

TECHNOLOGY OF NATIONAL STEREOTYPES' RELATIVIZATION IN TEACHING GERMAN BASED ON THE INTERCULTURAL APPROACH

N.V. Sorokina

Zabaikal State University (Chita, Russian Federation)
E-mail: sorokinachita@mail.ru

Abstract. The author of the article shows the important role of national stereotypes as a factor of intercultural communication and proposes to integrate the problem of stereotypes into the context of teaching foreign languages. She suggests considering relativization of stereotypes as an educational goal. Relativization of national stereotypes means realization, acceptance of stereotypes' relativity and taking it into account in intercultural communication. The article presents the technology of stereotypes' relativization for the upper-level courses at universities, which consists of three stages: ethnodifferentiating, ethnointegrating and ethnorelativizing ones. The process of stereotypes' relativization is combined with developing intercultural sensitivity through the step-by-step declining of ethnocentrism and increasing of ethnorelativism in the out-group attitudes of the students. Ethnodifferentiating phase is focused on realization of national stereotypes as manifestations of cultural specificity. It includes entering diagnostics, building up a notional base, detection and re-formation of cultural and individual stereotypes, and studying of stereotype formation mechanisms. The goal of the phase is achieving the stage of Polarization of differences. The orientation of the next phase – the ethnointegrating one – is the opposite of the previous one. It focuses not on the differences but on the common issues uniting cultures and people. The phase includes studying cultural universalities, developing the culture of evaluation, developing the skills of shifting perspective, considering the problem of the stereotypes' truth or falsity, their functions, and the role in communication. At the end of the phase the students achieve the stage of Minimization of differences. The final phase of the technology – the ethnorelativizing one – is focused on the recognition of relativism of cultures, cultural values, and national stereotypes. It includes studying the theses of cultural relativism, developing perceptive ability to keep a double perspective, developing compensating skills, skills of self-regulation, and of stereotype suspending. The ethnorelativizing phase ends with achieving the stage of Acceptance of differences and moving to the stage of Adaptation to them.

Keywords: national (ethnic) stereotype; relativization of stereotypes; intercultural competence; developmental model of intercultural sensitivity.

National (ethnic) stereotypes are one of the most important factors of intercultural communication. They are stable images or conceptions which one nation has of the others (out-group stereotypes, for example *the Germans value order*) or of itself (in-group stereotypes, for example *the Russians trust to luck*). Stereotypes influence the whole process of intercultural intercourse: beginning with the perception of an out-group partner, his words

and actions, and up to programming one's own conduct. The influence of national stereotypes can be positive or negative. In one case stereotypes can be more adequate and help the communicator to orient himself to the situation, to predict its development, to understand what is going on, in other case stereotypes can be absolutely wrong and distort communicative process causing misunderstanding, mistakes, conflicts, and even total refusal to communicate. In spite of the important role of stereotypes in communication they are neglected in teaching foreign languages. The stereotypes of the students which were formed during their socialization and education and the problem of stereotypes' activation in intercultural context often remain unconscious for the students and for the teachers. But efficient intercultural communication is hardly possible without taking this factor into consideration.

Another educational problem connected with the attempts to introduce the issue of national stereotypes into teaching foreign languages is setting incorrect teaching goals, such as intention to destroy, to eliminate, to overcome, to erase, to extirpate stereotypes. These goals are unrealistic, unreasonable, and inconsistent. You can't destroy a stereotype because a new one immediately appears at the same place. The attempts to suppress stereotyping lead to the opposite effect and enhance stereotypes. Besides that stereotyping is a natural mechanism of human thinking, without it normal information processing and social interaction are impossible. That is why the educational goals mentioned above can't be accepted. There is a need of defining a new vector to solve this pedagogical problem.

