THE IMPACT OF PATTERNS ON THE PROCESS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

The article devided into the complexities surrounding stereotypes and their impact on the pedagogy of intercultural communication. It underscores how stereotypes can precipitate discrimination, whereby misconceptions and negative sentiments translate into unjust treatment of particular individuals or communities. However, the article posits that this detrimental cycle can be preempted through the adept integration of intercultural communication components within the curriculum of specialized educational institutions, such as schools and gymnasiums. This strategic inclusion aims to alleviate cultural shock and foster smoother interactions with native speakers in subsequent communicative endeavors.

*   ***Key words:*** *culture; intercultural communication; competence; ethnocentrism; communicative competence; stereo type.*

INTRODUCTION

Culture is a way of life, a 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 a legitimate perception. This inclination, known as ethnocentrism, prompts us to evaluate the behavior of individuals from other cultural backgrounds based on the norms of our own culture. In the prejudice of our own worldview, we tend to portray other cultures too simplistically, and view each person as having the appropriate stereotypical traits. The fact is that a stereotype may be correct in depicting a typical member of a culture, but it is inaccurate for describing a particular person simply because each of us is unique, so characteristics cannot be predicted based on ethnic norms. The importance of cultivating intercultural sensitivity and communicative competence has gathered increased attention in recent years, fostering discussions and scholarly inquiries aimed at fostering cross-cultural understanding and cooperation. Educators should not only draw students attention to facts about other cultures, but also highlighte that communication is not just an exchange of information, opinions, as well as stereotypical images about the culture of other peoples.

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

When people from different countries laugh at the same joke, it hints that there might be some truth in it. Stereotypes, which are generalizations about groups of people or cultures, often have a basis in reality, even if they're not entirely accurate. When we meet new people, we tend to focus on what we have in common, which helps us connect with each other. In general, humans naturally gravitate towards those who share similar views, habits, or languages, as it fosters a sense of comfort and facilitates

the establishment of new relationships. The more commonalities we discover, the easier it is to connect and build rapport. However, the true test arises when we encounter differences and fail to find common ground. In such instances, it's crucial to muster the courage to overcome any resulting anxiety and continue to engage with the unfamiliar. 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 move forward, or do we all withdraw from interacting with the unknown?

MAIN PART

When faced with uncertainty, stereotypes often emerge as a coping mechanism. While commonly viewed in a negative light and associated with prejudice, stereotypes are a natural phenomenon that all individuals, regardless of their beliefs, may yield to. Despite our limited understanding of others, we tend to categorize them based on a fragment of truth. This mental shortcut is ingrained in our cognitive processes as a means of navigating the complexities of life and comprehending a vast and intricate world. Stereotypes are thus universally created, operating at both collective and individual levels, although with varying degrees of accuracy and impact.

Indeed, while our brains are proficient at categorizing inanimate objects, they encounter challenges when attempting to classify people due to the inherent complexity of human nature. Unlike objects, individuals possess multifaceted identities, emotions, and experiences that ignore simple categorization. Attempting to fit people into rigid stereotypes overlooks the richness and diversity of human existence, often leading to oversimplification and misunderstanding. Therefore, while classification is a natural cognitive process, it's essential to approach the classification of people with caution and sensitivity, recognizing and embracing the complexity inherent in each individual.

RESULTS and ANALYSIS

Firstly, stereotypes create a cognitive filter that selectively processes information, reinforcing our existing beliefs while disregarding contradictory evidence. People tend

to overlook or dismiss facts that challenge their preconceptions, especially in the absence of resources to confront such information. Stereotypes are resilient and resistant to change, even when confronted with instances that contradict them. For example, if someone believes the stereotype that all Americans are arrogant, they may dismiss encountering a friendly and approachable American as an exception rather than challenging their stereotype. Moreover, this selective filter amplifies information that aligns with our assumptions, leading us to perceive only what we want to see and making decisions based on false premises. In essence, stereotypes deceive us into making misguided judgments.

Secondly, stereotypes can give rise to self-fulfilling prophecies due to the link between beliefs and behavior. Your perception and treatment in society can be shaped by prevailing stereotypes about your group, influencing how others perceive and interact with you indirectly. For instance, when Europeans are reminded of the stereotype suggesting they have lower athletic abilities compared to African Americans, they may exhibit poorer performance than those who are not exposed to such stereotypes. Similarly, women may internalize the belief that they are less competent than men in technical and mathematical fields, perpetuating a myth that has been debunked as women have demonstrated equal capabilities to men in these domains. This stereotyping effect is so harmful in the sense that it can lead us not to put more effort into solving the problem. Instead, he questions our own abilities and attributes this weakness to our age, race, gender, nationality, etc.

Finally, there are 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, no matter how positive they are, stereotypes remain unchanged, 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 of one particular group highlights the negative stereotypes of others (e.g.they are lazy; they depend on welfare; they are criminals, etc.). In fact, it can contribute to legal injustice, social hostility, racial hatred, and the

creation of platforms to accuse other groups of not being a model, which does not correspond to the level of their contribution. But what if we consider the stereotype in relation to the concept of cultural fact? At this point, a 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's important to know the difference between stereotypes and real cultural descriptions. Prejudice comes from what we think, while accurate cultural descriptions come from research. To check if cultural information is true, we should make sure it describes things without judging, can be confirmed by different sources, applies to most people in the group, and explains how that group is different from others.

DISCUSSION

Now let's consider the following statement: "The Dutch are tall." The first criterion is noted because the statement is descriptive and not evaluative, it does not give a moral connotation, good or bad. The second criterion is missing, but it can be obtained from at least two studies confirming that the height of the Dutch is above the world average. The third criterion is also not fulfilled, but can be represented by statistical data confirming that this height applies to most Dutch people, and not to all. The fourth criterion is vague, since "being tall" without a comparison system is useless, we do not know if the Dutch are "taller than whom?". Conclusion: the statement in its original form is more a stereotype than an accurate cultural observation. But what about it then? How can you be aware of all these nuances without having ever visited other countries? It's crucial to help students understand their own culture while also teaching them about other ethnic groups. Building intercultural awareness means developing good communication skills and being able to interact peacefully with people from different backgrounds. Teachers of foreign languages play a key role in this by acting as "intercultural mediators," helping students critically understand the connections between different cultures. After all, Stereotypes and prejudices are widespread, and we often encounter their direct effects. However, we do have a choice in how we

respond to them. We can choose not to act on them and, even better, work on changing our own behavior and mindset. Training in intercultural communication can help with this. Effective intercultural communication relies on qualities like empathy, respect, openness, and sensitivity, as practical experience demonstrates.

CONCLUSION

Absolutely, creating opportunities for communication that are sensitive to the values, cultural norms, and needs of students is crucial in fostering effective language learning. By prioritizing understanding over merely following curricula and textbook materials designed for native speakers, educators can better support students in developing a deeper appreciation for diverse perspectives and contexts. Building "ethnic awareness" is indeed a key aspect of intercultural language learning, as it enables students to comprehend and interact with people within their own cultural contexts more meaningfully.

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