STEREOTYPE: A KEY CONCEPT OF LUBLIN ETHNOLINGUISTICS

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In public discourse a stereotype is evaluated as a negative concept and, as a reader of social and political journalism will become convinced of, it is postulated that such a pre-judgment should be overcome and combated. However, if stereotypical thinking is considered without negative emotions, it turns out that it is impossible to avoid stereotypes, and programmes intended to eliminate them are based on a false assessment of the state of affairs.

The main part of my paper is devoted to presenting the evolution of the comprehension of the stereotype in the Lublin ethnolinguistics and to describing specific applications of this concept in research material.

1. Psychological overview of stereotype

Stereotype is a concept that functions in different fields of study. In Poland it has been already described from the point of view of language philosophy (Hilary Putnam, Adam Schaff), sociology (Jan Stanisław Bystroń, Józef Chałasiński, Florian Znaniecki), linguistics (Uta Quasthoff, Jerzy Bartmiński), psychology (Ida Kurcz), literature science (Zofia Mitosek, Jerzy Święch). A comprehensive overview of various visions of stereotype was presented by Jerzy Bartmiński in his article Stereotype as a Linguistic Subject (Stereotyp jako przedmiot lingwistyczki, 1985).

In my paper I discuss and report more broadly only the latest trends in the comprehension of this concept, based on psychology, which has a substantial influence on contemporary linguistics and, as it turns out, is reflected in the way stereotype is comprehended by ethnolinguists in Lublin.

“In psychology, the term stereotype”, Monika Grzesiak-Feldman states, “usually denotes a collection of simplified beliefs on the characteristic features of a given
class of people which are attributed to its members. [...] An individual person is subjected to a stereotype-forming process, comprehended in as with the class, and is attributed with qualities associated with the class” (Grzesiak-Feldman 2006: 12–13). Stereotype is assumed to be two-component (Kofta, Sędek 1992): it consists of a group-soul component (a conspiracy stereotype – a cognitive representation of a group as a whole) and a trait-laden component (a traditional stereotype based on characteristics of a the group member that is subjected to a stereotype forming process). In other words, an individual is stereotyped according to the group he or she is from – the essence of stereotyping. The latter is a three-level concept, consisting of (1) a label (“a representation of a class characteristic”, e.g. skin colour), (2) a collection of characteristics typical of a given class and associated with it – e.g. tardy, mean and (3) typical behaviour (Grzesiak-Feldman 2006: 15).

It is commonly thought that stereotypes are judged negatively. However, in the light of research, only conspiracy stereotype is negative, whereas a trait-laden stereotype can contain positive beliefs on the representation of a given class. As for other differences, a classical stereotype of a Jew will differ from a stereotype of a German, a Russian, a Czech, etc. – we can say that it possesses diverse content. The conspiracy stereotype, on the contrary, has the same content, not only for members of one specific community, but even on multicultural level (Grzesiak-Feldman 2006: 19–20).

In that case, how are “changeability and inevitability” of stereotypes (cf. Kurcz 1994) aperceived in the light of psychological conceptions? All depends on the identity of an individual. Difficulties in distinction between one’s own and someone else’s perspective are conducive to ethnocentrism and stereotype formation. People with an attributive form of identity (a sample statement characteristic of this group: “We are people who take care of our own intellectual and spiritual development”) are to the least extent receptive to phenomena related to ethnocentrism. People with a class identity (a sample characteristic statement: “We are students/Poles/youth”) – to the greatest extent (Grzesiak-Feldman 2006: 26, 29).

