

## Managing Stereotypes through Experiential Learning

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This paper considers how stereotypes can be managed through education. Learning objectives, drawn from the theoretical background, were embedded into the lesson plans of two lessons in three courses that each combined English language education with intercultural communication at a Japanese university. Qualitative data indicate that learners can define stereotypes clearly, and recognise their own stereotypes and stereotyping tendencies (and those of other people). Memory plays a key role as learners relate what they learn about stereotypes to past experience, reworking it in the process. Through experiential learning, learners can recognise and start to overcome the potential pitfalls of stereotypes, demonstrating or developing meta-cognitive awareness and control in the process. This involves the flexible revision of information held in the mind about people in response to new information about them. But the author came to agree with some learners that people can only aim to gather more accurate information than they already have, and that information can never be completely accurate. Judgment should be revised along with the information it is based upon, which should be as accurate as possible.

### Theoretical Background

The term “stereotypes” was originally coined by Lippman (1922) to liken the cognitive stereotyping process to the way a printing press works when it prints the same identical symbols repeatedly, but the definition was later developed by Allport (1954) who explained it as “an exaggerated belief associated with a category.” Dovidio, Brigham, Johnson, and Gaertner (1996, pp. 279-281) review definitions of stereotypes that have been presented since the term was first introduced, noting that earlier definitions tended to focus on their flawed nature, whereas later definitions emphasised their status as necessary cognitive processes that help us make sense of a highly complex world, highlighting the complex relationships that exist between stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination.

Stereotypes can be seen in terms of advantages and disadvantages. Brislin (1986) defines stereotypes as a double-edged sword: on the one hand, a “useful and important aspect of intelligent and efficient thinking” and on the other “any categorization of individual elements concerned with people that mask differences among those elements” (p. 44). Though the very idea of stereotypes is often negatively valenced, their effects are not always bad. Information held in the category can be considered a source of knowledge used to make inferences about people when other kinds of information are not available, which can be useful if the information is correct (Hamilton & Neville Uhles, 2000). Indeed, Brislin (1986, p. 78) points out that “stereotypes themselves cannot be evil since they are so basic to human thought. Additional adjectives are necessary when referring to wrongs such as prejudicial stereotypes or hostile stereotypes.” On the other hand, stereotypes are “over-generalized beliefs” (Barna,

1985, p. 327) and since the categories become the focus of response, individual elements are glossed over and the information held in the stereotype may be inaccurate.

- Stereotypes are over-generalized beliefs that can distort perception. They can be seen as “stumbling blocks for communication because they interfere with objective viewing of stimuli” (Barna, 1985, p. 327). Since they are based upon exaggerated points of difference, stereotypes form a source of inaccurate information (Campbell, 1967; Harding, Proshansky, Kutner, & Chein, 1969), distorting perception of the other and increasing the likelihood of misunderstanding.
- People tend to seek confirmation of stereotypes during interaction, so “stereotypes are used to constrain the behavioural alternatives of others, and to engender stereotype-confirming behaviour from a target. In short, stereotypes become self-fulfilling prophecies” (Hewstone & Giles, 1986, p. 16).
- Stereotypes have an adverse effect upon memory, causing people to see and remember behaviour that confirms their stereotypes, also leading them to “remember more favourable in-group and more unfavourable out-group information” (Hewstone & Giles, 1986, p. 15).
- Stereotypes can lead to inaccurate predictions about behaviour (Gudykunst & Hammer, 1988; Kim & Gudykunst, 1988).

In addition to the effects of stereotyping upon individual perception listed above, stereotyping (or categorization) processes also contribute to the formation and maintenance of group boundaries, which relates directly to ethnocentrism (LeVine & Campbell, 1972; Rubovits & Maehr, 1973). Negative evaluations can be accentuated by illusory correlation, a form of cognitive bias, which takes place when distinctive but unrelated events are associated during information processing. Behaviours of out-group members noted and evaluated negatively on different occasions may bias the observer to associate and remember them as beliefs about the group (Hamilton & Gifford, 1976). This may lead to a tendency to evaluate those members negatively on every occasion thereafter, reinforcing the in-group and out-group distinction, and enhancing the self-esteem of the individual concerned in the process.

