

19th PCSF 2019

Professional Culture of the Specialist of the Future

THE ROLE OF MOTIVATION IN THE LEARNING OF GERMAN LANGUAGE

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Abstract

The article deals with the need to study the culture, customs and traditions of the target-language countries in order to avoid the negative impact of the established heterostereotypes on the acquisition process. Thus, an earlier determination of established heterostereotypes in order to correct their negative effects on the students' motivation is extremely relevant. A free associative experiment is proposed as the main procedure for identifying students' attitudes toward a foreign language. An associative experiment was conducted in February-March 2019 with students of the German Language Department of the Moscow State Linguistic University and students of the Moscow Power Engineering Institute who study German as a foreign language. The results of this experiment showed that students of MPEI are often guided by stereotypical ideas, which are not always positive. This in its turn is connected with the denial of German culture and, as a result, the unwillingness to learn German. Students of the Moscow State Linguistic University, having chosen German as their main subject at the university, have a high motivation to learn both the language and the culture. Thus, the content of heterostereotype becomes irrelevant, stable associations become less relevant. Students form a different stereotype, and the negative connotation changes to a positive one in the process of students learning about the culture being studied.

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Keywords: Motivation, intercultural communication, associative experiment, heterostereotype.



1. Introduction

It is well known that communication does not always occur as language interaction, but it is always culturally-based (Hall, 1976). Therefore, in order to achieve effective communication, a student of a foreign language needs to learn customs, ethnic values and attitudes, national etiquette, religion, mythology and the specifics of the ordinary worldview of a native-speaker (Almazova, Khalyapina, & Popova, 2017; Hofstede, 2006; Inglehart, 2010; Ley, 2019; Popova, Almazova, Khalyapina, & Tret'jakova, 2017; Schwartz, 2008). The adaptation to a certain culture – inculturation – can occur consciously, through systematic learning, and unconsciously – under the influence of various circumstances.

Subconscious perception of culture is of greater importance for communication, since the basis of the world perception of every nation has its own system of objective meanings, social stereotypes and cognitive schemes (Khlopova, 2018). This, in its turn, leads to the fixation of knowledge and stereotypical representations of the individual in associative-verbal networks, which content is revealed on the basis of frequent reactions received during a free associative experiment (Zalevskaya, 2012).

2. Problem Statement

Certain heterostereotypes about a particular nation can lead to the situation when students don't want to learn a particular language. Therefore, the earlier revealing of heterostereotypes in order to correct their negative effect is extremely relevant.

3. Research Questions

This article deals with the respondents relationship to the representatives of German linguoculture. We believe that a positive relationship to the representatives of a definite linguoculture can positively affect the learning and acquisition of a foreign language and vice versa.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this article is to define with help of associative experiment the influence of the motivation on the image of the foreign language speaker.

5. Research Methods

We offer a free associative experiment as a basic procedure for identifying students' attitude toward a foreign language. Through associative experiment, one can determine the effect that motivation has on the image of the native-speaker.

The associative experiment was conducted in February-March 2019 with the students of the German language department of the Moscow State Linguistic University and the students of the Moscow Power Engineering Institute who study German as a foreign language. 125 responses of MPEI students and 218 reactions of the Moscow State Linguistic University students were received, 125 of them were chosen by random selection. Respondents were asked to react with the first word that came to mind to the stimulus word "German".

6. Findings

The following reactions were given by the students of MPEI: *war* (28), *Hitler* (18), *fascist* (13), *the Great Patriotic War* (8), *beer* (6), *automobile* (3), *car* (3), *punctuality* (3), *quality* (2), *order* (2), *pragmatic* (2), *stability* (2), *football* (2), *cleanliness* (2), *neat*, *Bavaria*, *Berlin*, *the Berlin Wall*, *doctor*, *endangered species*, *discipline*, *Ilmenau*, *Cologne Cathedral*, *good pension*, *Oktoberfest*, *pedantic*, *perfectionism*, *bad past*, *drink*, *equality*, *development*, *sharp*, *difficult language*, *severity*, *equipment*, *moustache in the form of braids*, *Volkswagen*, *0.5 whiskey + 0.5 cola + football*, *World Football Championship 2014*, *ambitious*, *selfish*, *economics*, “*Ya iz Germanii pribyt, celebny sredstvo privosit*”, *Tor / gates* (1).