Automatism of stereotype formation is regarded by some psychologists as inevitable, while others link it with the motivation of an individual. Stimulation of cognitive control processes restrains stereotypical reactions. Such stimulation can be triggered by egalitarian beliefs or conformism; it can be caused by verbal persuasion (“please, avoid stereotypical judgments”) or by realising the discrepancy between the open opinions of an individual and an automatic reaction. A sense of shame or guilt occurring at the moment of stereotypical behaviour hinders stereotype formation. Briefly, stereotypical reactions resemble, in this scenario, a bad habit, and habits can be eliminated (Grzesiak-Feldman 2006: 32–35). “Thus, motivation is an important regulator of stereotypical responding. It plays a crucial role in the process of eliminating stereotype formation and may, as a final result, lead to restraining not only application, but also activation of stereotypes” (Grzesiak-Feldman 2006: 36).
2. Stereotype as a stabilised unit

The literature concerning stereotypes in linguistics is ample. Basically, there is a division into formal and semantic stereotypes. However, other definitions are used sometimes, but they concern the same division – e.g. Charlotte Schapira distinguishes thinking stereotypes (stéréotypes de pensée) and linguistic stereotypes (stéréotypes de langue). Firstly, I will discuss stereotypes considered as stabilised compounds.

According to etymology, stereotype is strongly fixed (gr. stereós meaning ‘block making’ + typos meaning ‘trace’). A more practical origin is the stereotype machine (i.e. you type a stereo) in which text is typed onto a wax sheet and multiple copies run off. According to the dictionary definition, stereotype is ‘the simplified and marked picture of reality, which is often based on incomplete and false knowledge of the world and which is stable and solidified by tradition’ (SWO 2007: 348). This definition not only sounds like scientism but it also does not suggest the meaning of the adjective stereotypical that will be different from relational meaning (‘the one connected with a stereotype’). Meanwhile, ‘something that is stereotypical is conventional and that is why it is not original’ (SJP 2007, V: 185). This is the form of interest.

Stereotype links are distinguished in phraseology. These are ones that are fixed in a language in a specific form and which do not have the obvious totality of the meaning, that is, “their semantic value is nearly the same as the sum of their particular elements” (Kurkowska, Skorupka 2001: 158). This was illustrated by examples of comparisons such as, dumb as a (left) shoe (from Pol. głupi jak but z lewej nogi – English equivalent: dumb as a rail). Andrzej Maria Lewicki wrote that stereotypes are “compounds reproduced from memory” (1976: 23). Such “understandable” stereotype is synonymous with words such as cliché and pattern (in linguistics). “The term “linguistic cliché” is not clearly defined. It includes both phrasedogisms, and simply frequent collocations, also more complex semantic entities: standard replies, slogans, popular quotations and many other things” (Krongauz 1995: 57). In the thesauruses of Nikitina and Vasilyeva there are examples of lingua cliché (stereotypes). Also the following concepts are listed: labelling formulas, aphorisms, sophisticated words and poetic formulas (Nikitina, Vasilyeva 1996: 86–87).

Jerzy Bartmiński (1985) distinguished three varieties of a stereotype: (1) topique – a connection of semantic entities, without fixing a verbal form (e.g. the Sun feeds itself with honey – from Pol. słońce żywi się miodem), (2) formulas – semantic links with an established verbal form, e.g. something goes around one’s mind – from Pol. coś komuś chodzi po głowie – English equivalent: to have an idea), (3) idioms – formal links, in which semantic motivation is already blurred for the language users, e.g. drop a hiding (from Pol. spuścić komuś manto – English equivalent: beat the pants off). The author emphasises that the direction of setting the form goes from topique to idioms and the most interesting for a linguist are formulas that are not researched enough by phraseology.
3. Semantic understanding of stereotype

However, it was the study of stereotypes in semantic interpretation that became a characteristic or even distinctive feature of Lublin ethnolinguistics. The starting point was the idea to compile a dictionary of folklore language – too narrow, as Jerzy Bartmiński wrote years later, and limiting the material basis. It did not allow the possibility of penetrating “the depths of folk oral culture”. At the second stage of work on the ethnolinguistic dictionary, the compilation of a dictionary of song formulas, was proposed.

3.1. The trial issue of The Dictionary of Folk Linguistic Stereotypes

In 1980 in Wrocław, a test volume of the dictionary of linguistic stereotypes (Słownik ludowych stereotypów językowych, SLSJ) was published. The content of the trial issue clearly shows that the narrow understanding of a stereotype (prevailing in psychology and sociology) was abandoned, and the scope of the team broadened beyond the reference to the names of people (in accordance with the concept of Walter Lippmann). The following terms were included in the dictionary: brat (a brother), gwiazda (a star), hej (hey), kochać (to love), koń (a horse), kukulka (a cuckoo), matka (a mother), rozmaryn (rosemary), słońce (sun), talar (a thaler), wół (an ox).

