

Tackling Ethnic Stereotypes in an Intercultural Communication Course

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A brief overview of the literature on stereotypes and, specifically, ethnic stereotypes identified a rapidly emerging, but critically important, issue: stereotype-oriented teaching. Many scholars strongly disagree with the idea of teaching stereotypes. Sporadic studies of teaching ethnic stereotypes in English language teaching report positive shifts of students' attitudes towards ethnic stereotypes. However, studies of stereotype-oriented teaching in intercultural communication are few in number. The purpose of this paper is to reveal the content of ethnic stereotypes and develop activities to tackle them through the exposure of students to ethnic stereotypes. The teaching went through several stages: (1) eliciting stereotypes from learners (applying "semi-free construction" method of elicitation), (2) getting learners acquainted with the content of stereotypes through activities based on focal awareness and critical thinking approach (verbal, nonverbal, and creolized representation formats; salient features), and (3) de-stereotyping through cognitive activities (commenting, reflecting, critical thinking, creative assignment of writing a research project, etc.). Quantitative and qualitative analyses revealed students' stereotypes. Monitoring of the students' attitudes during and after the exposure of the students to the de-stereotyping activities (new nonverbal and creolized representations of stereotypes, among them) and feedback drawn from self-assessment sheets showed changed attitudes of students towards ethnic stereotypes.

In intercultural communication (ICC) studies, numerous papers have explored stereotypes, especially with respect to aspects as definition, content, nature, origin, functions, and so forth. Defining stereotypes, scholars generally agree that stereotypes are oversimplified standardized images, conceptions, or opinions of individual members or a culture (or group) as a whole (Moore, 2006). Depending on the approaches, definitions varied from the "units" on which ethnocentric perception is based, generalizations, broad categories about people (Stewart and Bennett, 1991), to forms of social perception (Bennett, as cited in Stewart & Bennett, 1991), to unique perceptual experiences (Adler, 1993; Kohls, 1984), to cognitions held by one social group about another social group (Elligan, 2008), to "mental pictures that are incomplete, biased, insensitive to variation, and resistant to disconfirming information" (Pinker, 2003, p. 201), and so forth. Other aspects of stereotypes that researchers in the past and present addressed were the issues of identifying and analyzing the content of stereotypes from the sociological point of view (the 1970s and 1980s), unconscious sources of stereotypes investigated under the psychodynamic angle, and the process of stereotyping and how this process works in the human mind from a cognitive point of view (Kurtz, 1989, p. 216; Quasthoff, 1989, p. 182, as cited in Popovic, 2004). Later, from the 1990s and onward,

the focus shifted to the linguistic study of the content—language realization of stereotypes (Berezovich & Gulik, 2002; Eshich, 2002; Fofin, 2008; Krysin, 2002; Mechkovskaya, 2002; Mieder, 1995; Shastina, 2008, etc.) and to discourse analysis (Scollon & Scollon, 2000), synergy approach, dynamic semiotic, memetic approaches (Gu, 2008), and so forth.

The literature on the nature of stereotypes highlights the controversy of stereotypes both from theoretical and practical points of view. Theoretically viewed, stereotypes are both natural and unnatural. Being cognitive products of the categorization process, stereotypes are natural. They are regarded as positive because stereotypes prepare participants of intercultural communication to contact between two cultures and lessen the culture shock. One more argument supports the positive aspect of stereotypes: the cognitive effort economy principle that facilitates perception of “other” cultures (Brislin, 1993; Ter-Minasova, 1996). On the other hand, stereotypes are unnatural because they are built on overgeneralization and simplification, which explicates why they very often lead to conflicts (Archer, 1991; Brislin, 1993; Carroll, 1991; Gudykunst & Kim, 1995; Stewart & Bennett, 1991; Valdes, 1993). As Pinker (2003) noted, “some categories (such as race, ethnicity, gender, etc.) are harmful because they may be used for discrimination” (p. 201).