Most of reactions are syncretic. They can be referred simultaneously to ideas, to cultural and emotionally evaluative reactions. Students who don't study German as the main subject associate representatives of the German culture mainly with the Great Patriotic War (68 reactions / 54.4%). As a reaction both the *war* itself and its Russian abbreviation *BOB* (*Великая Отечественная война*) can be met. The nuclear, i.e. one of the most frequently met, response of the respondents is the reaction *Hitler*. It is known that Hitler was the founder of the totalitarian dictatorship of the Third Reich, the supreme commander of the armed forces of Germany in World War II. The reaction has a negative connotation for any Russian and indicates a negative attitude towards the Germans. The word *Fascist* is used as a pejorative term for Germans. However, this reaction is an actual mistake. The German dictator stood for National Socialism, which is one of the ideologies of fascism (Lüdtko, 2010). The reaction *bad past* is also associated with the Second World War, which was set off by the German invaders.

26 reactions (20.8%) are culturological. Reactions *automobile*, *car*, *Volkswagen* are associated with the car industry in Germany. It is known that German cars are the best and are characterized by the highest quality in the world. 17 reactions (13.6%) are associated with the qualities of a typical German and indicate features of a national character. According to the widespread heterostereotype, the Germans are punctual, they do their job perfectly and competently and keep things tidy, they are pragmatic, thrifty and neat, they keep their house and street where they live clean, they are disciplined (Hintereder, 2008; Quasthoff, 1973).

Wolf (2012) points out the following heterostereotypes about Germans: they are punctual, disciplined, stingy and squeamish; they are characterized by a complete lack of humor and strict adherence to etiquette. Serov (1974) claims that exceptional hard work, high professional skill, discipline and love for order and, finally, a sense of responsibility for the work and perception of work as the most important duty of a person are typical for the German worker. This is a historically developed character trait; its roots go back to the distant past, to the Middle Ages, when masters who did their work thoroughly and did not tolerate any negligence in their work faced very high demands.

One of the heterostereotypes about the Germans is the love of all Germans for beer and football, which is also reflected in the reactions of students of MPEI. For the Germans, *football* is the most important game. It is believed that if the German team plays, the Germans are sitting in front of the TV screens or at the stadium and are supporting the team.

Bavaria is the most famous of the 16 federal states of Germany, Berlin is the capital of Germany. *Ilmenau* is an individual reaction and the recipient associates it with an Institute which MPEI has a partnership with. Many students go to Ilmenau for an internship. *Cologne Cathedral* and *the Brandenburg Gate* (*Tor*) are the most famous tourist attractions. It also should be mentioned that in order to interpret the

reaction correctly, we asked the respondent to comment on this. The reaction *moustache in the form of braids* occurs due to the associative connection of the stimulus word with the famous cartoon “Asterix and Obelix”. The reaction *Ya iz Germanii pribyt, celebny sredstvo privosit* is a precedent reaction and is associated with the advertisement for the German cough syrup “Ambrobene”.

The reactions *beer* and *drink* indicate a heterostereotype about Germans' love for alcohol. An interesting reaction is *endangered species*, which is associated with a large number of immigrants in Germany. Therefore, it is almost impossible to find a true, pure German.

Students of MPEI have insufficient background knowledge of German culture, language and the country in general. They are often guided by stereotypical ideas that are not always positive. This is connected with the denial of German culture and, as a result, the unwillingness to learn German. Due to the fact that a foreign language is a secondary subject for MPEI students, they lack motivation to learn the German language and German culture and, therefore, the heterostereotype about the Germans, which often has negative connotation, prevails.

