

Effects of Cultural Stereotype on Inter-cultural Relations from The English Teaching Perspective

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Abstract: Cultural differences widely existed are often simply standardized into preconceived ideas and images, leading to stereotype on different ethnic groups. Such fixed conceptions could have real consequence on the human behaviour and its evaluation. This paper intends to explore the effects of these mindsets of different cultures in several aspects. The overall negative impacts caused by stereotype have been demonstrated for an array of social groups in terms of international students' academic performance, global trade and mass tourism. This essay has examined the decreasing efficiency of students, employees and visitors abroad have resulted from the prejudice even without conscious awareness.

Keywords: Cultural stereotype, Intercultural relation, Academic performance.

1. Introduction

Due to the influence of globalization trend, intercultural communication has become an essential part among people who attempt to learn from or work with individuals related to other countries whether directly or indirectly. Thus, inclusive attitude has played a fundamental role for the speakers to achieve effective communication and mutual understanding between different cultures (Firth, 1996). Cultural differences are often simply standardized into preconceived ideas, leading to stereotype on different ethnic groups. This unconscious prejudice can result in both studying and working problems to people abroad. It could be argued that fixed conceptions make almost no difference to multicultural communication. However, more researchers (Steele & Aronson, 1995; Osborne, 2007) demonstrate that these mindsets of ethnicity indeed have a large impact on cross-cultural relations among nations. This essay intends to explore how stereotype is shown to undermine the performance in a variety of domains, including not only academics but also business and tourism.

2. Effects on Students' Academic Performance

First of all, achievements of students are often reduced by stereotype threat, "a situational predicament in which people are or feel themselves to be at risk of confirming negative stereotypes about their social group" (Inzlicht, 2011, p. 5). It is widely accepted that overseas students have become a large group among inter-cultural communication and are easily influenced by negative cultural images. Osborne (2007) illustrates that international students get lower scores in math tests under higher stereotyping threat environment, conducting that negative fixed impressions towards foreigner students serve to increase individual anxiety levels, thus hurting performance in general. Nevertheless, the results of test distinguish in gender. The research (Osborne, 2007) also suggests that more anxiety caused by cultural stereotype are imposed on female students as their scores are overtaken by boys and show a continuing decline with the increase of stereotype threat level but the scores of boys display just an opposite trend. It is likely that males are less or positively affected by stereotype pressure while females seem more sensitive in reaction. In this case, people studying abroad could be less efficient and success in their courses, resulting in the loss of and low grades.

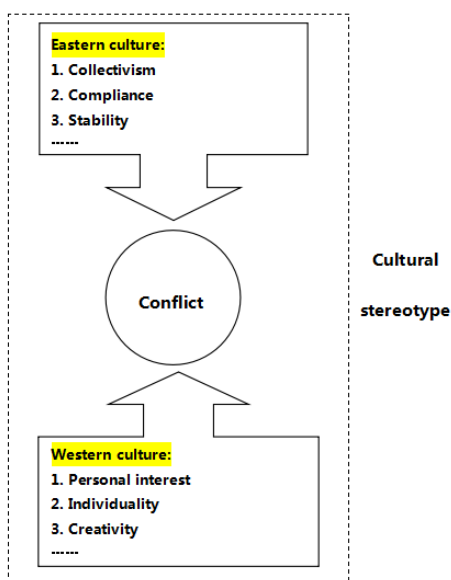


Figure 1. Causes of cultural shock

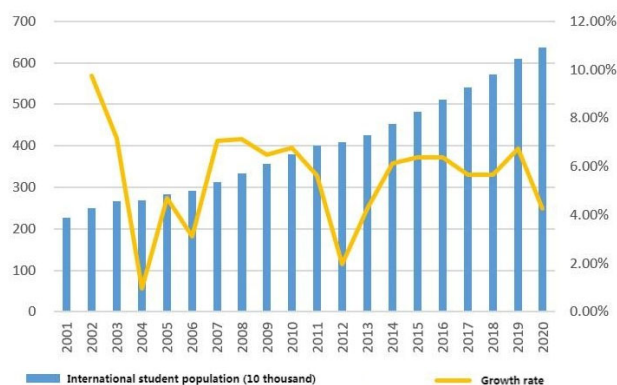


Figure 2. Global international student population and growth rate (2001-2020)

