived early and loudly... He claimed to represent over half of the Bowmore victims, and therefore deserved a lead role in the negotiations. He spoke with a clipped nasal voice and in an accent quite foreign to south Mississippi, and he was instantly despised by everyone there (Grisham, 2008, p.380).

Both affective and behavioral components of attitude underlie the stereotype of Mr. Bintz (a "Yankee"). The behavioral component (arrived loudly; claimed to play a lead role) is perceived negatively by all the people from the Deep South; the affective component (clipped nasal voice and an accent) causes strong emotional reaction: immediate disgust. Affective components of attitudes, usually evaluative and expressive, are

based more on feelings than on assumptions. The perceivers are convinced that the behavior of aliens should be condemned. The two components (affective and behavioral) interact in this situation and are the source of the stereotype.

Having analyzed cognitive processes, we saw how these processes shaped stereotypes. Awareness of cognitive processes gives us a deeper understanding of stereotypes. For example, we know why worldviews are various (due to perception); why we stereotype (due to categorization); why stereotypes are considered normal (due to categorization processes); why stereotypes are reified (due to the anchor); why some people experience a self-enhancement bias (due to judgmental anchoring and accompanying *Lake Wobegon effect*); why asymmetry of mental categories exists (due to anticipation categories, prejudices and overgeneralization); why people experience a mental conflict (due to cognitive dissonance), etc.,. Understandings of stereotypes and stereotyping processes as part of intercultural communication are necessarily interdisciplinary, so cross-disciplinary cognitive findings may significantly inform comprehension of and deepen insight into stereotypes. However, the above-mentioned considerations by no means exhaust the range of issues related to the problem of stereotypes that can be found in nearly every intercultural situation.

Conclusion

The goal of this chapter has been to explore theoretical approaches to the study of stereotypes across various scholarly fields and to see what cognitive processes shape stereotypes. This chapter has shown various theoretical approaches, disclosing important features and aspects of stereotypes that can manifest on diverse linguistic levels. By nature, stereotypes display diverse features, most of which are negative.

Analysis of different approaches along with cognitive mechanisms highlights the choices made in stereotypes studies. Scholars tend to ascribe the traits that reflect stereotype definitions and nature in their scientific fields; hence there exists a great variety of different scholarly assumptions. All these assumptions may be regarded as operational (sometimes not complete but convenient for research). I suggest applying an interdisciplinary platform to stereotype studies that integrates methods. The analysis of cognitive processes is helpful in understanding why and how perception can be distorted: people belonging to different cultures have different perceptual experiences, different knowledge about the world. What is regarded as a positive stereotype might be regarded as negative. For

example, the stereotype of the blonde is negative in the USA with countless jokes about the blondes' intellect (dumb blondes), but blondes are positively perceived in Russia. Applicability of the cognitive processes to specific intercultural communication situations highlights the bases on which various stereotypes are built. The examination of theoretical approaches and cognitive mechanisms undertaken in this chapter may be applied in teaching practice and educational research.

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