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**NATIONAL STEREOTYPES
IN THE CONTEXT OF CROSS CULTURAL COMMUNICATION****[*О.В. Дышекова* Национальные стереотипы
в контексте межкультурной коммуникации]**

It is considered national stereotypes in the context of cross cultural communication. Stereotyped thinking has always been an essential feature of any human being, as a manner of perceiving reality. It is emphasized that stereotypes penetrate into almost all spheres of public life and touches upon gender, religious, political, racial or cultural issues. The most common stereotypes are considered to be national ones, as they are interlinked with the idea of a national character and are believed to reflect the main specific points peculiar to a definite nation.

Key words: stereotyped thinking, system of ideas, national peculiarities, standardized description, national character, community.

Stereotyped thinking has always been an inherent feature of any human creature, being a way of perception the reality. There is not a single person completely free from stereotypes – everyone seems to be under their influence to a certain degree. We may feel it or not, but this system of ideas, cultivated by traditions, upbringing, education, mass media, to say nothing of personal convictions as well as ignorance, finally evolve into the strong preconception of the world, which defines and outshapes a person's outlook. We cannot but agree with G.V. Yelizarova who claims that “stereotypes represent not mere abstractions on the basis of a personal experience, but the abstractions gained by both verbal and non-verbal ways in a certain linguistic and cultural society during a long period of time” [1].

Stereotype is considered to be an excessively generalized judgment of definite type of people. Stereotype is a wide generalizations about a particular group of people.

Apart from being developed from outside by the surrounding, a stereotype is always filled with personal emotional and estimating content. As a consequence, the phenomena which do not correspond those ideas fixed in a person's mind are normally either rejected or neglected. According to the American journalist and political scientist, who is known as an inventor of the term "stereotype", Walter Lippmann, "our stereotyped world is not necessarily the world we should like it to be. It is simply the kind of world we expect it to be ... For when a system of stereotypes is well fixed, our attention is called to those facts which support it, and diverted from those which contradict ... What is alien will be rejected, what is different will fall upon unseeing eyes. We do not see what our eyes are not accustomed to take into account. Sometimes consciously, more often without knowing it, we are impressed by those facts which fit our philosophy" [6]. Stereotypes penetrate virtually all spheres of social life – be it gender, religious, political, racial or cultural issues. As a rule, they operate with stamps and a set of standard definitions. Among the most common and widespread stereotypes are those dealing with national character. A nation is generally looked upon as a whole unit, a communion of people bounded by the same historical background and originating from the same roots, thus having the same identification in the shape of cultural, social and behavior peculiarities. They can "turn out to be trivialities" like: "Spaniards are cruel to animals, Italians can do nothing without making a deafening noise, the Chinese are addicted to gabbling. ... Nevertheless, nothing is causeless" [3].

In his book "The English National Character: The History of an Idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair" Peter Mandler writes: "The idea of "national character" – that a people forming a given nation have some psychological or cultural characteristics in common that bind them together and separate them from other peoples – is one of the most intensely focused forms of national consciousness because it implies specificity both about the people in question (and all of them, not only some) and about other peoples" [7].

Stereotypes are closely interwoven with the idea of the national character, since they are believed to reflect major points that are specific and unique for the certain nation. It is important to realize that a one-sided view upon the problem of stereotypes is erroneous, as this issue is multidimensional, not to say ambiguous.

The explorers of the problem of stereotypes have divided into two groups – those who suppose them to be nothing but false absolutism, and those who claim them to have real basis. It seems that the most positive approach is to keep to the golden middle instead of going to the extremes. A quite reasonable approach is demonstrated by Zhernovaya. So she writes that using stereotypes is inevitable while intercultural communication [2]. Stereotypes are very meaningful for the realization of cross-cultural communication. The role stereotypes are very valuable for the interaction and mutual understanding of cultures in the process of intercultural communication realization. Quite often in the process of cross-cultural communication and estimation of partners people are guided first of all by the previously prevailing stereotypes. Ter-Minasova is of the opinion that with all their schematism and generality, stereotyped ideas concerning other nations and cultures prepare for an encounter with an alien culture, weaken the power of collision, and reduce the cultural shock [4].

The classical example of the so-called “national stereotypes” are the British ones! They are numerous and as any other fixed ideas amazingly long-lasting. Nevertheless, there are some controversial questions about them, which are to be described below. So, what is there that makes British so British? To begin with, the term itself – “the British stereotypes” – is rather elastic and provides too much space for all sorts of speculations and interpretations. The foreigners tend to mix up the words “British” and “English”. George Orwell wrote: “It is very rare to meet a foreigner ... who can distinguish between English and Scots or even English and Irish” [8]. According to Krishan Kumar “non-English members of the United Kingdom rarely say “British” when they mean “English”, or “English” when they mean “British” [5].