To my mind this vector must be *relativization of national stereotypes* in teaching foreign languages. Before grounding this goal it should be mentioned that the term "relativization" (from *lat.* *relativus* – relative) was used in Russian science mainly in mathematics, cybernetics, logics, linguistics to define different phenomena of relativity. Much more often this term is used abroad. In this study relativization is defined quite broadly and is considered to be the goal of working on stereotypes, the process of its achieving and the final result. As educational goal **relativization of stereotypes** means **realization, acceptance of stereotypes' relativity and taking it into account in intercultural communication**. So there are three levels of the planned result – a cognitive, an affective, and a behavioral one. The stereotypes' relativity lies in their dependence: on the context of activation – whether they are activated relating a group or a separate individual; on the grade of their truth or falsity in a concrete communicative situation; on their affective component – whether it is positive or negative; on the subject of stereotyping – whether the stereotypes are cultural or individual conceptions; on their role in communication – whether it is positive (constructive) or negative (destructive).

The technology of national stereotypes' relativization is methodologically based on the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS),

created by M. Bennett and his colleagues [1-5]. The main advantage of this model is the clear direction in solving intercultural problems: the move from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism. Bennett uses the term "ethnocentrism" to refer to the experience of one's own culture as central to reality. "Ethnorelativism" is used by Bennett as the opposite of ethnocentrism. This is an experience of one's own beliefs and behaviors as just one organization of reality among many viable possibilities. Bennett points out six stages in the continuum from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism: three ethnocentric stages (Denial, Polarization, Minimization of cultural difference) and three ethnorelative ones (Acceptance, Adaptation, Integration). The distinguishing mark of each stage is the kind of the individual's experience of cultural differences and his / her attitude towards them.

The move from one stage of intercultural sensitivity to the next one is accompanied by the transformation of the stereotype system: from the most polarized to relativized images, which are becoming conscious in the context of general cultural values' relativity. So relativization does not mean destroying the students' stereotypes. The system of stereotypes changes because of their explication and realization of their relativity. Parallel to the process of stereotypes' relativization ethnorelativism is being developed upgrading the students' intercultural competence.

The technology of national stereotypes' relativization will be represented in the context of teaching German as a main subject. This technology was implemented in a series of textbooks [6, 7]. The work on national stereotypes consists of three phases: ethnodifferentiating, ethnointegrating, and ethnorelativizing ones. Each phase will be described as follows.

I. Ethnodifferentiating phase

The main goal of this phase is realization of national stereotypes as manifestations of cultural specificity. National stereotypes are taken into consideration as images representing cultural differences and reflecting cultural values. During the whole phase students are exposed to cultural differences and deal with them, that develops their interest to the differences and forms the students' endurance of them. Due to the growing awareness of cultural diversity on the planet and of its value the worldview of cultural pluralism can be formed as a foundation for developing intercultural competence. Another goal of this phase is developing critical thinking and sensitivity to explicit stereotypes.

Before starting teaching some *entering tests* should be done. The first direction of diagnostics measures the students' knowledge about national stereotypes and appropriate skills they already have in this sphere. This can be done with the help of specially developed achievement tests: receptive, analytical, and communicative compensating ones. The second direction of

diagnostics measures the level of ethnocentrism / ethnorelativism in the students' ethnic attitudes. To do this several ethnopsychological techniques can be used: semantic differential of Ch. Osgood [8: 193-196], social distance scale of E. Bogardus [8: 177-179], free associative description, national peculiarities test [9: 213-214], self-attitudes test of M. Kuhn and T. McPartland [8: 173-175], ethnocentrism / ethnorelativism questionnaire based on the publications of M. Bennett [1-3], J. Bennett [4], and M.R. Hammer [5]. The results of the entering diagnostics should be used later for comparing them with the final learning achievements and demonstrating the dynamics of the stereotypes' relativization to the students.

The first teaching step of the ethnodifferentiating phase is an *introduction* to the problem of national stereotypes in the intercultural context. The goal of the introduction is to arouse interest in the problem, to promote realization of stereotypes as generalizing phenomena and of their universal nature. The introduction should be practical, and the introductory exercises should be based on real life examples. These could be tasks to define nationalities of people shown in the pictures or described verbally. Accomplishing the tasks one can't but notice rapidity and uniformity of the answers while guessing nationalities. In that way it can be vividly shown that everybody has stereotyped conceptions. After that students can be asked to answer the question: "Where do these stereotyped conceptions come from to our minds?". As a result of this discussion students will realize that stereotypes are acquired by individuals while their socialization process, like any other social information.