Stereotypes thus play a role in the definition of group boundaries. Social identity theory suggests that stereotypical categorisations help define group boundaries and lie at the heart of inter-group attitudes. A person’s identity consists of both personal and social identity. Personal identity refers to “self-categories that define the perceiver as a unique individual in contrast to other individuals,” whereas social identity “refers to social categorisations of self and others, self-categories which define the individual in terms of his or her shared similarities with members of certain social categories in contrast to other social categories” (Turner, 2000, pp. 341). Social categorisation of people into distinct groups can cause discrimination as the in-group is favoured over the out-group, which is rooted in a basic human need for self-esteem (Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971; Tajfel, 1982; Turner, 1987), although the universality of this tendency has been questioned by Wetherell (1982) suggesting that cultural tendencies also play a part. It seems to be generally accepted, however, that stereotypical categorizations do lie at the heart of inter-group attitudes. Negative evaluation of the out-group can be seen as a mechanism for forming and

maintaining group boundaries, which relates to the ethnocentric need for positive social identity.

Prejudice, or unfair negative attitude toward out-group members (Dovidio et al., 1996), also relates to group identification processes. Brislin (1986) identifies key aspects of prejudice as pre-judgment based upon labels applied to people originating in factors differentiating people such as race, sex, skin colour, occupation, religious or political affiliation, whereby people are judged based on perceived membership of the labelled category, rather than as individuals. Brislin (1986) highlights the point that prejudicial judgments are evaluative. In addition to making judgments about facts, individuals also make judgments about the goodness, worth, or desirability of other people based on applied labels. They are sometimes so strongly held that they are impervious to the introduction of new facts which, from a rational point of view, should affect attitudes towards others. Prejudice thus finds its roots in social categorisation and involves the tendency to evaluate negatively.

To avoid the potential negative effects of stereotyping processes, one needs to understand the process through which stereotypes are formed. Categories are often based on visually-obvious attributes such as race or gender and may vary in saliency, relevance, or differentiation according to the social context. Once a category has been set up in the mind, knowledge, beliefs, and expectancies are added and individuals within the category are thereafter imbued with the characteristics attached to the category (Hamilton & Neville Uhles, 2000). Such categorisation processes form and maintain the group boundaries that underpin ethnocentrism and prejudice (LeVine & Campbell, 1972; Brislin, 1986; Rubovitz & Maehr, 1973). Through interaction with people who do not fit into the broader category, category sub-types are set up to account for the differences. Though still general in nature, category sub-types contain more detail than the main category and can have one of two effects upon the main category. They may isolate atypical members from the main category, thus preserving the existing stereotype, or they may “increase perceived diversity of the group diminishing ability to make sweeping generalizations” (Hamilton & Neville Uhles, 2000, p. 469). Thus, stereotype categorisation may or may not break down in response to new information.

Let us consider stereotyping from developmental standpoints. Intercultural development is related to both cognitive and moral development, all of which are profoundly influenced by basic information processing as people form cognitive representations of the world around them, assimilating new information into existing schemata by modifying those schemata to accommodate inconsistent information to maintain equilibration and reduce cognitive dissonance. Both cognitive and moral development are characterised by a shift out of egocentrism (de-centering) that can be likened to the shift out of ethnocentrism that characterises intercultural development. When discrepancies arise between schemata and input, people tend towards schema-driven perception to maintain existing categories and form simple but coherent impressions but may attend to the discrepancy by reconstructing existing schemata or adapting new ones depending on motivation and cognitive resources.

Sercu (2000) highlights some of these connections. Endicott, Bock, and Narvaez (2003) link Kohlberg's (1969) Stages of Moral Development with Bennett's (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity by suggesting that multicultural experiences are related to

both moral and intercultural development in terms of increasing socio-cognitive flexibility, noting that both models share the common element of a critical shift from rigid to flexible thinking. Bennett's (1993) model presents a wide range of possible responses to cultural difference, highlighting the particular role of in-group/out-group dynamics in intercultural development.

In short, Bennett argues that intercultural development should primarily be seen in terms of cognitive development as intercultural misunderstanding is rooted in our ethnocentric projection of our own worldview onto others. In cognitive terms, the initial exposure to difference may be characterised by a lack (or absence of) cognitive categories for difference, which makes evaluation impossible because there is nothing (or too little) to evaluate. Further exposure to cultural difference allows differences to be identified, categorised and evaluated, and affective dimensions come into play that may result in the irrational rejection of otherness. Ongoing exposure to difference, however, allows similarities to be identified and categorised in super-ordinate constructs although the concomitant increase in category complexity may mask cultural difference by swallowing it up into a bigger and undifferentiated whole.

This is how Bennett describes the process of intercultural development within the ethnocentric range of responses to difference. In this way, ethnocentric processes parallel egocentric processes, as described in the earlier stages of Kohlberg's developmental model of moral development. Bennett (1993) notes that just as egocentric people assume their existence is central to the reality perceived by all others, ethnocentric people also assume that their own worldviews are central to all reality, which can cause problems in intercultural communication. Paul and Elder (2002) consider the same basic problem in terms of socio-centrism. Now, let us focus on the role of stereotypes in Bennett's (1993) model.