Regarding this theoretical controversy of stereotypes, the issue of more applied nature emerges: can stereotypes be tackled in education or not? And if in the affirmative, how should stereotypes be taught? A short review of opinions shows that much less attention has been paid to stereotype management in education through English language teaching (ELT), teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), and intercultural communication courses. The overview presented a variegated picture reflecting contradicting attitudes to the management of stereotypes. Some scholars affirm that the treatment of stereotypes is problematic in intercultural education, as eliminating stereotypes is not possible (Lehtonen, 1994). The attempts to teach ethnic stereotypes were perceived as a spread of stereotypes by the ELT, EFL, or ICC teachers. The mere exposure of students to the problem was regarded as threatening and teachers were accused of reinforcing stereotypes (Peake, 2005).

This pessimistic attitude notwithstanding, there were attempts to manage stereotypes in education. Until recently the remedy to get rid of stereotypes was to erase stereotypes from peoples’ minds; scholars tried to eradicate ethnic stereotypes represented by ethnonyms, proverbs, sayings, and slurs from dictionaries with the exception of “gypsy” (Mechkovskaya, 2002). However, abusive ethnic names, proverbs, sayings, and slurs are still used because they are stored in the minds of cultural bearers and transmitted from generation to generation. One more radical measure was applied: the introduction of Politically Correct (PC) terms instead of abusive ones, but some of these soon acquired pejorative meaning and had to be substituted by new PC words (Pinker, 2003). The reason for this is that one cannot do anything until a phenomenon exists in a culture, in the collective unconsciousness. There used to be an assumption that teaching a foreign language was a good remedy to removing stereotypes, and scholars and teachers equated learning a foreign language with the internalization of a foreign culture, which was understood to bring about automatic avoidance

of stereotypes by learners of a foreign language. But it is not necessarily so (Byram & Rizager, as cited in Popovic, 2004).

Regarding stereotype-oriented teaching and different techniques of stereotype management, the overview of the literature revealed positive outcomes. Successful results were reported by Micah (2002), who managed stereotypes by reading expository texts (including pre-reading) and by directing reading, thinking, post-reading, and extension activities. Applying an interdisciplinary approach to linguistic analysis of nationality words in English, Popovic (2004) studied their connotations and reported changes in students' attitudes to stereotypes. Integrating linguistic learning and critical cultural analysis, as well as focal awareness, the author developed several activities to manage stereotypes through ELT teaching. According to Belchamer (2007), de-stereotyping was reached through a journal writing method and individual approach in ELT. The methodology of Honisz-Greens (2008) was based on self-awareness and reflection introduced to adolescent and young learners through socio-contextual tandem learning activities. The author also elaborated practical activities, providing intercultural experience for ELT students using modern technology tools such as chat-rooms, video-conferencing, and Skype, among others. In another ELT study (Bruggeling, 2008) the results were positive and stereotypes were shattered with the application of a stereotype-oriented teaching method based on role plays created both by the teacher and students followed by discussions. An example of successful outcome in managing stereotypes through teaching English in a Japanese context is Houghton's research (2009). Operating under the methodological assumption that "Students need to get comfortable with reflecting upon their own stereotypes in a critical way" (p. 140), the author reported broken stereotypes in the students.

Most of these sporadic studies briefly analyzed above were performed in ELT. While these studies are pioneering and of great importance for stereotypes management issues, the dilemma of whether stereotypes could be tackled through teaching in an intercultural communication course or not still remains open. Teaching stereotypes and especially ethnic stereotypes in ICC is more challenging for at least two reasons: first, stereotypes—ethnic stereotypes in particular as being of great importance in ICC—are ubiquitous in intercultural communication; second, a large volume of material must be covered within a limited time (only 8 out of 36 academic hours are allotted to ethnocentrism and stereotypes in the curriculum). While in ELT it is possible to integrate stereotype teaching in nearly every lesson during one semester (or two), this is more challenging in ICC teaching that covers a great variety of topics within a limited amount of time. Answering the question put earlier on whether stereotypes can be tackled in education or not and, if so, how they can be taught, we should answer in the affirmative and find ways to change attitudes of students.