The next step is *building up a notional base* as a theoretical foundation for considering stereotypes during the whole course. The students are suppose to study the key notions of the stereotype theory, such as stereotype, national / ethnic stereotype, prejudice, stereotypes' structure, features, types, sources, and mechanisms of their building. These notions can be acquired with the help of the explanation-and-illustration method while working on scientific literature and doing exercises on developing critical thinking. Some elements of the research method can also be used for theoretical analysis and summarizing literary sources. To develop critical thinking of the students the teacher should give them not one largely accepted definition of a certain notion, but many different definitions reflecting different positions of the researchers. The students should critically analyze those definitions, point out their key words and make up their own definition. There are a lot of theoretical materials at this phase, which is why the technology of team teaching is one of the best to be used here. This technology supposes that every student individually studies a part of the material to be acquired and then teaches it to all the small group mates switching from being a teacher to being a student and back. The information about the history of the stereotype research can be efficiently studied with the help of the problem method

where the teacher tells the students about the ways that the researchers chose to solve different problems doing research on stereotypes.

All theoretical notions should be acquired practically, in context. This is an important feature of the developed relativization technology. For example, to realize the flexibility of the stereotype's affective component students are asked to find a positive or a neutral equivalent for negative stereotype labels: *wasteful* – *generous*, *hot-tempered* – *energetic* and so on. The practical contexts of this exercise are essays and interviews of the students who have been to Germany. These materials show the changes in the affective component of the students' stereotypes which occurred after the trip, for example "*the Germans are greedy* – *the Germans are economical*".

Working on different stereotype classifications should also be practical. The following task can be an example of such work. The students are given many cards with verbal expressions of different stereotypes: "*All the functionaries are corrupt*", "*The elder people like classical music*", "*The Finnish are terse*". The students are to classify these stereotypes according to the object of stereotyping. In this way the students acquire different kinds of stereotypes: gender, age, professional stereotypes and others. This is an example of implementing the principal of a broad social context. Students realize that national stereotypes are only one kind of many different stereotypes. They can add their own examples of other stereotype kinds and expand the classification completing it with stereotypes about sexual minorities, corpulent people, the disabled or other social groups.

Having built up a notional base, we can proceed to the next technological step focusing on *stereotypes' detection and realization*. Individual and cultural national stereotypes spread in Russia and other countries will be taken into consideration. This phase has an empirical research character. At the beginning students' knowledge about different research methods should be activated. It can be brain storming where students suggest different techniques to research stereotypes. After that they do practical research work. All the techniques are acquired by the students while they experience them first as respondents and then as researchers. So the students learn such research methods as associative experiment, questionnaire, content analysis, document analysis, psychosemantic, and graphical methods. Then they do their own research on national stereotypes of a certain group working out necessary materials and summarizing the results.

As teaching experience shows, students react very emotionally when they get to know stereotypes about Russians. Many of these stereotypes are quite negative and the students are often surprised, embarrassed or even feel insulted. So there is a great need to develop a tolerant attitude to the stereotypes spread in different countries and to promote realization of the necessity to accept their existence as reality. The students don't have to agree with them, they just should take into consideration the possible activation of these stereotypes while communicating with foreigners. It might be profitable to

look for the explanations of why the image of Russia and the Russians is like that in Germany or in other countries.

Besides the research tasks there are a lot of exercises to develop *perceptual skills*, the sensitivity to stereotypes' activation in particular. At this phase the work should be focused on the explicit stereotypes' representation. Doing these exercises students realize peculiarities of stereotypes' activation in different contexts. Different kinds of texts can be used as teaching materials: printed texts (newspapers, magazines, literature, travelers' notes), audio texts (interviews with foreigners who visited certain countries), video films showing the every day life of the native speakers. The students can be asked to detect stereotypes in these materials and say what the means of their expression are.

Reflexive exercises also play a very important role at this phase, exercises on *identification and explication of one's own stereotypes* in particular. The students gather their answers, notes, drawings which they made being respondents while testing different research techniques, then they compare them and present their own image of German and Russian people. For a better differentiation of cultural and individual stereotypes students have to do exercises on comparing their own stereotypes with those spread in Russia. Afterwards the students are suggested to consider the emotional component of their stereotypes, to detect what kind of labels they use, and to think about the possibility of replacing them by neutral or more positive labels.