The first ethnocentric stage in Bennett's (1993) model is the *denial stage* which comprises the two non-evaluative stages of *isolation* and *separation* because no cognitive categories exist at these stages for cultural difference, the implication being that there is simply nothing to evaluate. Isolation results from a lack of exposure to cultural difference where the individual, in cognitive terms, has either no cognitive categories for cultural difference or very broadly defined and poorly differentiated categories (termed "benign stereotypes" since they have no evaluative dimension).

The second ethnocentric stage in Bennett's (1993) model is the *defence stage* comprising the three evaluative stages of *denigration*, *superiority*, and *reversal*. They have clearly defined cognitive categories for cultural difference (involve in-group/out-group dynamics and are evaluative). Denigration is said to set in when cultural difference is perceived as threatening and cultural difference is evaluated negatively as a defensive strategy, which can then give way to the superiority stage when positive evaluation of one's own culture is reinforced to preserve self-esteem and a need is still felt to subjugate cultural difference. The defence stage of reversal may occur in individuals who recognise the superiority of the host culture over their own. This stage is still considered to be ethnocentric since the only real change is the shift of the centre from one culture to another.

The third ethnocentric stage in Bennett's (1993) model is the *minimisation stage*. This comprises the two stages of physical and transcendent universalism, which are characterised by less judgmental universalism since at these stages, similarities are sought, and super-

ordinate constructs are created that incorporate previously irreconcilable elements into a more complex structure. The implication that the search for difference precedes the search for similarity is questionable, though Bennett recognises that in reality, the stages may not be as linear as they seem. Still, this is a developmental theory in which development is characterised by an increase in cognitive complexity, which minimises the difference by swallowing it up into a new and larger whole, giving the impression that differences do not really exist and we are all the same underneath (i.e., everyone is the same as me). Since this underlying assumption denies cultural difference, it is classed as being ethnocentric in Bennett's (1993) model.

## Methods

### *Syllabus Design*

In the field of intercultural communication, stereotypes are often elicited through the use of questionnaires (Sercu, 2000) but since the study described in this paper was a piece of classroom research, such an experimental approach was not followed. Instead, the priority was placed upon inferring learning objectives from the academic literature appropriate for adaptation to the ELT classroom through syllabus and task design, which made this study an original piece of research. A range of possible learning objectives are implied by the academic literature on stereotyping presented above. Specifically, stereotypes need to be defined clearly and learners need to learn to recognise their own stereotypes and stereotyping tendencies, as well as those of people around them. The advantages and disadvantages of stereotypes need to be highlighted but the pitfalls need to be tackled through education. Highlighting the problems posed by stereotypes also emphasizes the need for the development of meta-cognitive awareness and control, which partly involves comparing and contrasting information gathered from a person from any given group with existing information held in one's stereotype of that group before identifying differences between them (i.e., distinguishing the individual from the perceived group), and judging others based upon correct and accurate information. In sum, teachers should foster learner awareness of stereotypes to help students to monitor how categories are forming in their mind, to recognize their own over-generalizing and flexible revision of existing categories in response to new information.

I will show below how such learning objectives were embedded into the lesson plans of two classes that took place in the middle of three courses of study that each combined English language education with intercultural communication at a Japanese university. Conducted over a period of nine months, the courses were split into two terms by the summer break. The two classes concerned took place before and after the summer break in weeks 14 and 15. In terms of course structure, all three courses ran through five interlocking stages. Stage 1 fed into stages 2 and 3, which ran parallel to Stage 4 (sub-stage 1). Stage 3 and Stage 4 (sub-stage 1) both finished at the end of the first term in July. Sub-Stage 4 (sub-stage 2) took the form of a summer assignment that fed into Stage 4 (sub-stage 2) in the middle of the second term between Stage 5 (sub-stages 1 and 2) around November. A brief descriptive overview of the

first half of the courses is presented below, but only the parts of the courses relevant to the discussion of stereotypes will be highlighted and discussed in this paper. For further detail about the courses, the reader is referred to Houghton (2009).