Academically, immigrant students with different cultural background are considerably affected by stereotype. A number of educators (Steele & Aronson, 1995) demonstrate that cultural stereotype depress African American college students' performances in standardized test such as GRE and SAT tests while the results of European-American students are higher excluding other factors, which implies that this group having a similar culture is less affected by these western-designed examinations. This experiment emphasizes that even in a single nation, cultural stereotype would have an impact on citizens from different cultures.

Additionally, students would face some embarrassments and lower effectiveness of study due to the limited, set view of other countries. American and Japanese exchange students suffer most from frustration, misunderstanding for meaningful dialogue, interpersonal conflict caused by different political systems and social alienation (Abe & Wiseman, 1983). They often have problems in making local friends or following their seminars. Most of these problems may occur as an impact of cultural prejudice and ethnocentrism since people holding such ideologies have the capability to listen to and even translate but lack the respect to catch the exactly same meaning as taught. It is considered conclusive that the general negative effect of stereotyping is a major factor of students' performance impairment.

3. Effects on the International Business

Secondly, stereotype affects international business on both the preference of trade partner and the efficiency of negotiation. The preconceived ideas have an overall harmful influence on the choice of partner for competitors from different countries because some similar cultural competitors can have a higher probability of receiving a cooperating offer than others. In China, for instance, a large number of senior executives of joint companies would have a higher trust in international partners of eastern ethnicities as themselves excluding other conditions (Jiang et al., 2011). These directors have a latently unfair preference for a particular group of trade partners so that they are more advantaged compared to the rest candidates from other ethnic groups. It is likely that this typical preference resulted from stereotype would lead to many negative consequences such as limitation for market expansion and a brake to future growth in the international market for the host companies themselves.

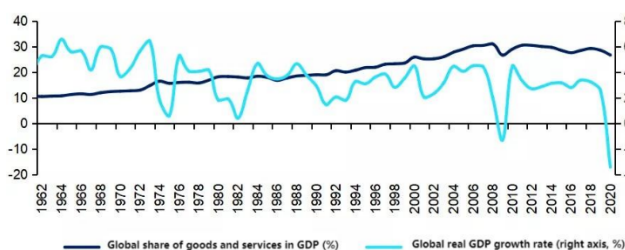


Figure 3. The trend of international trade (1962-2020)

Lower efficiency of inter-cultural communication can also be seen as the result of stereotype. The consensus is that first-language speakers are born to have more proficiency to master their own language and culture than bilingual or multilingual managers. For example, expatriates from Nordic subsidiaries and speaking non-native languages might hardly match the language proficiency of those Japanese host country's managers, thus been put at a disadvantaged stage in

business negotiation (Peltokorpi, 2010). Western employees having less knowledge about foreign speaking strategies and cultures would easily be surpassed by East-Asian people when communicating with the local partners. As Kaye and Taylor (1997) state that most western expatriate managers have great difficulties in adjusting China. Over one-third of them stop their assignments earlier and return because of their poor performances or adjustment inability in such a foreign environment and nearly half staying longer have little achievements during their work in China. Further, if the gap of cultural and racial differences between eastern and western cannot be willingly accepted, then an efficient and beneficial cooperation would be hardly like to achieve. It is established that stereotyping should be considered a key point of causing restriction and reducing the effectiveness in business.

4. Effects on the Outbound Tourism

Moreover, stereotype plays an important role of deciding the traveling sites and the length of stay in outbound tourism. There is a broad agreement among "marketing researchers and practitioners that cultural images of a vacation destination play an important role in travel decision making" (Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000, p. 37).