The final step of the ethnodifferentiating phase is working on the *stereotypes' formation*. The aim is to realize historical genesis of any stereotyped conception and the existence of many social agents which influenced its formation. The exercises are focused on *developing hypotheses about some stereotypes' origin* based on historical data, on *analyzing its possible sources*, on *realizing the main role of the language* in its formation. For example there can be tasks to match an ethnopoliism (a slighting name of an ethnic group) and an ethnonym, to explain the origin of an ethnopoliism (*Iwans* – Germ. Russians, *Iwan* – a common male name in Russia; *Makkaroni* – Germ. Italians; *macaroni* – a famous Italian dish). There is another language tool to form and transport stereotypes – idioms and proverbs with national or geographical components, for example *Dutch courage*, *Chinese compliment*, *Greek gift*. The students are supposed to detect stereotypes formed by these idioms. After that they can discuss the permissibility and the extent to which these idioms and proverbs have spread in Russia, Germany, and other countries.

At the end some reflexive exercises should be done, they focus on *realization of the students' stereotypes and analysis of their possible sources*. Some students have relatives or acquaintances who visited Germany, their descriptions and stories might have influenced the image of the country and its people. Some students learned German at school, some of them liked to

watch films about World War II, and so on. Discussing all those questions the students realize the uniqueness or the typicalness of their situation concerning the factors which influenced their own stereotypes. The task to differentiate the primary and the secondary sources of ethnocultural information seems to be very useful. Many students of elder semesters have already had their own experiences with Germans and have visited Germany, so they can analyze the influence of the first-hand communication on their stereotypes and compare it with the influence of the secondary sources.

To develop flexibility, productivity, and independence of the knowledge and skills gained at the ethnodifferentiating phase the teacher has to organize *creative activities* where the students can use the acquired stuff in new situations. One of the directions of creative activities can be different art technologies which demonstrate creative interpretations of national stereotypes in general and the content of some specific stereotyped images. For example students can create products of different arts: drawings of a "typical representative" of a certain nation, symbolic maps of different countries, computer presentations, video films, comics, poems, short stories, dramatizations about stereotypes, etc.

Another direction of creative activities at the ethnodifferentiating phase is doing research on national or ethnic stereotypes in a new ethnopsychological context – not in the context of intercultural communication between Russians and Germans any more, but between other national or cultural groups (Russians and Buryats, Caucasians, Chinese, etc.). This work will be especially efficient and useful when done in the context of a cultural diversity of the region. As teaching practice shows, studying national and ethnic stereotypes at a regional level students come across not only positive examples of forming national images but also different problems connected with negative stereotypes, prejudices, tensions in interethnic relations. All of these problems shouldn't be ignored or embellished. Dealing with interethnic problems may increase emotional tension which might be quite strong even before that. It can be caused by the immersion into cultural differences at the ethnodifferentiating phase. This increasing tension is to be considered as a favorable circumstance which is necessary to develop tolerance to differences. Tolerance can be developed only if the differences are big and evident enough, if there is a necessity to overcome negative emotions caused by them.

The ethnodifferentiating phase is an opening one in the stereotypes' relativization technology, which is why the goals of the phase are not very ambitious in developing intercultural sensitivity. The target stage of intercultural competence at this phase is Polarization, the second one after Denial cultural of differences. As diagnostics show, most students beginning the course are at this very stage. Many of them are at Reversal as a variation on Polarization, where German culture is experienced as superior to Russian culture. Reversal is common among the students who study German as their

first foreign language and have visited Germany. The ethnodifferentiating phase does not assume going further than Polarization, but it prepares the move to the next stage of intercultural competence. At this phase students compare in-group and out-group stereotypes, so they can see examples of ethnocentrism in their own conceptions inclusively. Realizing ethnocentrism as a problem is the first step to solving it. That builds up conditions for the move to the next phase of stereotypes' relativization.