The purpose of the present paper is to reveal the content of ethnic stereotypes and develop activities to tackle them through stereotype-oriented teaching incorporated into the "Introduction to the Theory of Intercultural Communication" course within the "Translation / Interpretation and Translation Studies" curriculum. The present study covered such aspects of

stereotypes in ICC teaching that had received little or no attention (e.g., application of an elicitation method of semi-free collocations as a diagnostic construction; representation of stereotypes in nonverbal and creolized (or polycode texts, that is, texts of heterogenic nature containing two constituents: verbal/language and semiotic/iconic, e.g., language description and cartoons, pictures, photos, etc.) formats in addition to more researched verbal format) among other, more investigated, problems. The central issues addressed in the present study are (a) the ethnic hetero-stereotype (what one group thinks about the other) content elicited from a preliminary survey, (b) identification and analysis with subsequent reflection by students on their stereotypes to develop skills to tackle those stereotypes (which was made possible through exposure of students to stereotypes), and (d) performance of various activities and assignments. The elicitation was based on the analysis of lexical connotations of ethnic names found in the so-called “semi-free collocations” (Kobozeva, 2000) that are not registered in dictionaries but are known to all cultural bearers. Being an associated meaning, lexical connotations reveal implications additional to the literal meaning of a word (ethnic name). These implications have a stable evaluative character of a subject (stereotypes). Elicited data from this tentative study were used to find the content of hetero-stereotypes of Americans that served as the starting point of the teaching process. The data of the study were analyzed followed by a series of activities and assignments developed and applied during the course by the author of the present paper.

Methods

Respondents

Fifty nine first-year students from a large university in Russia who were going to take the “Introduction to the Theory of Intercultural Communication” course served as respondents. Their ages ranged from 17 to 19. The variation in gender was significant: out of 59 students only 4 were males, the rest (55) were females. Out of 59 students, 57 returned the questionnaire, but 7 of the questionnaires were blank. Thus, only 50 students participated in the experiment. The survey was anonymous to encourage students to freely express themselves.

Procedure

The procedure of the analysis comprised several steps, reflecting the way of eliciting the content of ethnic stereotypes, the quantitative and qualitative analyses of the elicited content of stereotypes, and de-stereotyping tools to monitor students’ gradual understanding of how to tackle stereotypes integrated into the ICC course.

Step 1: Eliciting stereotypes from learners to identify the problem. Contrary to traditional ways of eliciting stereotypes (questionnaires, interviews, lists of adjectives, semantic

differential, etc.), a so-called “lexico-semantic experiment” (Kobozeva, 2000) was tentatively applied prior to teaching the course. This diagnostic construction of semi-free compatibility was offered to 59 participants (with 50 who returned and filled out the test): “As a genuine American he or she is...” (“Kak istinnyi amerikanets on...”.) The purpose of the diagnostic construction was to elicit the content of hetero-stereotypes of Americans held by Russian students. The students were instructed to complete the given semi-free collocation with the first word/words denoting psychological features that would come to their mind. The timing was short: not more than two minutes. The semi-free collocation was both in Russian and English; the students were supposed to answer either in Russian or in English (depending on their knowledge of the language).

Step 2: Quantitative and qualitative analyses. The obtained data on the content of stereotypes were analyzed and classified according to the frequency of reactions. Corresponding descriptors (30) were ascribed to synonymous and similar lexical expressions of reactions. Descriptors were ranked and analyzed based on semantic components of the reactions. The quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data obtained were performed.

Step 3: De-stereotyping teaching and students' feedback. The process of de-stereotyping consisted of many stereotype-oriented teaching activities and exercises designed to confront stereotypes: discussions, commentary and reflection sessions centered on stereotypes, developing critical thinking and critical reading, and so forth. To familiarize learners with the content of stereotypes, various activities (explicit and implicit verbal, nonverbal, and creolized representation formats; salient features that served as bases for stereotypes formation, etc.) were performed for the purpose of stereotype recognition and reflection on various aspects of stereotypes. The task to write a research project on co-cultures and subcultures was given to students, a part of which was dedicated to stereotypes. In addition to the project, the students were also given a task to fill out self- and peer-assessment sheets that served as feedback.

