

Ethnic Stereotypes of *Ours* vs. *Theirs* Perception During the Process of Cross-Cultural Communication

¹Klara Konarovna Bazarbaeva, ²Zhanar Adilhanovna Omarova and
¹Klara Muhamediarovna Abisheva

¹Turan-Astana“ University, Astana, Kazakhstan

²Kazakh National Pedagogical University named after Abay, Almaty, Kazakhstan

Abstract: In this article, the *insiders (ours)* and *outsiders (theirs)* stereotypes are considered from the point of view of cognitive approach and the cognitive basis of ethnic stereotypes is grounded. Though stereotypes are determined by simplified perception and one-dimensional image of another one (nation, representative of another linguocultural community), it is still possible to recognize the presence of cognitive attributes in them, which is expressed, firstly, through ambiguous perception of *our* and *their* objects during the process of cognitive activity; secondly, through conceptualization of the *insider* and *outsider* concepts and building the understanding of them; thirdly, in the presence of categorizing activity of the perception subjects, when based on the differentiation of the attributes of *ours* and *theirs*, the subject forms the *ours* and *theirs* categories using the principle of contrast and non-identity of the concepts. Along with that, psychological attributes are also identified in ethnic stereotypes. These are: simplification, formation of the autostereotype (*ours*), the heterostereotype (*theirs*) and the valuability of perception. These attributes of ethnic stereotypes are considered through comparing and contextual analysis. In addition, the methods of conceptual analysis of the *ours* and *theirs* concepts are used, as well as the method of analysis based on the perception by a human of the social reality. The main approaches used in the article are: the cognitive and the activity-based approaches. The article characterizes perception barriers and reviews situations of perceiving *theirs* in cross-cultural communication based on the said approaches and methods (defining the extra image of *theirs* by language, behavior; expression of biases with respect to *theirs*, etc.)

Key words: Cognition · Ethnic perception stereotypes · Ethnic biases · Ethnocentrism · Barrier of own perceptions

INTRODUCTION

Appearance of the new branch of knowledge-the cognitive psychology-encourages the throughout study of ethnic stereotypes, which are perceived as images of ethnic communities mirroring the objective reality, though distorted or transformed: the properties of two interacting groups and relationship between them [1, 295]. Ethnic stereotypes in professional literature are described cursorily, only their general properties are studied, but their particular types have not been elaborated, particularly the *ours* vs. *theirs* ethnic stereotypes. Interest to study such ethnic stereotypes is caused by the intention to explore them both during the process of

perception and as a stage of cognitive activity; the processes of conceptualization of *ours* and *theirs* are accomplished, as well as the processes of their categorization by *ours* and *theirs* groups according to ethnic stereotypes and cognitive abilities of the individual. Though, T.G. Stefanenko finds it wrongful to place stereotypes only in the cognitive sphere [1, 290], it is believed reasonable to study ethnic stereotypes in terms of cross-disciplinary aspect, focusing on their psychological and cognitive properties. In the *ours* and *theirs* ethnic stereotypes, the cognitive basis is clearly traced, as cognitive ability of an individual is defined by his ability to identify differences, which is caused by the peculiarities of cognitive processes. According to T.A.

Van Dijk, every new object perceived by us is a precedent in terms of perception and it is automatically placed in the relevant category due to the influence of cognitive processes, such as categorization [2]. In ethnic stereotypes of *ours vs. theirs* perception, the concepts of *ours* and *theirs* are categorized by similarity (*ours*) or difference (*theirs*). This confirms the idea that stereotypization is understood as a rational form of cognition and a particular case of the more universal process of categorization [3]. Categorization of *ours* and *theirs* stereotypes is accomplished in a more simplified form. In this case, gathering the knowledge on the objects in the *ours* and *theirs* categories is accomplished intuitively based on subjective and emotional attributes. At that, attention is not focused on the significant characteristics of the *ours* or *theirs* category, which characteristics are defined based on the principle of plurality and diversity of baselines of categorization. Following this principle, according to E. Rosh, categories are divided into natural (more or less based on perception) and semantic (based on the concepts) ones [4]. The *ours* and *theirs* concepts are considered as forms of knowledge-concepts represented in conceptual opposition [5, 50]. The continuously increasing attention to the study of cognitive component of stereotypes has predetermined the subject of our article, in which we characterize the cognitive and psychological attributes of ethnic stereotypes of *ours vs. theirs* perception based on their exemplary analysis.

In this work, we use the method of conceptual analysis, which allows to describe the *ours* and *theirs* concepts, the comparative method as well as the method of contextual analysis, which both show how the *ours* and *theirs* perceptions are expressed in various situations of cross-cultural communication. The method of analysis of human perception of social reality is also used. Research of ethnic stereotypes, as the results of cognitive, identifying and differentiating activity of a human, proved that ethnostereotype is a result of dualistic perception of the idea's subject, which is determined by the phenomenon of self-consciousness, exerting in two aspects: understanding oneself and some other people being individuals due to common properties, attributes and qualities, understanding of others' particularity, assigning other properties to others based on certain experience and knowledge [6].

