FUNCTIONS AND MEANINGS OF STEREOTYPES
IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

The world we live in has a lot of countries and a lot of differences. The inhabitants of the countries have their own values and believes. It is necessary for good communication to have knowledge about the culture of the person you want communicate with. This knowledge helps us to understand people of different cultures and is also the basis of the way we communicate towards people of different cultures. However cultural differences can lead to miscommunication and conflicts. This leads us to stereotypes.

The purpose of this work is to analyze the impact of stereotypes on intercultural communication.

In everyday use, the concept of the stereotype is used in various contexts: usually the word stereotype is used to refer to members of some kind of collective: firemen are courageous, blondes are less intelligent, Italians are noisy, and so forth. When a person makes inferences about a new person or about some social event, they use their existing knowledge to reduce the uncertainty in the situation. The less one knows about the object, the more one uses stereotypical generalizations.

As for stereotypes in intercultural communication, they can be defined as a generalization about some group of people that over simplifies their cultures. When meeting people from other nations and cultures, people usually have a natural tendency to perceive their behavior from the positions of their culture. Misunderstanding of a foreign language, gestures, facial expressions and other elements of behavior often leads to a distorted interpretation of the meaning of their actions, which easily creates a number of negative feelings: wariness, scorn, hostility. It even could motivate inimical attitudes toward cultural difference. In this case, stereotypes play an indispensable role in influencing the effectiveness of intercultural communication [1].

Cultural stereotypes are called respectively auto- and hetero-stereotypes depending on whether they concern ones’ own nationality or differing one. They can be described as follows:
- auto-stereotype: “In our opinion we [my nationality] are...”;
- hetero-stereotype: “We think that they are...”.

Differences in stereotypes from different cultures concern many aspects. For example, the topics of conversations: about what is possible to talk with representatives of other cultures and isn’t, the perception of time, the behavior of representatives of different cultures in public places, etc.

The backgrounds of stereotyping are in repeated situations in people’s lives. This is enshrined in the people’s minds in the form of standard schemes and thinking patterns. In general, it can be said that stereotypes are certain beliefs and the existing knowledge of people regarding the qualities and traits of other individuals, as well as events and things [2].

The psychological mechanism of stereotyping is based on the principle of saving effort. This principle means that people do not seek to respond to the events that surround them every time in a new way, but bring them under categories they have. The constantly changing world simply overloads people with new information and psychologically compels him to classify this information into the most convenient and familiar models, which are called stereotypes.
The most well-known ethnic stereotypes are stable judgments about the representatives of some national groups from the point of view of others. For example, stereotypical ideas about the politeness of the British, the eccentricity of the Italians, the carelessness of the French, or the "mysterious Slavic soul" [3].

Stereotypes are often resistant to change. Experiences at variance with the stereotype usually do not change the stereotype but are interpreted as exceptions.

Stereotypes carry out a variety of functions and tasks, such as:
- explanation of human actions by providing ready and simple information about their specific socio-cultural characteristics;
- foresight of various behaviors of communication partners;
- the formation of the basics of their own behavior in relation to interlocutors and partners;
- the protection of their traditions, customs, habits and culture;
- providing members of society with appropriate standards, models, standards of conduct;
- stabilization and integration of relations between socio-cultural groups in society.

A lot of researchers believe that, depending on the methods and forms of their use, stereotypes can be both harmful and useful. We conducted research at the School of Business of BSU where 80 people were involved. The results are shown in the figure. During this research it became clear that people believe that stereotypes can play both a positive and a negative role in a person's life - 70% think so. However, 20% see only the negative role of stereotypes and do not believe that they can bring any positive.

![Fig. 1. The results of the research](image)

Stereotypical ideas about other peoples and other cultures prepare for a clash with a foreign culture, reduce a cultural shock, what is very important for successful communication without conflicts, misunderstandings and awkward situations [4].

Stereotypes also bring certain benefits in the following cases:
- if the stereotype represents the group norms and values, not the specific qualities of a single individual;
- if the stereotype is descriptive, not estimated;
- if the stereotype is only a guess about a group, but not direct information about it;
- if the stereotype is not the final conclusion of an individual, but is changing on the basis of further observations and experience of communication with real people.

Researchers identify a number of reasons that stereotypes may interfere with intercultural communication:
there is no possibility to identify the individual characteristics of people using stereotypes. Stereotyping assumes that all members of the group have the same features;

very often stereotypes are based on half-truths and distortions.

In conclusion, we would like to say that it is necessary to take into consideration both negative and positive psychological consequences in the analysis of stereotypes. On the one hand, the judgment about the other person based on stereotypes often acts as a prejudice. In the conditions of a lack of information, the social stereotype often turns out to be false and plays a conservative role, forming misconceptions about what is going on. Any social stereotype that turned out to be true in one situation may turn out to be wrong in another one. On the other hand, the existence of social stereotypes plays a very significant role in social life for the simple reason that without them, in the absence of comprehensive information about what is happening, it would be difficult to process information. Stereotypes facilitate understanding, for example, the more stereotypes in the text, the easier it is for understanding.

And what should be taken into consideration is that an observer tends to favour information that is consistent with existing expectancies, and tends to ignore information that is inconsistent with the stereotypes.

To sum up, we can conclude that despite the validity or groundlessness, all of them are an integral part of any culture. They influence on peoples’ consciousness and behavior. Therefore, stereotypes play a significant role in intercultural communication.

References


K. Zelenovskiy, A. Karnilova, 
1st year students of School of Business of BSU 
Scientific supervisor:
 senior lecturer
O. Kovalenko

THE FAKE NEWS ISSUE: THE IMPORTANCE OF REPUTATION IN BUSINESS

Our paper is an analysis of the issue of fake news which is widespread among all nations. Our research was conducted by the using of survey method and analysis of secondary data. Looking through the topic, it is noticeable that in 21st century media sources use their right to familiarize users with the information for their personal gain. The aim of this paper is to reveal how the yellow press influences the business and how to protect reputation in a competitive world where the level of rivalry is extremely high. Our tasks are to determine the level of anxiety in the world about fake news, and explore how the Belarusian students relate specifically to this issue. What is more, research was