Results

Semi-Free Association Descriptors

The data obtained from the tentative survey disclosed 65 reactions that were realized in 56 lexically various ways. Thirty descriptors were distinguished and ranked according to their frequency. The quantitative analysis showed the following distribution of descriptors: the top-ranking descriptor of American hetero-stereotype was “patriotic” (frequency = 43%), followed by “egoist” (frequency = 20%); two descriptors, “gluttonous” and “secretive,” shared the same frequency rank (13.3%); the next two descriptors, “tactful” and “economical,” also shared the frequency rank (10%); eight descriptors: “rich,” “health-concerned,” “responsible,” “cautious,” “pedantic,” “sociable,” “well-bred,” and “athletic,” were ascribed a frequency of 6.6%; 16 concluding descriptors had a frequency of 2.3% each.

Quantitative analysis of axiological (evaluative) aspect of the data obtained brought to light the following: 53% of hetero-stereotypes of Americans were positive; 12% were neutral, and 35% negative.

The qualitative analysis of the content of students' stereotypes "painted" a stereotypical "portrait" of Americans that looked highly controversial: Russian students stereotyped Americans as egoistic and heedful, secretive and tactful, stingy and rich, clever and foolish, hardworking and lazy, athletic and ill-fitted, and so forth. This very fact was a good point for discussion in class and a stimulus to develop focal awareness through different activities to monitor and to tackle stereotypes.

Stereotype-Oriented Teaching Module

Complex methodology was applied to tackle ethnic stereotypes through activities, exercises, assignments of texts, and so forth. Designed stereotype-oriented activities were based on authentic texts drawn from modern fiction, films, cartoons, jokes, idioms, proverbs, sayings, mass media, Internet forums, blogs, personal experience of both the author of the present study and the students, and so forth. Four activities were based on focal awareness to shift students' attention from one aspect of ethnic stereotypes to another not only to highlight different aspects of ethnic stereotypes but also to make students think critically. Three activities focused on the various representations of ethnic stereotypes in language (Activity 1), nonverbal (Activity 2), and creolized (Activity 3) formats; Activity 4 focused on salient features of ethnic stereotypes. Each activity included an assignment to reflect on the focal aspect of stereotypes. Exercises with various assignments were elaborated to develop critical thinking aimed at theoretical awareness of ethnic stereotypes. These assignments were based on specific definitions, alternative theoretical views, and negatively loaded stereotypical statements for the students to reflect on. Critical reading also aimed at developing critical thinking was based on the text by Robert L. Heilbroner (1961), "Don't Let Stereotypes Warp Your Judgments," with tasks that induced students to reflect on specific utterances and ideas to both find the author's implications as well as stimulate the students to express their own opinion (see samples of activities in Appendix A).

Due to limited time allotted for teaching stereotypes in the course curriculum, an assignment to write an essay on ethnic stereotypes as part of a final, larger research project on co-cultures was given to the students. This final task was set at the beginning of the course with the deadline for submission set at three weeks before the end of the semester. The research project was performed in both written form and in a PowerPoint presentation. With the goal of eliciting students' feedback and finding changes in perception of stereotypes in general and of ethnic hetero-stereotypes of Americans in particular, they were given the assignment to fill in self-assessment and peer-assessment sheets.

Attitudes to Ethnic Stereotypes

Monitoring of students' changing attitudes was conducted using three sources: (a) the teacher's evaluation of both written and oral performance during seminars, (b) the feedback from self-assessment and peer assessment sheets, and (c) the stereotypes part of research project. After the integration of activities into the teaching process, the attitudes of students towards stereotypes in general immensely changed. After being exposed to the axiological aspect of stereotypes they came to realize that stereotypes may be positive, negative, and neutral. The general tendency of all the activities and exercises to develop critical thinking was helpful for students to understand the nature of stereotypes and how to tackle them. This especially refers to the critical reading section, for which students discussed Heilbroner's article on stereotypes. The positive shift in students' attitudes was clearly seen in the self-assessment and peer-assessment sheets.