It should be emphasized that British people have an “acknowledged” code behavior according to which it better not to express straightforwardly what you think or feel. In contrast to Russian people, who prefer directness, Britons try to detract things. English comments are full of hints, understatements and half-tones. British people do not like to interfere with the other people’s personal life and affairs. British people are known to possess the so-called cult of personality, so they usually keep to themselves, and they dislike disturbing other people’s privacy. For example, they do like to speak about their personal matters and interests, and when they do, they always do it in an “excuse” manner. While speaking, the British

mostly avoid direct questions, as well as strong, dogmatic ones, because the culturally acknowledged mode of behavior does not allow to directly ask people about their personal affairs. So we can see that the British are ruled by the statute of absence of interfering into other people's private life. The highest feature of the human character for Britons is considered to be self-possession. They appreciate possibility to stay calm in all kinds of situations and to leave things unspoken. So British people can be called extremely reserved. We also consider them to be extremely polite, traditional, courteous, honest, and nationalistic with the peculiar sense of humor, which can sometimes be elegant.

It should be emphasized that the expression "British stereotypes" reveals the inability or unwillingness to see the diversions among the four nation-forming peoples of the UK – from the point of view of the historical, cultural, social and even a number of psychological backgrounds. The English writer George Orwell described it thus: "It is quite true that the so-called races of Britain feel themselves to be very different from one another. A Scotsman, for instance, does not thank you if you call him an Englishman. You can see the hesitation we feel on this point by the fact that we call our islands by no less than six different names, England, Britain, Great Britain, the British Isles, the United Kingdom and, in very exalted moments, Albion. Even the differences between north and south England loom large in our own eyes" [8]. Still, due to certain pieces of literature, music and films foreigners get a standardized picture of the inhabitants of the British Isles. A list of must-have stereotypes includes love for tea and fish and chips, love for pets and horse-racing, flowers and gardening, "the addiction to hobbies and spare-time occupations. The privateness of English life." [8]. Most people do not fail to remember the notorious conservatism and adherence to traditions, good manners and sometimes snobbism. Representatives of different nations notice different things, highlight various aspects of the British life and character each in his own way. Thus, one can come across a large number of definitions, "a ready list of adjectives at hand ... polite, unexcitable, reserved ... class-bound, hidebound and incapable of expressing their emotions" [9]. Sadokhin A.P. explains this phenomenon in the following way: "Meeting representatives of other cultures a person shows his natural tendency to perceive their behavior through his own culture, to measure another's corn by one's own bushel" [3].

Exploring stereotypes of different cultures and learning the differences can help us communicate with others more effectively. When someone finds himself in a baff-

fling situation, it is important to analyze how culture reflects the own reactions of a peculiar person, it is necessary to reveal the world from the other's point of view. One should be aware, first and foremost, of some fundamental patterns or stereotypes of cultural differences, such as different communication styles formed on the basis of the peculiar culture-influenced convictions, different attitudes towards conflict due to a distinct set of values. Cross-cultural business communication represents the main source of creation behavioral stereotypes that may contribute to the success or failure of a business talks. When people work in the international commercial sphere, awareness of the cultural stereotypes influence and cultural differences is one of the essential points to succeed in international business. When a person improves grades of cultural awareness it contributes to the creation of international communicative competencies and gives opportunities to become more globally sensitive.

There are also stereotypes connected with the geographical position and climatic peculiarities of the area. Just like Russia is unfailingly associated with severe chill, frost and snow, alike Britain is believed to be the home of never-ending fogs, mists, rains, sleet and all sorts of nasty weather. But just like Russia can offer you lots of sunshine and scorching temperatures in the south, Britain is not that gloomy dark place either. The British Isles do have lots of rains due to being isles! This is reflected in the language. One should only have a closer look at how rich the vocabulary in words denoting weather, mostly wet weather. However, in spite of being rainy from time to time, the British weather is sure not to be called unchanging, monotonous and dull.

To sum it up, the British stereotypes can be a little bit exaggerated ideas, they can be even distorted by personal esteems, opinions and prejudices in a way, like any other ideas. However, they can't be called false, because they evidently reveal the basic national features. They are like caricatures, which show the most outstanding things in an extravagant way, but they do not lie. Frequently this is stereotypes that become the first step on a long stairway of getting acquainted with a new culture.

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