At the time, the standard of the description of entries was not fully developed, which Czesław Hernas actually stated in the introduction to this volume. The ethnolinguistic character of the dictionary should be understood – avoiding the error of anachronism – in the sense adopted by ethnolinguistics: the analysis of linguistic facts, communication units, was to be used to examine closely the folk culture, “to define the sense of cultural objects and activities” (cf. Burszta 1986: 33).

3.2. Stereotype as “an image in the head”

With time the purpose of the stereotype dictionary has evolved towards the reconstruction of a folk-linguistic picture of the world. This is something completely different from knowledge of the world (although they are interrelated). The concept of the linguistic picture of the world, currently very popular, is also being incredibly blurred and sometimes even incomprehensible (Duda, in print). Therefore, it appears to be justified not to refer to the literature of the subject (which apparently does not explain anything), but to define it. Linguistic picture of the world is a method of conceptual presentation of the world that can be reconstructed from linguistic facts (class and connotative facts).

Walter Lippmann, an author on the concept of stereotype, in Public Opinion (1922) defines stereotype as “an image in the head”. According to Hilary Putnam, stereotype is “in vernacular linguistic usage, a conventional (often biased) idea that

1 Cf.: “Works on the dictionary were inspired by two factors: linguists who examine forms and meanings of folk language and folklorists interested in the role of stereotypia (topiques, formulas, idioms) in the folklore texts and searching for a key to semantics of records. The dictionary was defined as an ethnolinguistic dictionary, and its subject was referred to folk linguistic and cultural stereotypes” (Bartmiński 1988b: 16).
can be very inaccurate in relation to how a \( X \) looks like, how it works, what it is like” (Putman 1975: 249). At present, we would say that stereotype is a cognitive representation in the mind of the user of a natural language. This suggests an analogy with idealised cognitive models, understood as images of objects, situations, etc. ICM (Idealised Cognitive Model) contains mental images, is a complete structure and is based on a comprehensive perception of a given phenomenon (cf. Kardela 1988: 37). This analogy raises certain difficulties concerning the conceptual structure of a stereotype, which is presented below.

### 3.3. Dictionary of Folk Stereotypes and Symbols

Since 1996 in the Lublin Dictionary of Folk Stereotypes and Symbols (Słownik stereotypów i symboli ludowych, SSiSL) has been published. It is noticeable that the formula has been expanded by cultural symbols; however, changes were much more significant.

“A ‘stereotype’, in very general terms, is an image of an object formed in a certain social frame of experience that determines what the object is, what it looks like, how it is treated by a human being, etc. […], as well as an expression fixed in the language, available through the language and belonging to a community knowledge of the world […].”

“A ‘symbol’ is an image of object which is perceived as a member of another image within a bigger system of signs […].” (Bartmiński 1996: 9).

The purpose the dictionary was devised in such a way is a reconstruction of mental objects that constitute a correlate between language and non-verbal reality. Characteristics of such a correlate are socially and culturally stabilised (criterion of statistical and cultural relevancy), thus cyclical.

To facilitate such a reconstruction, the method of entry explication, referred to also as cognitive definition, has been developed.

### 3.4. Cognitive definition as a tool of stereotype reconstruction

Cognitive definition is a type of definition that aims at reconstructing the manner in which an entry subject is comprehended by users of a given natural language (Bartmiński 1988a: 169–170). Such a definition is a tool of linguistic reconstruction of an object image (mental object), and this object occurs from “the knowledge of the world, categorisation of its phenomena, their characteristics and their structures fixed in the language” (Bartmiński 1988a: 173). An adjective cognitive combined as “cognitive definition” originating from Latin cognosco ‘experience’, “emphasises that the content given in a definition is supposed to be of cognitive character, not purely semantic” (Bartmiński 1988a: 169).