Discussion

The purpose of the present pilot study was to reveal the content of ethnic stereotypes and develop activities to tackle them through stereotype-oriented teaching. The research was preceded by a short tentative survey; the data obtained confirmed the teacher's expectation that the students were biased in their perception of Americans. The quantitative analysis disclosed positive traits that prevailed in the elicited hetero-stereotypes of Americans along with negative and neutral ones. The qualitative analysis identified the highly contradicting content of stereotypes. The statistics of quantitative analysis and the results of the qualitative analysis were demonstrative of the bias of people who do not think critically, but instead have superficial ideas of stereotypes and consider that stereotypes are always negative. The tentative study and pilot stereotype-oriented teaching suggested that it is easier to teach skills than to develop the right attitude towards stereotypes. While skills can be acquired through experiential learning, attitudes require reflective learning approaches because attitudes are based on a cognitive mental process and are deeply set in the minds of people. It was found that students gradually acquired not only skills to tackle their own stereotypes in intercultural context, but also sensitivity and awareness of ethnic stereotypes and changes in their own attitudes.

After acquaintance with the nonverbal format, the students came to understand that stereotypes may be represented in diverse implicit and explicit ways and in various formats (verbal, nonverbal, and creolized). The nonverbal format of stereotype realization is as important as the verbal one because verbal and nonverbal channels form the infrastructure of human information. Though the possibility of expressing stereotypes by semiotic (nonverbal) signs was mentioned in the literature (Popovic, 2004), it had not been analyzed so far. Entirely new was the stereotype realization in creolized texts that had never been applied to stereotype analysis in ICC. The importance of this format is clearly seen in its emotional

influence on the perceiving person. Creolized texts highlight two systems of stereotype representation in their interaction: natural language and semiotic signs (cartoons).

Acquaintance with the axiological aspect of stereotypes led students to realize that stereotypes may be positive, negative, and neutral (most students were sure that stereotypes were only negative). Their theoretical awareness of ethnic stereotypes grew considerably after a series of exercises highlighting the typology of stereotypes, contrasting theoretical definitions of stereotypes, discussing alternative views of the issue of teaching stereotypes, and reflecting on what was wrong in sentences with stereotypical statements.

The feedback received from self-assessment forms were indicative of the changes: most students answering the question, “Now that I did research of a co-culture, what can I personally do to avoid stereotyping, culture bumps and clashes and to understand a different culture?” gave various answers that showed positive changes. For example:

I think I will be more attentive to the representatives of other cultures, co-cultures, and subcultures; I will not jump to conclusions about their ‘strange’ behavior; I will try to communicate with people from other cultures and learn as much as possible about people from that culture; representatives of this or that culture. (translated from Russian)

The tentative study and pilot stereotype-oriented teaching allowed the inference of at least three major implications.

The first implication is that hetero-stereotypes of Americans were interpreted in the context of the students’ own culture therefore the evaluation of the same trait was radically different from the way Americans perceive themselves. Highly demonstrative of this implication were interpretations of descriptors like “economical” (“...works only for his own profit,” etc.). The lexical representation of this descriptor presupposes positive interpretation of the content in American culture, but negative in Russian primarily polychronic collectivistic culture where people are very often not economical, and very easily borrow and lend money. In the eyes of many Russian students, Americans were patriotic, which was regarded as a positive trait (confirmed by phrases like “adores his/her country,” “believes in America,” “takes care of his/her country,” etc.). At the same time, reactions like “thinks that his / her country is the best” or “is hanging the national flag outside his house” had negative connotations, because Russians do not usually hang flags outside their house and tend to criticize their own country. That might be explicated by low auto-stereotypes of Russians.

The second implication is that stereotype-oriented teaching should be integrated into ICC courses, contrary to some scholarly opinions regarding the alleged impossibility of teaching stereotypes (Lehtonen, 1994). The present study suggested that the students should be taught stereotypes in a highly sensitive way to successively direct their attention to ethnic stereotypes and shift focal awareness to the required angle under study (their nature, explicit and implicit verbal and nonverbal representation, salient features that underlie stereotypes,

their types, functions, etc.), to reflect on stereotyping, to find alternative views, and to introduce critical thinking, and critical reading that highlights different facets of the problem. Integration of stereotype teaching into the ICC course through focal awareness and critical thinking with reflective approach, realized in this investigation, conveyed a positive shift from unconscious stereotyping to thoughtful conscious approach.

The third implication is that if stereotype-oriented teaching were applied, students' attitudes towards stereotypes would change from unconscious stereotypical assumptions to conscious attitude towards stereotypes. The fear of some authors (Peake, 2005) of spreading stereotypes through teaching was not confirmed by the present pilot study. The data that substantiated this conclusion were obtained from the students' assessment feedback that clearly showed their changed attitudes to stereotypes.

