Language Nature of Ethnic Stereotypes in Anecdotes

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Abstract: This paper analyzes the language nature of ethnic stereotypes of Russians, Kazakhs and Germans in Russian-speaking anecdotes. Method of contextual and presuppositional analysis of anecdotes, aimed at studying the language representation of stereotypes, as well as the differentiation between auto- and heterostereotypes, is developed in this paper. In author’s opinion, ethnonyms, analyzed in this paper, are stable nationally text-creating components in the reflection of stable language picture of the world, which objectifies regular world of objects. The study is performed in the context of contemporary anthropocentric directions of linguistics, in which works reflecting various processes of intercultural communication, works elucidating different aspects of human perception of the reality in the language system and works characterizing complex language – human – world interrelations become increasingly urgent. In multi-ethnic countries, such as Russia and Kazakhstan, the problem of successful inter-ethnic communication is very urgent; therefore, the study of ethnical stereotypes of neighboring ethnic groups, associated with commonness of cultural, historical and social development, is virtually necessary for a stable tolerant coexistence in the frameworks of a single socio-cultural and economical environment. To some extent, this problem can be solved by studying how the neighboring ethnic groups view on each other, which is reflected in ethnical stereotypes of auto- and heterogeneous character.

Key words: Intercultural communication · Stereotype · Ethnostereotype · Auto- and heterostereotype · Ethnos · Ethnonym · Anecdote

INTRODUCTION

For the study, we chose stereotypes of the three above-mentioned ethnic groups, having traditions of long-term and intense interethnical contacts. The total number of anecdotes was 600, 500 of which were ethnical anecdotes and 100 anecdotes were those with different topics. At the same time, we tried to keep equal actualization. It seems urgent to study the ethnostereotypes from the viewpoint of language methods and means for expressing, on the basis of material of texts of ethnic anecdotes which, in our opinion, is insufficiently investigated by linguists. Due to their high ethnocultural significance, anecdotes are very scientifically interesting for the modern linguistics. Anecdote reflects a system of values for the nation, positive and negative perception of the surrounding world [1]. It should be stressed that, for a number (and, primarily, extralinguistic) reasons, anecdote has not yet been the object of a special scientific study.

For the study, we chose stereotypes of the three above-mentioned ethnic groups, having traditions of long-term and intense interethnical contacts. The total number of anecdotes was 600, 500 of which were ethnical anecdotes and 100 anecdotes were those with different topics. At the same time, we tried to keep equal relationship of anecdotes about representatives of these said ethnic groups: we studied 176 anecdotes about Russians, 164 anecdotes about Kazakhs and 160 anecdotes about Germans. In particular, the works of such scientists as Raskin [2], Ritchie [3], Lendvai [4], Sedov [5], etc. were devoted to studying the humorous texts and anecdotes. Language and speech methods of formation of humorous text were addressed in works of Long and Gresser [6]. Linguoculturological nature of anecdotes was studied in works of Abdrazakova [1] and Ermakhanova [7].

The Purpose of this work was to study the language nature of ethnical stereotypes on the basis of material of Russian-speaking anecdotes by identifying linguistic means. This purpose can be achieved by solving the following problems:
To analyze the use of ethnonyms and other lexical means, functioning as ethnonym in the texts of ethnical anecdotes.

To identify morphological means for explication of ethnical stereotypes;

To consider the syntactic means for expressing the ethnostereotypes.

**MATERIAL AND METHODS**

Study were the texts of the Russian-speaking ethnical anecdotes, in which stereotype concepts about the Russian, Kazakh and German individuals as the representatives of the ethnic groups were reflected. The ethnostereotypes of the Russian, Kazakh and the German individuals were identified using the texts of anecdotes, in which there were also other ethnic groups and, in particular, French, American and Jew individuals. It does not mean that we deviated from the given topic of research because, as analysis shows, Russian individual, manifesting itself against the background of other ethnic groups, displays the same features as in the texts with the participation of Kazakh and German individuals. The same can be said about the latter two. In the course of continuous selection, anecdotes were extracted from various sources: written versions from collected anecdotes (“The collection of anecdotes”, “Anecdotes. We are ahead of the whole planet”, “The history of the USSR in anecdotes”), from newspapers and magazines for the period of 2005 – 2009 (“Around the laughter”, “1001 ethnonyms. In anecdote, ethnonyms function as an exact ethnonomination of characters. In this case, enthonym acts as the lexical item with the meaning of ‘the representative of ethnical community’; for example: The Russian, German and Kazakh individuals found themselves on inhabited island (…). Denotative meaning of ethnonym can be expressed with the help of ethnonymic adjectives, which are usually represented as syntactical construction “offethnonymic adjective + noun”.