In the development of intercultural (communicative) competence, self-reflection is seen as a key process since so many cultural presuppositions are held on the unconscious level. Consciousness-raising through self-reflection, therefore, formed an integral part of this teaching approach. In Stage 1 (weeks 1-8), learners reflected on their values with reference to Schwartz and Sagiv (1995) and Schwartz, Verkasalo, Antonovsky and Sagiv's (1997) taxonomy of 10 universal value types. Once they had learned to identify the values in dialogues, they went on to reflect upon and write about their own values by developing an essay describing their values over a number of weeks. Stage 4 of the course (weeks 2-25), which was sub-divided into three stages, ran parallel to Stage 1 in accompanying homework tasks in which learners had to write three questions for each of the ten value types to gradually develop a questionnaire with which to interview a foreigner about their values. This central interview task, conducted during the summer break, was enveloped by weeks 14 and 15, during which ongoing discussion about the nature and effect of concepts and conceptual categories upon culture-specific vocabulary was extended to present stereotypes as a particular kind of concept used to categorise people into groups. Week 14 and 15 tasks and learning objectives are presented in the Appendix.

Before the summer interview, week 14 tasks focused on defining and examining the nature of stereotypes (from task 14.5 onwards). More specifically, Task 14.5 provided learners with a definition of stereotypes in a paragraph that they were asked to read and answer questions about in a reading comprehension exercise. Task 14.6 encouraged learners to reflect on their stereotypes of Germany and write about them in the box to raise learner awareness of their own stereotypes. Task 14.7 provided learners with information that highlighted the problems stereotypes can present in another paragraph followed by a reading comprehension check. This highlighted the need for meta-cognitive awareness and control and was the first active step towards development.

In Task 14.8, learners were asked to read and discuss an article about systematic attempts being made by the German government to alter Italian stereotypes of Germany to make Germany more attractive to Italians. This task highlighted the fact that people in other countries also have stereotypes, perhaps differing in content, which can be subject to control (even at the political level). As a summer assignment, learners were asked to interview a foreigner about their values using the questionnaire developed during the term. No specific link was made between this interview task and the preceding discussion of stereotypes, although the teacher intended to revisit the theme in the next lesson. Students were free to select any foreigners they wanted and it was anticipated that some students would interview people they already knew, and others would interview relative strangers. In either case, the general pedagogical aim would be for students to develop their interviewee-related schemata (Bennett, 1993).

After the summer interview, week 15 tasks focused on whether or not student stereotypes had been broken by their foreign interviewees after the interviews had taken place. More specifically, Task 15.1 encouraged learners to reflect on their stereotypes of Italy by writing

about them in the box and marking each item as being either positive or negative in valence, not only to raise learner awareness of their own stereotypes and their content, but also to highlight the fact that stereotypes can be positively or negatively valenced. Task 15.2 provided learners with the definition of stereotypes in a paragraph that they were asked to read and answer questions about in a simple reading comprehension exercise for review purposes.

In Task 15.3, learners were asked to listen to the teacher reflect upon and talk about her stereotypes of Italians before her summer trip to Italy, and to make notes in the box, marking each item as being either positive or negative in valence. This task highlighted the fact that even teachers have stereotypes that can be positively or negatively valenced. Task 15.4 provided learners with the advice on how to manage their own stereotypes in a paragraph that they were asked to read and answer questions about in a reading comprehension exercise, which reiterated the need for meta-cognitive awareness and control, and provided learners with specific advice on how to develop these two skills.

In Task 15.5, learners were asked to listen to the teacher reflect upon and talk about how the Italians she had met during her trip to Italy in the summer differed from the stereotypes she had held before the trip, and to make notes. This task highlighted the central teaching point related to stereotypes from weeks 14 and 15: that learners should seek differences between individuals and their stereotyped group (which relies upon conscious awareness of the distinct features of the individual concerned and one's own stereotypes of the group concerned, and the similarities and differences between them). The teacher modelled this process by deploying her own stereotypes in relation to her own experience and then, in Task 15.6, learners were asked to do the same by reflecting on how the foreign person they had interviewed during the summer break differed from their stereotypes of people from that country that they had held before the interview. This concluded the series of tasks directly related to stereotypes.

### *Research Design*

Classroom research was conducted in the English language classroom in Japan. Theoretically-inspired learning objectives were developed for implementation in class in the target language and medium of instruction (English) to fulfil both pedagogical and research goals. Qualitative data were gathered in English only, for pedagogical purposes, during the nine-month period of this action research case study from 36 female, Japanese student participants (in 3 different classes of 12 students each), by the author, a British teacher-researcher who had lived in Japan for about 12 years at the time the study was conducted. Data collection techniques used in the weeks related to stereotypes included the audio-recording of classes, documentary data in the form of student work, post-class teacher diary entries and post-class interactive student diary entries. Ethical issues were duly considered (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000).