With these encouraging but still preliminary findings, the author sees the perspective of further study in implementation of enhanced elicitation tools, including pre-test and post-test questionnaires, new techniques, application of Internet technologies (social networking) to connect students from neighboring countries, and collaboration with international scholars to find the best possible way to manage stereotypes. The author also sees the possibility of writing a manual on stereotype-oriented teaching suitable for different world cultures and contexts to enhance understanding in our rapidly globalizing world and slow-changing stereotypical attitudes.

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Appendix A.

SAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES, EXERCISES AND ASSIGNMENTS

Activity 1 Language representation of ethnic stereotypes. The goal here was to elicit linguistic expression of stereotypes. Assignment I: *Study the texts below to identify language representation of ethnic stereotypes; define the status of identified language expression. Think of the degree of abusiveness*. Example : (Text 5) He turned from her, feeling, as usual, stupid as an Indian, and absently picked another chip from the door... (Gardner). Assignment 2: *Summarize linguistic ways of stereotypes representations and reflect on the role of language in creating stereotypes in intercultural communication*.

Activity 2 Nonverbal representation of ethnic stereotypes. The goal here was to direct students' conscious attention to a different (nonverbal) way of stereotype expression. Example: "They been wrong from the beginning, 'the beginning of time,' he said happily, all rolling-eyed darkie" (Gardner). Students were to find out the nonverbal signs representing stereotypes (the skin color and the habit of many African-Americans to roll the eyes). Assignment 2 was to call students to reflect on the role of non-verbal expressions in realization of ethnic stereotypes and their abusiveness.

Activity 3 Representation of ethnic stereotypes in creolized texts. The goal was to develop focal awareness bringing both verbal and nonverbal representations of ethnic

stereotypes into the focus of students. Here is an example of the activity. Assignment 1: *Interpret or comment on the semiotic (iconic) signs and the language expression.* Assignment 2: *Dwell on the roles of the two heterogenic systems (natural language and semiotic signs); which is more expressive and influential? Do they complement or contradict each other? What are your feelings about this cartoon?*

Activity 4 Salient features of ethnic stereotypes. The goal was to bring salient features of ethnic stereotypes that serve as a foundation for stereotypes. Assignment I: Find stereotypes and comment on salient features in the texts. Example: “Give me a one-way ticket to Capri.” “Si, signore.” “What’s this ‘si signore’ crap?” Robert said in a loud voice. “Why don’t you people speak English like everybody else?” The man’s eyes widened in shock. “You goddamn guineas are alike. Stupid! Or, as you people would say, stupido.” (Clancy). Students were supposed to define salient features: in the eyes of a stereotyping person, foolishness was a salient feature of those who did not speak English, even though that was not their native language. Assignment 2: Is the salient feature true to life? Why do you think a stereotyping person accuses the other?

Other activities and exercises included assignments focusing on different aspects of stereotypes shifting the focus to theoretical awareness and to critical thinking.

Exercises to get acquainted with the typology of stereotypes. The goal was to get students acquainted with a variety of stereotypes. Example: *Match stereotypical verbal expressions in the left column with the type of stereotype in the right column:* “Stressed-out New Yorker” [matches with] Territorial / geographic stereotypes (the first example had been done for the students).

Exercises to get acquainted with evaluative nature of stereotypes. The goal was to show that stereotypes may have different degrees in abuse (most students think that stereotypes are only negative). Assignment: *Rank theoretical assumptions of different authors and say how they evaluate stereotypes on a scale of “positive,” “neutral,” and “negative”:* Stereotypes are harmless sorts of jokes we tell about other nationalities *vs.* Stereotypes tend to impede intercultural communication in that they repeat and reinforce beliefs until they often become taken for “truth.”

Exercises for comparing definitions of stereotypes. The goal here was to develop critical thinking through contrasting theoretical definitions. Assignment: *Compare alternative theoretical attitudes to stereotypes given in a table format. Agree or disagree with the statements and give your arguments.* Stereotyping is the individual’s natural defense in confronting cultural difference. *vs.* Stereotypes keep us from being successful as communicators because they are oversimplified, and/or exaggerated.