Figure 4. The trend of global tourism revenue (1996-2020)

On the one hand, many tourists may prefer to visit countries with similar cultural background but different natural scenery. Travelers will have a personal partiality for nations with more "civilized" fames as their destination (Kim & Chen, 2015), thus some developed countries or regions having an "honorable" reputation would always have a large volume of visitor whilst the less famous places may keep their low visiting rate invariably. According to Office for National Statistics (2011), the top countries provided the most visitors to the UK are mainly in Europe such as France, Germany and Spain. With preconceptions in mind, western tourists will have a culture-based vacation site choice with the financial issue excluded. So countries

On the other hand, stereotyping can shorten the length of stay. As Howard (2006) mentions, American experiences the cultural shock most during their vacation tour as they keep a biased and outdated conception towards other countries. Another possible case is that power projection sites attempting to restrict foreign tourist's right may easily give rise to interpersonal conflicts (Wang & Weaver & Kwek, 2015). Travelers may accidentally offend others or against local rules because of their limited pre-existing knowledge of exotic custom. The huge differences between the real experience and their expectation for the place could cause problems in adaption and cut the journey short, making a large amount of income loss for the destination. Consequently, international traveling sites as well as visiting time are largely

affected by stereotype to different ethnic groups.

However, the meaning shift in translation not stereotype might be considered the major problem in cross-cultural communication. The cross-national comparison on the differences in political salience of the items between Norway and the Netherlands indicates that historically, politically and culturally differences may result in different interpretations or translations of seemingly straightforward concepts and that could affect how responses to attitude items are constructed and described (Van der Veer et al., 2003). This deciding point of translation can possibly affect the understanding of dialogues since some images or conceptions could be common sense whilst rare appear in other cultures, but stereotype just causes occasional error in understanding. So it may be argued that the meaning shift other than stereotype that is the prominent factor for international exchange.

Although the transfer of meaning could lead to significant loss of content, stereotype still has a powerful influence on the choice of partners in business. In the economic competition, candidates from similar cultural background are often favored by the directors of the host enterprises because they are the dominant party in the negotiation (Jiang et al., 2011). With the more understandable and clearer persuasion, managers of the competing firms are more likely to gain a specific preference to win the promising market cooperation with the host companies having leaders from the same country as themselves. Another research (Knutson et al., 2003) highlights that American and European managers have distinguished strategies of rhetoric and apology compared to the Arabic or Thai speakers. With the inter-cultural stereotype they often have great difficulties in understanding multinational corporations, thus also resulting in disputes and failure of achieving an agreement.

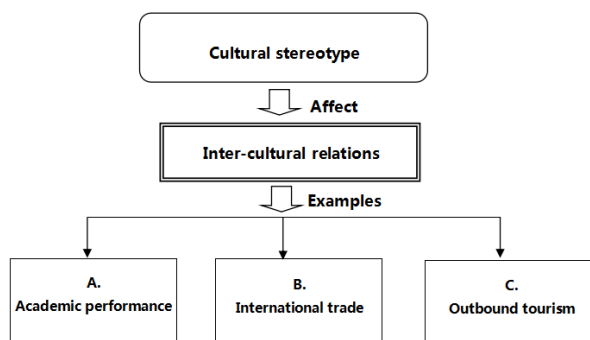


Figure 5. Effects on the cultural stereotype

5. Conclusion

The essay has focused on the existence of effects stereotype have on inter-cultural relations in many aspects. It has been provided that the overall negative impacts caused by stereotype have been demonstrated for an array of social groups in terms of study in a different cultural environment, international trade and mass tourism. This essay has examined the decreasing efficiency of both students and employees abroad have resulted from the prejudice without conscious awareness. Overall, stereotype does have large effects on inter-cultural relations.

Nowadays, English teachers have realize the importance of communication competence and its positive effects of

academic achievement on international students for the purpose of higher education (OECD, 2011). Therefore, the intercultural communication is closely linked to contemporary education as it may help facilitate the language learning and efficiency of study and work by offering chances for learners to have an open and tolerant attitude and gain the cultural norm effectively at the same time, resulting in a better result when it comes to more frequent inter-cultural interaction.

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