Such dualistic perception of the reality objects takes place during the process of cognitive activity-the cognition. According to authors of the Brief Dictionary of Cognitive Terms, this term describes both individual acts

of perception and processes of integration of the experiment data and the ability of a human to identify attributes, qualities, sides of various objects, form their integral image, discretize and structure perceptual data [7, 173]. During the cognition process, the attributes of *ours* and *theirs* are identified; the collective identification of a group by *ours* and *theirs* attributes is accomplished. At the formation of these categories, individuals possessing the *ours* and *theirs* attributes are included in them. The *ours* or *theirs* groups have collective identity, but it *does not exist outside the individuals who constitute this identity and its bearers* [8].

U. Neisser identified three types of perception through association of the perception process with a person's cognitive abilities: 1) the system of direct perception; 2) the system of interindividual perception; 3) the system of representative perception [9, 14]. To identify and describe the stereotypes of ethnic interindividual perception during the communication process, we must refer to the second and third systems of perception, when during communication a person perceives and assesses another person and builds definite perception stereotypes that simplify the image of the other person or allow him to differentiate himself from this other person. R.S. Nemov and I.R. Altunina believe that the process of perception of a person by another person consists of three particular processes, including identification, comparison and reflection [10, 290-291].

During the process of ethical interindividual and intergroup perception, an oppositely directed perception of *insiders* and *outsiders* takes place: at perception of *insiders*, representatives of an ethical group identify each other through the concept of casual things associated with the perceived objects. During communication of representatives of different linguocultural communities, the categories of personal perception are formed, which differ by results of association, or attribution, in native and *outsider's* cultures. Thus, in native culture, which is based on the values uniform for the communicants, discrete units of the language and the culture are associated with certain categories, which are used by them in their mental activities. When new phenomena or concepts are compared with the previously stated categories and the conclusion is made with respect to their similarity or difference of certain categories, the necessity of forming a new category is discussed. And, in the cross-cultural communication environment, the result of associating phenomena with various categories and application of existing knowledge to them is different from such attribution in the native culture, as in this case

association of phenomena with categories is accomplished through the prism of native culture and then applied to the objects of another nation's culture. The substance of the perception barrier is that communication partner's behavior and deeds are perceived by the second communicant through the prism of his native culture, in which value systems have been determined, stereotypes of behavior perception have been formed and norms have been adopted. Partners are representatives of different cultures and they unconsciously form categories of their own perception in the result of influence of the following factors: 1) existence of obvious differences and similarities, which, in their turn, are based on the understanding of casual and familiar things, associated with the perceived objects of any kind; 2) extension of properties and characteristics of casual and familiar things to the new and unknown ones; 3) dividing people into *insiders* and *outsiders*; 4) intensification of positive aspects related to perception of *insiders*; 5) assuredness that all people in the world are virtually identical and, therefore, they behave mostly according to the postulates of the culture, which is native for the perceiving person [11].

The *ours* and *theirs* perception barrier in interethnic communication occurs due to the fact that during cross-cultural interaction the communicants use the feeling of anxiety and uncertainty, as new partners are involved in new unconventional communication situations, which creates the perception barrier. For such uncertainty, two aspects can be identified: 1) uncertainty with respect to relationships, feelings, values and behavior of the *outsiders* or uncertainty of prediction; 2) uncertainty with respect to the causes or motives of these relationships, feelings, values, behavior models or uncertainty of explanation [12, 27]. There is no uncertainty about *insiders*, as an *insider* is perceived as someone familiar, close and casual and not threatening our lives. An *insider* is an embodiment of positive qualities, he is reachable, *ours* cannot threaten our safety, where *theirs* does. *Ours* as the *image of us* differentiates *our perception* from the *theirs* perception of. Members of one group are associated with each other based on the characteristics of the *ours* and *our perception* categories. Such social identification, i.e. self-determination of individuals in social group space with respect to the *insiders'* and *outsiders'* communities, involves the need of a social group in creating positively assessed differences from other groups in order to provide own members with positive assessments. *Insider* has the attribute of *the guard, our warriors*. Compare: "And you are on our side-

Of course, we are, old lady.-On whose else do you think?-replied Bozhanov laughing. Ours are black Kazakhs and Kyrgyz,-joked Tolstunov,-and there are a lot of Russians here, too. Don't you see? Don't you recognize us?-God save you, our protectors,-said the old woman" [13, 15]. Communication of army men assumes materialization of *outsider's* attributes by such attributes of the *outsider* extra image, as:

- The language (outsider by language):