Data were gathered to shed light on the extent to which individual learning objectives had been met by students as they performed the tasks. A coding process was used to generate detailed descriptions. Emerging themes or categories (rooted in multiple perspectives and data

sources) were triangulated before the success of learning objectives was considered after the event in relation to the learning processes being illuminated in the data. In the next section, selected pieces of data will be presented (primarily from the interactive student diaries) and discussed to highlight key themes emerging from the data in relation to stereotypes.

## Results

### *Data Analysis*

The data below suggests that when reflecting on the week 14 class in their diaries, some students recognised that there is something negative about a stereotype that needs to be overcome. Student A11 recognised how easy it is to stereotype others when there is a lack of knowledge, despite the fact that she herself does not want to be stereotyped by others. She also remembered teachers from other countries reminding her in the past not to use what they said in class as a basis from which to stereotype people from their respective countries, showing that she had already been taught to individualise individuals from their group as a way of overcoming stereotypes.

#### **Student A11**

I don't want others (foreigners) to see us with stereotypes. However, when we saw other country or cultures, I think we always have stereotypes in some way. Because I don't know the culture well, so if I saw or hear one aspects of it, we imagined it shows all. Teachers who teach us one's culture often say "my telling culture is one aspect of it, so don't think it all of this country." It just proves that they also have own aspects (that is, stereotypes).

In their week 15 student diaries, students A1, A3, A8, B2, B3, B6, B7, B9, B12, C5, and C8 all reviewed the definition of stereotypes in task 15.2. Students identified the different features of stereotypes, and their advantages and disadvantages. Student A7 recognised that stereotypes could be useful, and student A8 reported how she managed to open the summer interview smoothly using an accurate stereotype of Hawaii. Students A6 and B6 both recognised how stereotypes can help us explain things or get general ideas in the absence of information.

However, students B3, B12, and C4 reported having negative images of the word "stereotype" itself. Student A10 noted that whilst she had had a negative image of stereotypes before the class, she had learned how helpful stereotypes they could be if they contained accurate information. However, student A8 noted how uncomfortable she tends to feel whenever she is being stereotyped, whilst student C7 suggested that stereotypes can sometimes cause a communication gap and be "dangerous," recognising that as she stereotypes Italians, she is also being stereotyped by Italians. Student A6 recognised how "dangerous" stereotypes can be when people judge without enough having information, maintaining incorrect images and ideas in the process. Student B6 recognised the potential for stereotypes to compromise information quality.

Students also reflected on their own stereotypes in their week 15 student diaries. Student B11 recognised that she had stereotypes about many things and others reflected on and identified their own particular stereotypes of people from specific countries such as Germany (student C3), Britain (student B5, student C8), America (student B1), and Italy, which comprised both positive and negative images (student B9). Reflecting on the nature of stereotypes, student C5 recognised how unreliable her stereotypes could be, whilst student B6 wondered whether stereotypes differed between countries as well as between individuals. Other students reflected on their own stereotyping tendencies, indicating the development of meta-cognitive awareness.

#### **Student C1**

I thought that fundamentally, I have good stereotypes for where I haven't visited. On the contrary, I have both good and bad images for where I have visited.

Many students reflected back on their summer interviews identifying their own stereotyping tendencies. Students B6 and B12 noticed that they sometimes talked about "what Japanese people do" during their interviews, highlighting their tendency to categorise people by perceived group membership in their minds when they knew little about them. Similarly, student C7 recognised how she tends to group up foreigners in her mind stereotyping them in the process, and resolved to change in the future. Student B2 made similar points, but added that her interviewee did not stereotype Japanese people in the way that she had expected, which caused her to reflect upon the different ways in which people can organise information in their minds. She concluded that she should pay more attention to information accuracy and think more flexibly.

#### **Student C7**

Although I learned it before, I had stereotype thinking when I'm doing summer assignment to foreigner, so I think it is difficult to change or delete for them....I feel stereotype about myself in the interview. I cannot explain where it is, but I have big vague images for foreigner. I think it sometimes causes stereotypes thinking, so I try to change it.

#### **Student B2**

I felt that how I am controlled by stereotype. And I also felt the difficulties of managing stereotype. Because even after this class, I tried to ask "It is said that we Japanese don't have our opinion. What do you think about it?" during the interview. But she said "I don't feel that. Who is saying that? I know there are many Japanese who have their opinions." From her words, I realized I have organized the information in categories in my mind as stereotype. But she organized her information based on her experience. That's the difference. I should really always check the accuracy of the information and think flexibly.

Other students reflected on their stereotypes in relation to their life experience in their week 15 student diaries. Student C3 reflected on the fact that her family had hosted an Italian exchange student the previous year whose personality did indeed match her stereotypes of the Italians, but she reminded herself that she must not stereotype other Italians even so. This also indicated meta-cognitive awareness, since she was attempting to control her potential stereotyping tendencies. Student B3 reported how her stereotypes of French people had changed in response to her experience in Paris.