Synonymous to such semantic definition is an explication (Bartmiński, Tokarski 1993: 53, 58; Bartmiński, Niebrzegowska 1994: 97–98). An equivalent to this name of the discussed method of defining is the term a method of meaning description (Bartmiński 1988a: 169).
The opposite of cognitive definition is taxonomic definition (Bartmiński 1988a: 171), which has a narrower application, as it is oriented only towards distinction of an object from a class of denotates. Also opposed to cognitive definition is the two-element equality definition introduced by Maciej Grochowski, whose “first element is a subject partial definition of a name, and the second – a definition of an object that comes down to its description through ostention” (Grochowski 1993: 63–64). It does not aim at the broadest possible description of the meaning of the word. However, it intentionally stops at a certain level of categorisation: sofa bed, bed, plank bed, davenport and futon as ‘an object that was made for people to sit on or lay down on’ (Grochowski 1993: 71).

An entry article in the ethnolinguistics dictionary consists of a cognitive definition (explication) together with documentation classified according to the text genres and cultural introduction. However, it happens that documentation can replace explanation (Bartmiński, Tokarski 1993: 53, 58).

An object subjected to the process of definition formation by means of cognitive definition is “a mental object with the whole richness of its description fixed in the linguistic picture of the world” (Bartmiński 1988a: 170), the stereotype of an object or the core of stereotype, that is a prototype (Bartmiński 1988a: 181).

A basic defining element in cognitive definition is “a judgement on an entry object in a form of a statement or its textual equivalent” (Bartmiński 1988a: 179). It should be sufficient for general knowledge, understood as common, basic, “first”. Definitional statements – since the test issue of Dictionary of Folk Linguistic Stereotypes – have already been classified according to semantic categories (Bartmiński 1988a: 181–182), but those that appeared after the publication of Lexicography and Conceptual Analysis by Anna Wierzbicka (1985), have been called facets. “Selection and arrangement of facets should reflect on the examined linguistic awareness and put in order the material documenting the usage of an entry” (Bartmiński 1988a: 182), that is, it should be based on “the rule of subjective reconstruction” (Bartmiński, Niebrzegowska 1994: 97–98). Compulsory elements of cognitive definition refer to characteristic features of a entry object (Bartmiński 1988a: 178), however, it is not an obligatory element – there are colloquial definitions that lack a superordinate, whereas characteristics of an object are given: “Flint, in essence, it has such sharp edges” (“Etnolingwistyka” magazine 2 [1989], p. 137). Thus, there are two possible structural versions of a cognitive definition.

It is postulated that one should avoid “scholar, bookish, scientific definitions” in the cognitive definition. The colloquial Polish language is thus used as a metalanguage (Bartmiński 1988a: 177).

To formulate the cognitive definition, basically three types of data are taken into account: (1) systemic, (2) textual, including definition obtained in the course of experiments and surveys, (3) records of beliefs and practices connected to the entry object and “cultural behaviour of language users towards the object” (Bartmiński 1988a: 177). It is disputed and criticised whether information on practices and be-
liefs can be part of a word definition, or it belongs to “non-verbal knowledge”, however, the Lublin ethnolinguists have supported them.

It follows that a comprehensive description of the word meaning, taking broad cultural context and various linguistic data into consideration, is expanding in terms of its volume. The maximal volume of cognitive definition is not specified – however, it is not enough to indicate characteristics necessary and sufficient to distinguish an entry object from a class of denotates: “all the characteristics of an object stabilised in the linguistic picture of the object should be taken into consideration” (Bartmiński 1988a: 177). Postulates of completeness and adequacy in the content of the discussed definition means that it “should be long”. Comprehension of the whole explication supports its internal order in the form of facets.

3.5. Profiles of basic stereotype

In recent years, the research on stereotypes of Lublin has gone beyond reconstruction of people’s beliefs and moved in the direction of intercultural research. The stereotypes of German in Poland and Pole in Germany, Russian in Poland and Pole in the eyes of the Russian, Pole in Belarus etc. are described in a contrastive way. It is assumed in this case that the stereotypes are irremovable, built in the linguistic image of world and cultural code, that they have cognitive function and are not uniform (cf. Bartmiński, Lappo, Majer-Baranowska 2002: 107). Non-uniformity means that the variants of the profiled term become disclosed in texts, a discourse depending on the subject’s point of view. These variants are called profiles; they constitute the results of the profiling process.