The attribute of an *outsider* by language is shown in the following context by means of providing an example of using the *outsider's* language: "As we passed about one and a half kilometer, a motorcycle with a sidecar whizzed past our column and when it reached the head of the column, the officer sitting in the sidecar shouted out:

- Der Oderst hat defohlen, Marshaltdis zum Destimmungsort!
- Hurry on,-my command was passed down the column in whisper" [13, 159].
- *Outsider's* behavior is strange, incomprehensible, alien, often it is threatening: an alien country is a deep forest, alien country is the mother-in-law; outland is the arrow wood and homeland is the mother; everyone has his own taste, etc. Compare:
- Whose machine gun is barking now, Kraev?-It's not one of ours, Comrade Commander...-Sure? Maybe, it is.-No, Comrade Commander, it's not. I feel it by its behavior. Ours have been taught to provide accurate fire in short bursts and the Germans shoot indiscriminately at the air. Oh, how they do like to make noise..." [13, 38].
- An *outsider* and an *insider* are differentiated from each other by the extent of proximity, friendly relations and moral quality. Compare: "If at this twilight time an enemy group springs on from any of the sides shooting with their tommy-guns, people will rush to the forest and disperse there and finding and gathering them in the nighttime is not an easy task" [13, 226].
- *Outsider* means from another place, outside the country, but who has come to this country as an aggressor; he threatens and, therefore, he is considered a foe, an enemy. In the following example, the words *foe, enemy, aggressor, the Germans* are

used as synonyms to *outsider*: "of course, the Germans have information about us, too. We must expect the attack of the enemies who believe in success of their intention, plan. They say the Germans have received and order from the General Headquarters: "Battle through to Moscow whatever it takes". If that is right, very hard battles are expecting us. We have the order to defend hard. We need to gain time by defending hard and we must not let the enemy capture the high road, we must involve them into battles." [13, 73].

- People have a prejudice to an *outsider* and it again becomes actual as biases are expressed. "A bias is unreasoned negative perception of other people, which does not change even if reasonable evidences of its unfairness and erroneous nature are provided" [14, 335-339].

In order to express one's rejection of *outsiders*, communicants can demonstrate depreciative attitude to the *outsiders* by using various nicknames, miscalling them with short words. Compare: "both parties showed perseverance. The young soldier put the rifle's club on his shoulder. One shot...and another.-I hit the fascists two times,-he confessed sadly,-and now I've missed two times" [13, 67].

In some cases, the *outsider* stereotype metamorphoses. For example, in a battle, the Germans are perceived as enemies, but in accordance with war ethics, humanist attitude is shown to captives, as if they were *insiders*. In this case, the attributes of positive ethnocentric attitude are expressed, as the captured enemy does not threaten anymore. Compare: "Turns out, when the German complained that he was cold, they covered him with a blanket and when he said his hands were cold, the Company Captain, Lieutenant Vasily Popov, put his gloves on the German's hands. As for the Sergeant, we buried him [13, 18].

According to A. Tajfel, in this situation two functions materialized: a) explanation of the existing relations between groups, including the search of causes of complicated and usually sorrow events; b) excuse of existing intergroup relations, for example, actions [15, 144-167].

The *outsider* perception also materializes in a situation of ethnic prejudice against foreigners. Compare: " These ones,-Harrison pointed at the people sitting by the table,-they are my family. My son Robert and his spouse Claudia. Even more, she is an Italian. I have never thought I was going to have guineas in my family" [16, 348].

With respect to an *insider*, a positive ethnocentric suggestion of *insiders* materializes: "When Hans-Ditrich was away, as he presently is, Valentina Lessing-Krukova was a draggle-tail at home and outdoors on the plot. Even guests did not encourage her to comb her hair, dress up and do her nails. But, if *outsiders* would visit her, for example, Herr Lessing's business partners, Valentina would appear in all her beauty in front of them: in an evening dress, with her eyes and jewels shining. But Katyusha and Andrey were put in the category of *insiders* and , therefore, there was nothing to worry about" [17, 28].

Finally, we note that during analysis of displays of the *ours vs. theirs* ethnic stereotype in cross-cultural communication, the following results were received: it was stated that the *ours vs. theirs* ethnic stereotypes give a simplified understanding of the polar *insider (ours)* and *outsider (theirs)* characters based on the conceptualization of the *ours* and *theirs* concepts and their categorization by various groups during the perception process. In cross-cultural communication, the barriers of perception materialize, which barriers appear because of inappropriate assigning attribution in one's native and alien cultures. The *rejection* perception materializes with respect to an *outsider*, which is expressed through feeling ethnic prejudice to him.

Thus, the *ours vs. theirs* ethnic stereotypes have complex nature, expressed in the presence of cognitive and psychological attributes with them. Therefore, it is necessary to study them using the cross-disciplinary approach and using methods of related sciences. Due to globalisation, such perception stereotypes lead to misunderstanding between partners; therefore, their research is required for elaboration of a strategy of coping with them.

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