Other students recognised and reflected upon the stereotypes of people around them, including both students and teachers at university. Student B8 noticed how similar the stereotypes of students tended to be about other countries they had never visited. Student C9 noted how students around her tended to rely on stereotypes of teachers when selecting courses from the syllabus, but she distanced herself from this practice, claiming that she ignored them because their stereotypes could be unreliable. Student C9 expressed an interest in the teacher's (the author's) negative stereotypes of Italy before her trip, and student A12 recognised that she had learned from the teacher's (the author's) story about her trip to Italy that whilst stereotypes are not always correct, they can sometimes help us to imagine unknown places more easily. Student B3 reported how she had interpreted the information provided by the teacher in relation to what was being learned about stereotypes in the light of the teacher's own stereotypes.

Other students reflected upon the advice given on how to manage stereotypes in their week 15 diaries. Students A8, B2, B3, B12, and C5 reviewed the advice on how to manage stereotypes provided in task 15.4, and students A5, C4, and B11 recognised that whilst stereotypes can help us if the information is correct, we should check the accuracy of the information and think flexibly, which indicates that they accepted the advice given by the teacher (the author). Student A7 claimed she had learned how to manage stereotypes and others generally recognised the need to manage stereotypes.

#### **Student C4**

When we learned about concept, you said sometimes information was old. I think same thing applies to stereotype and there are three problems we learned in this class. So, I felt managing stereotypes is very important.

Student B3 recognised that people should keep in mind how stereotyped and prejudiced information can be, and student B1 noted that before we judge something, we should try to experience it directly and consider whether or not our judgment is based on truth. Student A11 also recognised the role of experience in managing stereotypes but student C12 recognised how difficult it is to manage one's own stereotypes because they are often held in the unconscious. Whilst the students above seemed to accept the advice on stereotype management offered by the teacher in task 15.4, others expressed uncertainty about the advice for various reasons. Student A10 claimed to be confused about whether or not it was advisable to seek differences between people. On the one hand, the teacher (the author) was advising her to differentiate individuals from the group to overcome stereotypes, but she claimed that this advice contradicted her existing view that people should avoid identifying

differences between people to avoid causing conflict. Student B8 questioned the teacher's advice that people should judge others based on accurate information wondering what to do if she lacked sufficient experience upon which to judge. Student B7 challenged the assertion that correct information can even exist, given the role of personal and cultural difference in the interpretation of social phenomena, concluding that people can only aim to gather more accurate information than they already have knowing that information can never be completely accurate. Student C12 made a similar argument.

#### **Student A10**

We studied that, to manage the stereotypes, we have to try to look for differences between the group and individuals. I have thought that finding differences caused a conflict, so I had some bad image for finding differences. Now I'm confused that finding differences are good thing or not between peoples relationships.

#### **Student B8**

I could learn how important to judge other people without applying stereotypes. Sometimes, we tend to judge other people with stereotypes. But, I could know stereotypes had some problems. We should judge based on accurate information. But, if I had the things that I have never experienced, what should I do?

Stereotype change was frequently discussed by students in their week 15 diaries. Students A10 and C7 noted that their stereotypes of Italy had changed after the discussion about stereotypes of Italians, but student A4 reported hers to be rather fixed and concluded that the only way to change them was to see Italy with her own eyes. Students A7 and C8, both reflecting on the process of stereotype change, seemed to agree that people should allow their stereotypes to change flexibly in response to new information without prejudice. Student C9 claimed that during the course of the interview with a Canadian, she had moved from a state of not knowing any Canadians, and not having any stereotypes of them, to becoming more informed about Canada and Canadians after the interview, which illustrates the point made by students A7 and C8.

#### **Student C8**

I think our stereotype should not be same all the time, it should be changed. We can get many information and news about anything, so our stereotype can be always changing. And I think we should never have a prejudice, and we should think about what is the true or not.

Student stereotypes also seemed to change in response to the summer interviews. Student stereotypes about their interviewees seemed to have changed in various ways but in all cases, students found that some information provided by interviewees about themselves during the interviews broke their stereotypes of the people from the country of the interviewee. Student B6 found her idea that Chinese people are loyal to parents and elders to be incorrect because her interviewee claimed that her own will was more important to her. Student B12 found that

whilst she had thought all Hawaiians were cheerful and happy, some people have jobs they disliked indicating more differentiated thinking about the group developed as she was forced to recognise differences within the group.