The term profiling is known to cognitive grammar. In the opinion of Ronald Langacker, “the basic process of every language predication is putting the profile on the basis. [...] A certain basic aspect is always emphasised; it serves, speaking intuitively, as a focus of the basis. This substructure is the profile of predication. [...] Regardless of its cognitive background, profiling is a fundamental phenomenon of language semantics” (Langacker 2004: 39). In the ethnolinguistics of Lublin, profiling is understood quite differently (Majer-Baranowska 2004). Previously, it was “bi-level – it includes selection of aspects and their detailed specification of a content” (Bartmiński 1993a), but the author of the concept – developed simultaneously to that of Langacker and independently of it – added the third component – categorisation (Bartmiński 1993b). It is compatible with the tenets of cognitive psychologists who claim that man “through categorization, creates firstly in his mind, the cognitive representation of a given set of objects which can be in a particular case, an individual or empty one, and afterwards – and not always – attributes a language definition to it” (Nęcka, Orzechowski, Szymura 2006:135).

Finally, at this stage, profile is understood as “a variant of picturing of an object [...] shaped through the selection of facets, putting them in order according to the rules of implication, filling them with the content appropriate to the established knowledge of the world, as well as a variant created by a given dominant factor, dominant
characteristic [...]. Various profiles [...] are created in terms of a derivation coming out the basic set of semantic features in area of the meaning – the open set of features” (Bartmiński, Niebrzegowska 1998: 217, 220). An active subject (homo loquens) becomes profiling subject when it adapts the points of view fixed socially. Profiles of terms respond to these points of view.

For instance, the authors of an article on the stereotype of Russian distinguished four profiles: (1) brother-enemy, (2) partitioner, (3) Muscovite-friend, (4) European-partner. Jerzy Bartmiński’s article on German (1994), extremely important for profiling this conception in Lublin, shows in turn that from an ordinary man’s point of view, the Poles perceive German as (1) ‘an alien’; from a nobleman’s point of view – (2) as ‘Prussian’; from a Polish patriot’s point of view – as (3) ‘partitioner’; from war violence victims’ point of view – as (4) a criminal and a Nazi; finally, from the young intellectual’s point of view – as (5) a rich and hardworking European.

3.6. Real ‘genuine’/typical modifiers

In the matter of the distinction between typical and true specimen of a given category, it is hard to rely on general Polish language dictionaries. Admittedly, according to the newest dictionary typical means ‘something which has characteristic features [of a given object] and can be a good example of it’ (SJP 2007, V: 419), whereas with ‘the word real, we describe people, objects and phenomena which have all the characteristic features for people, objects and phenomena of a given type’ (SJP 2007, IV: 189). It cannot be seen, if real has the meaning ‘characteristic’.

However, these adjectives are not understood to be equivalents. The modifiers real and typical introduce an essential differentiation of the concept-creating process of an investigated term. The material explanation of differentiation between real and typical representative of a given category is given among others in Jerzy Bartmiński’s article on the stereotype of mother in the Polish language. It is demonstrated that real means ‘something as it should be’, standard, something which is postulated – but in no case ‘perfect’, whereas typical means ‘something as it is’, true, as it is described (Bartmiński 2007: 157–158).2

All in all, the adjective real seem to update stereotypic beliefs.3 Discussing

2 It is quite troublesome because in the case of the real and typical mother, the three first features have been repeated in the same order (‘love’, ‘care’, ‘understanding’). A lexicographer of SJP may have unconsciously (through the vicious circle, i.e. definition error) given a colloquial (his own?) concept-creating process of the world, cf.: “in a colloquial way of thinking which has features of mythological thinking, there occurs – as it results from the analysis of respondents’ answers – a rule of binding epistemic modality with the deontic one. […] We can add by the way that it is a very archaic property of colloquial thinking, finding an analogy in the mythological and religious thinking” (Bartmiński 2006: 27). The respondents understood real as ‘something as it is and as it should be’.