The stimulus word *German* was followed by 218 reactions of the Moscow State Linguistic University students, 125 of which were chosen by random selection for a relevant comparison: *punctuality (9), Germany (5), organization (5), friend (4), order (4), restraint (4), accuracy (4), practicality (3), Berlin (2), sausage (2), Oktoberfest (2), assistance (2), cleanliness (2), car, Bavarian costume, frugality, Brandenburg Gate, rich history, faithful, delicious food, attention, good manners, war, high, mountains, loud, villages, dignity, industry, engineer, intellect, interesting, quality, communication, Lutheranism, inhospitable, ugly women, unforgettable communication, German joke, educated, optimist, patriotism, pedantry, landscape, beer, correctness, integrity, work, workability, measured, early rise, Reichstag, knuckle, red-headed, serious, modesty, calm, medieval cities, severity, precise, tradition, hardworking, respect, smile, ability to work, philosophers and poets, uniform, football, want to be one of them, successful, honest, schnitzel, joke, economics, economy, electric bulb, Bratwurst / grilled sausage, humorlos / humorless (1).*

The reactions of the Moscow State Linguistic University students are more diverse (71 occasional reactions) than the reactions of MPEI students (30 occasional reactions), which may indicate more diverse associative-verbal connections of students who are motivated to learn German. The largest number of nuclear and individual reactions (48 reactions / 38.4%) also reflects the stereotypical picture of the national character of the Germans: the Germans are punctual, accurate and pedantic. According to V.P. Fedorov (1988), the Germans are hardworking and organized. An important feature of the German character is the desire for orderliness. Therefore, the typical German saying is “Ordnung muss sein! / There must be order in everything!”. The Germans are very tidy. They say in the 90s in Germany the streets were washed with shampoo. The Germans are practical and prudent and should always see a benefit in their actions. It should be mentioned that among the reactions of students of MSLU there are practically no negative emotionally evaluative reactions. The exception is a single reaction *war*, while at the students of MPEI it is frequently met, as well as the reaction of *inhospitable* and *ugly women*. It is known that the Germans do not like sudden visits. And sudden guests are not a reason for the Germans to prepare, for example, a solemn lunch or dinner. Respondents perceive the German as a friend, show respect for the German people. The respondent who gave the reaction *respect* mentions that he respects the Germans for the "economic miracle", which

should be understood as the rapid recovery of the economy of Germany after the Second World War. Thus, the reaction *respect* indicates the respondent's knowledge of historical events related to the history of Germany. Respondents also mention other culture-specific concepts: *Berlin, the Brandenburg Gate, Germany, the Reichstag*. Respondents name traditional German drinks and dishes: *beer, knuckle, Bratwurst / grilled sausage*. The reaction *schnitzel* probably means for the respondent a national German dish as well. However, *schnitzel* is known to be a traditional Austrian dish. The reactions of the respondents indicate the knowledge of the fact that Germany is the land of philosophers and writers. The reaction *Lutheranism* indicates the knowledge of the religious movements of the German people. An interesting reaction is *want to be one of them*, which can express great respect for the German society. Reactions of respondents also indicate a heterostereotype about German humor: *a German joke, a joke, humorless*. The Germans are believed not to know how to joke and don't understand humor. Some reactions indicate the efficiency and diligence of the Germans: *work, efficiency, hardworking, ability to work* and the quality of work: *accuracy, intelligence, quality, educated, accurate*.

Students of the Moscow State Linguistic University, who have chosen German as the main subject at the university, have a high motivation to learn the language and culture. Thus, the content of heterostereotype becomes irrelevant, stable associations lose their significance. Another stereotype is created and the negative connotation changes to a positive one when students begin to learn the foreign culture and dig into it deeper.

7. Conclusion

Due to the fact that nowadays the main purpose of teaching a foreign language is to help a student prepare for real, productive communication with representatives of other cultures in various spheres of life, the subject of intercultural communication is extremely important. Ter-Minasova (2000) believes that for successful communication it is necessary "to know the world of the foreign language as deeply as possible. In addition to lexical meanings and rules of grammar you need to know: 1) when, how, to whom, with whom, where to say / write; 2) how a given meaning / concept, a given object of thought lives in the reality of the foreign language" (p. 147-161). Knowledge of the culture of the foreign language improves the learner's knowledge of the language itself and approximates its formation as a secondary linguistic personality, which is, according to Khaleeva (1989), one of the main goals of teaching a foreign language.

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