Before the interview, student B7 had thought all Americans were powerful, strong, and have positive thinking but came to recognise that her Korean-American interviewee was much more group-oriented and more similar to Japanese people than she had expected, a process which seems to have involved the identification of differences between the interviewee and the stereotyped group and the identification of similarities between the interviewee and the student's own group. Students B5 and B11 both found that their British interviewees did not match up to their expectations of the stereotyped group, which involved differentiating the interviewee from the group.

### Discussion

Now, let me summarise and discuss the findings presented above. In week 14, some students recognised not only the existence of stereotypes but also that there is something negative about their nature that needs to be overcome (but learners were not drawing any links between stereotypes and their upcoming summer interviews since the teacher herself had not drawn any). After the summer interviews, the theme of stereotypes was revisited in the first class of the second term (week 15).

In their week 15 student diaries, many students reviewed the definition of stereotypes presented in task 15.2 for review purposes. Their post-class reflections sometimes identified the different features of stereotypes along with their advantages and disadvantages, and learners sometimes linked stereotypes with their past experience. Learners also reflected on their own stereotypes of people from specific countries, the stereotypes of people around them (including both university students and teachers) and the nature of stereotypes, sometimes identifying their own stereotyping tendencies (including those that emerged during the summer interviews) with some students resolving to change in the future (perhaps specifying how they wanted to manage their stereotypes in the future), which indicates that attempts were being made at meta-cognitive control. One learner reflected upon how her stereotypes had changed flexibly in the past in response to new information, perhaps from life experience. Another noted how she consciously refused to rely upon the stereotypes of those around her (with students perhaps viewing these processes as examples of good cognitive practice).

Some learners reviewed the advice given on how to manage stereotypes provided in task 15.4 but whereas some students seemed to have accepted it, others expressed uncertainty, questioning whether or not it was a good idea to seek differences between people. One bore in mind the conflict she thought may be caused, and another wondered whether or not it was ever possible to gather "correct" information upon which to judge given the role of personal and cultural difference in the interpretation of social phenomena. It was suggested that people can only ever aim to gather more accurate information than they already have, but that this has to be tempered by the understanding that information can never be completely accurate.

Stereotype change was frequently reflected upon by learners in their week 15 diaries. After the discussion about stereotypes of Italians, the stereotypes of some students seemed to have altered but others seemed more rigid. However, there was some agreement that people should allow their stereotypes to change flexibly in response to new information without prejudice, with some learners reflecting upon how this had happened to them in the past, perhaps during the summer interview, as their stereotypes had been broken by their interviewees in different ways, or when travelling abroad years before. The teacher wondered whether this cognitive shift was reflected in sentence construction, which seemed to change from “all” to “some” during plenary discussion.

Let us review the findings above in the light of the learning objectives related to stereotyping that the teacher hoped would be met in weeks 14 and 15 of the courses, and in relation to the theoretical background presented at the start of the paper.

1. Stereotypes need to be defined clearly and many definitions are available for use by foreign language teachers (Allport, 1954; Dovidio et al., 1996).
2. The advantages (Brislin, 1986) and disadvantages of stereotypes (Brislin, 1981) need to be highlighted but the pitfalls in particular need to be tackled through education to correct faulty thought processes generally promoting higher and more critical levels of thought (Paul & Elder, 2002) with a view to reducing prejudice (Brislin, 1986) and its social effects.
3. Highlighting the problems posed by stereotypes also highlights the need for the development of meta-cognitive awareness and control (i.e., the awareness of one’s own cognitive processes and the ability to take conscious control of one’s own cognitive tendencies) to develop critical cultural awareness (Byram, 2008), judging others based upon correct and accurate information.
4. Part of this involves comparing and contrasting information gathered from a person from any given group with existing information held in one’s stereotype of that group before identifying differences between them (i.e., distinguishing the individual from the perceived group) (Hamilton & Neville Uhles, 2000), generally promoting cognitive development (Bennett, 1993; Kohlberg, 1969), even if this takes place within the conceptual limitations of the target language in the foreign language classroom.

It seems to be possible for learners to define stereotypes clearly and to learn to recognise their own stereotypes and stereotyping tendencies, as well as those of people around them. The role of memory came to the fore more than had been anticipated by the teacher as learners related what they were learning about stereotypes to their past experiences, reinterpreting them in the process. Indeed, reflectively drawing links between stereotypes and past experience involves the kind of reinterpretation of memory encouraged in the *Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters* (Byram, Barrett, Ipgrave, Jackson, & Mendez Garcia, 2009). It also seems to be possible for learners to appreciate the advantages and

disadvantages of stereotypes, and to make an effort to recognise and overcome the potential pitfalls. This seemed to involve recognition of their stereotyping tendencies, again by reflecting upon past experience (sometimes from the summer interviews, which came to count as recent past experience by the time we had reached week 15).