Genre-related selection of the actual material is determined by the fact that anecdote is one of the most intensely developing language genres, specific in its anonymity. Anecdote generally has no authors, it is an “exaggerated” reflection of stereotypic views acting as a fragment, a part of the picture of the world for some or another nation. Owing to the oral form of existence, anecdote is one of the most widespread language sources of ethnical stereotypes.

In our work, we applied the general scientific methods of generalization and comparison (in identifying the complex of language methods and means for expressing the ethnical stereotypes) and statistic methods (to confirm the validity of conclusions about the existence of stereotypic images of the Russian, Kazakh and German individuals in anecdotes, as well as the proper linguistic (component analysis, used to study the lexical and grammatical means for explication of ethnical stereotypes; and etymological analysis, used for the language analysis of ethnonyms and anthroponyms) methods and techniques.

**The results of the study.** The general nature of stereotypes and ethnostereotypes was studied and analyzed in details, e.g., by the following foreign scientists: Lippman [8], Bartminski [9], Buholtz [10] and Antony [11]. In works of the Russian and Belorussian scientists and, in particular, in works of Berezovich [12], Toporov [13] and Potapova [14], the ethnical stereotypes were considered as the projection of ethnocultural mental imaginations: Ethnic stereotypes are stable mental imaginations on own/strange ethnic group, i.e., a fragment of the language picture of the world, sought of as a complex of views on the properties and ways of existence of the objects of reality and expressed in language units [14]. In the present work, this definition is used as an operational one because it provides the possibility to consider the ethnical stereotype not only as a certain generalized mental conception about the properties and ways of existence of the objects of reality, but also as a fragment of the language picture of the world, i.e., taking into consideration the linguistic means for manifesting this complex cultural-cognitive phenomenon.

Texts of anecdotes provide diverse and rich material for studying the ethnostereotypes in the linguistic aspect. We took the linguistic feature, i.e., functioning of ethnonyms, as the basis for selecting the anecdotes, explaining why anecdotes were mostly (51.6%) those with ethnonyms. In anecdote, ethnonyms function as an exact ethnomenclation of characters. In this case, ethnonym acts as the lexical item with the meaning of ‘the representative of ethnical community’; for example: 

In ethnical anecdotes, where ethnonyms get a definite characteristic, composite nominations, expressed by syntactic construction “attribute + ethnonym”, act as language markers. Linguistic monitoring of anecdotes showed that characteristics of ethnonyms occur just in those cases, where behavior of heroes of anecdotes is determined by features of their national character. Ethnonym Russian in ethnical anecdote was found to have the following attributes: funny, smart, hardy.
Kazakh doing now? We shall find him”. Suddenly, “How is our poor meal and then the Russian says: decided to live together. They cooked the dinner, took a garden and planted vegetables. Kazakh was absent. Cold times have come. The Russian sits in his new cabin, last. They went to different corners. The Russian decided to build a cabin. The Ukrainian individual made a garden and planted vegetables. Kazakh was absent. Cold times have come. The Russian sits in his new cabin, the Ukrainian comes to him with his vegetables. They decided to live together. They cooked the dinner, took a meal and then the Russian says: “How is our poor Kazakh doing now? We shall find him”. Suddenly, somebody is knocking the door. They open the door and adventurous Kazakh, wearing police cap, stands on the doorstep and says: “I am your district police inspector! How many people live here? Do you have documents for house holding?” (“Around the laughter”, 2009, no 1, p. 5).