Exercises to find students’ attitude to teaching ethnic stereotypes. The goal here was to help students acquire understanding of stereotype-oriented teaching through discussing alternative views of the issue of teaching stereotypes in ICC. Assignment: *Complete the phrases choosing the assumption from the table.* Stereotypes should NOT be taught because... *vs.* Stereotypes should be taught because... (choosing from: the teachers spread

and reinforce stereotypes *vs.* students become aware of them and would not stereotype any more). Assignment 2: *Discuss alternative views of teaching stereotypes in ICC and give your arguments. What is the purpose of teaching ethnic stereotypes in ICC?*

Exercises on reflection on stereotypes. The goal was to come to a deeper understanding of stereotypes and to find out the students' feelings and attitudes. Assignment: *Read the sentences below and say what was wrong in them. What are your feelings?*

Critical reading exercises. The goal was further development of critical thinking (based on the text by Robert L. Heilbroner, "Don't Let Stereotypes Warp Your Judgments"). A variety of assignments were assigned to elaborate on the text and included various forms of work (individual, in small groups and class discussions). These activities are directed to monitor gradual changing perception of stereotypes. Assignment 1: *What could your answer be to the question put by Heilbroner "Why is it that we stereotype the world in such irrational and harmful fashion?" and share your opinion with the class* (individual work). Assignment 2: *Reflect on the metaphorical phrase from the text "Finally, for all the fact that horn-rimmed glasses have now become the standard television sign of an "intellectual," optometrists know that the main thing that distinguishes people with glasses is just bad eyes" In pairs discuss and explain the relation of the phrase to stereotypes."*

Research project as a creative expression of students' attitudes. The goal was to find out how the students perceive ethnic stereotypes now. Ethnic stereotypes were only a part of a final bigger project on co-cultures or subcultures (they were supposed to choose a co-culture or subculture from the list the author of the present study gave them). This final task was given at the beginning of the course. In the table consisting of three columns--1) "What I know about the co-culture of my choice," 2) "What I would like to know about this co-culture," and 3) "What I have learned about the co-culture"—the students were asked to fill out the first two columns out immediately after their choice; the third column was filled out after the project was finished. The deadline for submission was three weeks before the end of the semester. The project was performed in both written form and in PowerPoint presentation.

Feedback exercises. The goal was to encourage the students to share their thinking about thinking, i.e., to express what they thought about their final understanding of ethnic stereotypes against the background of a co-culture or subculture. The other goal was to monitor gradual changes in perception of stereotypes, in general and ethnic stereotypes, in particular. The assignment was to fill out a self-assessment form where one of the points was "Now that I did research of a co-culture what can I personally do to avoid stereotyping, culture bumps, and clashes and be tolerant to a different culture?" See samples of answers in Appendix B.

Appendix B.
THE STUDENTS' FEEDBACK (SAMPLES)

“Before I took the course of Intercultural Communication I had an entirely different assumption about the reasons why and how stereotypes arise and how one nation perceive and describe the other. I thought that all negative stereotypes about our country were artificially fabricated, just for the purpose of humiliating one nation and to excel their own. Now I understand that this is natural to stereotype and there are salient features that are seen in as negative and are spread first to one person, then spread to the whole nature...This is the way stereotypes about the English reserved character, Japanese politeness, German punctuality are formed” (translated from Russian).

“If interlocutors like each other their communication will be positive, if they stereotype, there will be a communication failure” (translated from Russian).

“I think I will be more attentive to the representatives of other cultures, co-cultures, and sub-cultures; I will not jump to conclusions about their ‘strange’ behavior; I will try to communicate with people from other cultures and learn as much as possible about people from that culture; representatives of this or that culture” (translated from Russian).

“I think there’s only one way to be tolerant to a different culture—just to be tolerant. That means to get rid of all judgments and stereotypes of a certain culture or subculture, allow a different person to be different. Everyone should understand that several people can watch one thing, and all of them will have different opinions on the matter. And the main thing is that everyone will be right” (written in English).

“The main thing, in my view, is to understand and accept a person or the whole ethos. We should even forgive some opinions that contradict yours for the sake of successful communication” (translated from Russian).