3 While anticipating further arguments, I quote the following statement: “[...] the ontology of stereotypical beliefs is based on a category understood colloquially as ‘truths’ rather than ‘typicalities’” (Bartmiński 2006: 15).
French works on stereotypes and prototypes, Elżbieta Skibińska (2003: 67) gives examples which certify that *vrai* (Fr. ‘real’, ‘true’) in combination with a noun used in non-referential way, allows one to demonstrate features attributed to denotates (and this rule does not disappear after translating the examples into Polish). Whereas the phrase *Minou est un vrai chat* (*Minou is a real cat*) means ‘Minou is a late riser and a pet...’ rather than ‘Minou is a domestic animal’. Analogically, *Piérre est un vrai célibataire* (*Peter is a real bachelor*) means ‘Peter is a pedant of quite difficult personality’ rather than ‘Peter is a man who did not marry anyone’.

In the introduction to the volume *Language – value – politics* (*Język – wartości – polityka*), Jerzy Bartmiński admits that the respondents of research conducted considered certain noun combinations artificial (Bartmiński 2006: 27). Indeed, it seems that the distinction between real and perfect specimen does not occur at all. It is possible above all in the case of a certain social adapted belief of a representative of a given category.

For instance, in the case of family members’ names (ties of kinship), the distinction being discussed will probably cover *mother, father, brother*. Doubts appear in the case of *sister*. The phrase *Ann is a real sister* will not be interpreted in Polish as ‘Ann is a perfect sister’, which may result from the polysemy of this word (nuns and nurses are also called *sisters*) – whereas, the distinction between typical and real *aunt* (uncle’s wife) does not count. The reason is that uncle’s wife belongs to quite remote family circle, and she does not have her own stereotype.

Presumably, the distinction of typical and real specimens also encompasses *doctor, teacher, priest, policeman, maybe lawyer*. Contact with the representatives of these professions is frequent enough for them to have their own schematised social image. For the opposite reasons it will not be the case with *pastry cook* or *painter*.

Interestingly, the fact that the prevalent – seemingly – stereotype of the blonde may not allow the distinguishing of a *typical blonde* and a *perfect blonde* on the same level. The phrase: *Ann is a real blonde* will be rather interpreted as ‘Ann has blond hair, not dyed’. In the phrase: *Ann is a typical blond* a stereotypical component of a ‘stupid’ or ‘gullible’, ‘credulous’ woman is being reinforced.

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4 Indeed, the features attributed stereotypically to a cat and a bachelor are updated here. With the reservation that in Polish culture, *real bachelor* is ‘confirmed bachelor’, which means an unmarried man of adapted habits which cannot be changed (euphemistically it is called ‘a difficult character’). As it seems to me, a culturally-relative term too, may be this of *real mother-in-law*. I used to hear that “a real mother-in-law is the one who has a daughter-in-law”.

5 I base the following arguments on introspection, I may be wrong, but I think fit to bring my remarks up for further discussion.

6 These beliefs are called the stereotype. One conclusion can be drawn here. The prototype cannot be associated with the stereotype.
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STEREOTIPAS – PAGRINDINIS LIUBLINO ETNOLINGVISTIKOS MOKYKLOS KONCEPTAS

Santrauka

Pagrindiniais žodžiais: kognityvinė etnolingvistika, kalbos pasaulėvaizdis, stereotipas, semantika, žodynai.

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STEREOTYPE: A KEY CONCEPT OF LUBLIN ETHNOLINGUISTICS

Summary

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The author presents the development of the conception of stereotype in works written since 1980ies by ethnolinguistic researchers from Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin. He discusses the psychological and linguistic, especially semantic, notions of the stereotype. Besides, he presents Dictionary of Folk Stereotypes and Symbols and cognitive definition – a notion for reconstruction mental stereotypes, which is used in this dictionary. Because of the fact that this type of definition is also used in other books and articles which show involving of stereotype in different discourses, the author describes also the notion of profiling, comparing Jerzy Bartmiński’s and Ronald Langacker’s conceptions. Finally, he discusses the question of use prawdziwy ‘genuine’ and typowy ‘typical’ text operators, which contributes important disparities into conceptualization of the researched notion, cf. differences between stereotypes of genuine teacher and typical teacher, etc.