Ethnonym the German gets in the anecdote the following characteristics: neat, accurate, pragmatic. For example: American, German and Israeli met each other in Paris. They walk down the street and suddenly encounter a backpack. Provident American says: “Oh! Somebody was robbed!” He grasps his backpack with iron grip. Israeli says: “Don’t come closer! One holds all in forefront and the other does so at back. And I call the police”. Neat German says: “This is disorder: garbage on the street. But in which canister we should put it? We have to open and sort the content!” (“Anecdotes from around the world”, p. 147).

After analysis of their personal names, Russians, Kazakhs and Germans (25.4%) were found to act in anecdotes as symbolic notations of the representatives of these ethnic groups. This is evident from the fact that most widespread names can characterize the stereotype of the nation. Analysis of anecdotes with Russian antroponyms (8.8%) suggests that the frequent name in them is an antroponym Ivan (2.2%), which is associated, on one hand, with power, prowess and recklessness and, on the other hand, with laziness and desire to have a drink. For example: The competition of strong men. Big American athlete comes in and lifts huge iron ball. The crowd is excited: “Oh!” The Russian Ivan takes the stage. Iron cube, which is twice bigger than ball, is in front of him. They tell him: “Ivan, there is vodka under the cube.” – “Where?” – says Ivan. He lifts the cube and disappointingly says: “Hallucination again!” (“It is just funny! Or the mirror of distorted kingdom”, p. 27)

Stereotypical image of the Russian individual is also associated with names Sasha (1.7%) and Petya (1.3%), which function as ethnonyms in anecdotes.

In anecdotes, containing Kazakh antroponyms (9.2%), such proper names as Serik (2.2%), Berik (1.8%) and Erbol (1.5%) are widespread and function as ethnonyms; on the one hand, they create certain typical collective image of hospitable, friendly Kazakh; on the other hand, they demonstrate such negative qualities as laziness and vainglory. For example, the next anecdote demonstrates the laziness of the Kazakh: Once three men met each other: the American named John. French man named Pierre and our Kazakh Berik. They started to clarify whom they each would like to be and why? John says: “I would like to be a lion, the king of animals, in order to rule everything”. Pierre says: “I would like to be a tiger, in order to be faster and stronger than all”. And Serik answers: “I would like to be a snake, in order to make everything in lying position: walk, eat, drink...” (“Around the laughter”, 2009, no. 2).

In anecdotes, containing German antroponyms (7.4%), heterostereotypical image of the German is associated with such names, widespread in German language, as Hans (1.6%), Fritz (1.5%), Michael (1.3%). In anecdotes, based on military topics, the above-mentioned antroponyms have negative shade, primarily because an image of the German in the period the Second World War was associated with the image of enemy. In anecdotes, reflecting the real things of the contemporary life, these said antroponyms have positive or neutral shade and are associated in anecdotes with such qualities as scrupulosity, punctuality, restraint and promptness, i.e., business qualities. In the next anecdote, due to business qualities, the German is presented as an expert in his business: Shooters compete. A girl with an apple on her head is standing. The first shooter is taking stage; he shoots and misses the target, the bullet passes by the apple. Commentator: “John Smith, USA”. The second shooter comes forward, shoots and hits the apple. “Hans Muller, Germany, professional”, says commentator. Man with beard in jacket comes forward, takes his shotgun, shoots and hits girl’s head. “Watchman Ivan, Babyakovo settlement, amateur”. (“Anecdotes”, p. 127).
Table 1: Morphological means of explication of ethnic stereotypes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronouns (personal)</th>
<th>Adjectives (evaluative)</th>
<th>Adverbs (comparative)</th>
<th>Quantifier words</th>
<th>Intensive emphatic particles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>we/you, our/your, own/strange, you have/we have</td>
<td>real, true, original</td>
<td>In Russian, in Kazakh, in German</td>
<td>all, any, every, always, never</td>
<td>even, only</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Syntactic means of explication of ethnic stereotypes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparative phrases</th>
<th>Phrases with attributive relations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>like Russians, like Kazakhs, like Germans</td>
<td>Russian soul, Russian perhaps, Russian boldness, Kazakh hospitality, Kazakh temperament, German nicety, German accurateness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Also, the ethnical membership of characters is indicated using most widespread Russian, Kazakh and German surnames such as Ivanov (1.4%), Petrov (1.2%), Sidorov (1%), Mirkimbayev (1.4%), Koshkarbaev (1.3%), Zhumagulov (1%), Muller (1.1%), Schmidt (1%), etc.