For this reason, experiential learning seems to be one way in which meta-cognitive awareness and control may be developed in relation to stereotypes. The biggest problem with the approach taken by the teacher related to the advice provided on ways of managing stereotypes. Whilst learners did not seem to take issue with the need to flexibly revise information held in the mind in response to new information about people (there was plenty of evidence of learner stereotypes being broken by their summer interviewees), the possibility of ever having correct and accurate information about people was brought into question. And the author tends to agree that people can only ever aim to gather more accurate information than they already have, but that this has to be tempered by the understanding that information can never be completely accurate. Judgment itself should thus be revised along with the information it is based upon, which should be as correct and accurate as possible.

### Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to consider the nature of stereotypes and how they can be managed through education. In the theoretical background, the definition of stereotypes was considered along with their potential advantages and disadvantages, in terms of their impact upon individual perception and inter-group dynamics. The process through which stereotypes seem to form was also considered from developmental standpoints rooted in information processing theory, with reference to theories on cognitive, moral, and intercultural development.

A range of learning objectives were identified and embedded into the lesson plans of two classes that took place in the middle of three courses of study that each combined English language education with intercultural communication at a Japanese university. A brief descriptive overview of the first half of the courses was presented, but only the parts of the courses relevant to the discussion of stereotypes were highlighted and discussed. The learning objectives and tasks were presented and discussed with reference to the teaching materials which are presented in appendices. An overview was presented of research design and selected pieces of qualitative data (primarily from the interactive student diaries) were presented and discussed to highlight key themes emerging from the data in relation to stereotypes.

It seems to be possible for learners to define stereotypes clearly and to learn to recognise their own stereotypes and stereotyping tendencies, as well as those of people around them. Memory seems to play a key role as learners relate what they learned about stereotypes to their past experience, reinterpreting it in the process. It also seems to be possible for learners to appreciate the advantages and disadvantages of stereotypes, and to make an effort to recognise and overcome the potential pitfalls, demonstrating or developing meta-cognitive awareness and control, and experiential learning seems to be one way in which they can be developed through education.

With regard to stereotype-management, it seems possible for learners to flexibly revise information held in their minds in response to new information about people but the author came to agree with some learners that people can only ever aim to gather more accurate information than they already have, but that this has to be tempered by the understanding that information can never be completely accurate. Judgment itself should thus be revised along with the information it is based upon, which should be as correct and accurate as possible.

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## Appendix

| <b>Tasks and learning objectives (week 14)</b> |  |
|--|--|
| Task 14.5                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Read a paragraph about stereotypes and answer questions about it               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Learning objective: Define stereotype</li> </ul> </li> </ul>  |
| Task 14.6                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reflect on your stereotypes of Germany and makes notes in the box               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Learning objective: Identify &amp; describe own stereotypes</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   |
| Task 14.7                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Read a paragraph about problems caused by stereotypes and answer questions about it               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Learning objective: Develop meta-cognitive awareness &amp; control</li> </ul> </li> </ul>                                |
| Task 14.8                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Read an article about German stereotypes of Italians and answer questions about it               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Learning objective: Identify and describe foreigner stereotypes of a different group of foreigners</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| Homework                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Interview a foreigners about their values               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Learning objective: Elicit the values &amp; concepts of a foreigner in real-time communication</li> </ul> </li> </ul>  |

| <b>Tasks and learning objectives (week 15)</b> |   |
|--|---|
| Task 15.1                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reflect on your stereotypes of Italy and makes notes in the box               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Learning objective: Identify &amp; describe own stereotypes</li> </ul> </li> </ul>  |
| Task 15.2                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Read a paragraph about stereotypes and answer questions about it (review)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Learning objective: Define stereotype (review)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   |
| Task 15.3                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Listen to teacher talk about her stereotypes of Italians before her trip to Italy               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Learning objective: Identify teacher stereotypes</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   |
| Task 15.4                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Read a paragraph about ways of managing stereotypes and answer questions about it               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Learning objective: Develop knowledge to help develop meta-cognitive awareness &amp; control</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| Task 15.5                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Listen to teacher talk about her stereotypes of Italians were broken during her trip to Italy               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Learning objective: Identify change in teacher stereotypes</li> </ul> </li> </ul>                       |
| Task 15.6                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reflect on summer interview with a foreigner and whether or not stereotypes were broken in some way               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Learning objective: Develop meta-cognitive awareness</li> </ul> </li> </ul>                       |