The analysis of ethnical anecdotes showed that morphological means (35%) serve as the language markers of explication of ethnic stereotypes. They include personal pronouns (9%) we/you, ours/your, own/strange; evaluative adjectives (6%) real, true, original; comparative adverbs (11%) in Russian, in Kazakh, in German; quantifier words (5%) all, any, every; adverbs always, never; intensive emphatic particles (4%) like even, only. They have pronounced evaluative qualities, since they mark ethnostereotypes; and the main feature of stereotypes is their evaluative character. For instance: As is well-known, all Russians celebrate Maslenitsa and traditionally eat pancakes. So, imagine a February. Street festivity takes place on the square: somebody is climbing on the post to take boots, somebody is singing songs; there are pancakes and fun. An organizer in Russian shirt with belt comes to the square and solemnly tells the poem: “I eat pancakes, the pancakes may have not been cold in that pot. But you shall not worry about this anymore. I will eat them alone with appetite!” (“Anthology of the world anecdote”, p. 127).

It was found that ethnical stereotypes can be expressed by the characteristic syntactical means (17%) and, in particular, by comparative phrases (7%) like Russians, like Kazakhs and like Germans. This is because any comparison is based on associations of representatives of the ethnic group about different real things, related to their culture, traditions, life conditions, specific features of behavior. Comparisons in ethnical anecdotes are based on the juxtaposition of certain qualities of one ethnic group against qualities of representatives of another ethnic group. We will consider one of the comparative phrases by the example of an anecdote about Kazakh ethnic group, reflecting autostereotype: Once the Kazakh was driving KamAZ and suddenly the car broke down. He stands on the road and thumbs a ride. He stops another KamAZ driver and asks him: “Help me, brother!” Brother of course fixed everything fast. “Thank you a lot! What is your name?” – “Ivan!” – “And what is your surname?” – “Muller!” – “Wow! Your name is Russian, surname is German, but you are smart, like Kazakh!” ("1001 anecdote", p. 23).

In the analyzed ethnical anecdotes, phrases with attributive relations were also identified (10%), where the attribute of noun is an adjective, formed from ethnonym and the noun is the name of any property of the representative of a certain ethnic group: Russian soul, Russian perhaps, Kazakh hospitality, German nicety, German accurateness. For example: English man, Japanese and French guy are sitting after Kazakh hospitality. Wherever they go, they encounter besh barmak everywhere; so they tell one another that they should go to some restaurant with European food. They came to a restaurant and make an order relying upon waiter’s choice and presuming that it will not be meat. And, of course, they were given a besh barmak. The English man asks: “So, what we are going to do?” with an English pronunciation. The French individual answers with French aspiration: “You may eat if you want and you may not if you do not want to!” And, at last, Japanese says with his Japanese pronunciation: “It will go in or will not go in” (“500 anecdotes”, 2007, no. 6).

Morphological and syntactic means of explication of stereotypes are presented in the form of the summarizing table (Table 1).

Morphological and syntactic means of explication of ethnic stereotypes in the Russian-speaking anecdotes

CONCLUSION

The considered methodological basis of the problems, as well as the linguistic analysis of the actual material enabled us to come to the following conclusions:
Linguistic nature of ethnical stereotypes lies in the fact that they cannot be separated from the language. With respect to language, ethnic stereotypes are expressed in anecdotes by describing stereotyped person as a representative of a given ethnic group, by creating its speech portrait, by characterizing its actions and situations with a participation of the person. An ethnic stereotype provides an individual with a succinct characteristic of another ethnic group, emphasizing one or several features which, according to stereotype, most fully characterize all representatives of the stereotyped group.

Ethnic stereotypes get language expression, in the form of ethnonyms, phrases and syntactically conditioned constructions. In our opinion, the use of ethnonyms the Russian, Kazakh and German fulfils certain functions in the ethnic anecdotes. First, it is the function of exact ethno-nomination of characters; and, second, it is the function of transfer of the complex of ethnic stereotypes, ascribed to them. Antroponyms are also used as a nomination of representatives of some or another ethnic group. Morphological and syntactic means act as language markers of ethnostereotypes.

REFERENCES