II. Ethnointegrating phase

The orientation of this phase is the opposite of the previous one. It focuses not on the differences but on the common issues uniting cultures and people. The common base should be built in spite of the differences found before by overcoming resistance of the differences. Overcoming these difficulties leads to the development of the students' intercultural competence. This logic goes with natural intercultural communicative processes where, after identifying a partner as an "alien" and activating conceptions of his differences from the in-group, people start looking for a common platform to communicate and to cooperate. Another aspect of dealing with the commonality is decreasing of psychological tension caused by intensive work on cultural differences at the previous phase.

An important feature of this phase is shifting the focus from national and cultural communities as big social groups to an individual as a unique person. National and cultural differences are neither denied nor eliminated, but they are moved to the background. To the front comes a Person and its Individuality. The main goal is to form a dominant of a factor evaluation [10], which means evaluating a person as it is, as personality, not as a representative of a group. Focusing on common human problems builds up a context for formation of a humaneness worldview, for realizing the value of a human and human culture, for developing empathy.

National stereotypes are seen in a new way, taking a new perspective. While the ethnodifferentiating phase dealt with stereotypes as social phenomena at the most generalized level, the ethnointegrating phase deals with stereotypes as perceptual frameworks in concrete situations with certain communicative partners. There is a shift from the abstract level to the concrete one. Thanks to that students can recognize the stereotypes' ambivalence, their ambiguity, possible prevalence of a true or false content in them, their possible positive or negative influence on communication. To promote the recognition of these aspects, critical thinking and sensitivity to the implicit stereotypes must be developed. These are supplemental goals of the ethnointegrating phase.

The first step of the ethnointegrating phase is *realization of cultural universalities*. A rather large scale of cultural universalities to describe value

orientations of a concrete culture can be found in the work of G.V. Elizarova [11: 30-41]. These universalities are relations to nature, time, space, work, communication, etc. Each universal issue is not a strict opposition of two mutually exclusive variants, but a continuum of relations stretching from one pole to the other, for instance, relation to nature – humans control nature vs. depend on it; relation to time – time is limited and irreversible vs. time is unlimited and inexhaustible. The specifics of each culture can correspond with any point of this continuum, not only with its poles. The students can be asked to match the stereotyped features of Germans and Russians studied at the previous stage and the scale of cultural universalities. For example, such features as punctuality, good organization, and orderliness of Germans correspond with the value of controlling nature and circumstances and the monochronic time in German culture. Time is understood as a limited source and a great value in this culture, so it is very important to act according to agreed plans, not to be late, keep one's word. In this way students can take into consideration all the other in-group and out-group stereotypes of Russians and Germans. This kind of work promotes recognition of the fact that stereotypes are grounded in reality and depend on cultural values.

Working on cultural universalities can be continued by studying European culture as a culture uniting Russian and German cultures. Different points of view on this issue can be presented and discussed at this phase. It is also useful to study the history of mutual cultural influences and contemporary European values which build up a common platform for the Russian-and-German dialogue of cultures.

Besides working on European values and comparing cultures with a scale of cultural universalities, it can also be very efficient to consider universalities of human existence in the context of commonality. These are spheres of life and elementary situations which are familiar to all people regardless of their cultural identity. G. Neuner [12] gives a list of such universalities remarking that it is incomplete and abstract: main issues of living, personal identification, social identification in private and social life, human relations, etc. The list of the universalities can be used as a reference for selecting teaching materials focused on cultural commonality. It is advisable to select situations and texts reflecting every day life of German students, their problems, and interests. In this case literary texts are especially efficient, for instance, short stories on different topics. Due to their emotional impact and identification with characters, situations, and ideas, literary texts give the reader an opportunity to see the every day life of contemporary Germans, their values, attitudes, and acute problems from their own point of view. It allows the reader to realize the fact that the Germans are just people to whom "nothing human is alien", that they come across different problems in their lives. While discussing the stories the students' attention should be focused on the primary factor evaluation of the characters, of their human

qualities. The criterion, evaluation of people as group representatives, plays a secondary role at this phase. Some very important perceptual skills, the skills of shifting perspective in particular, are also developed during this work on texts.

The next methodological step of the ethnointegrating phase is focused on the *recognition of the stereotypes' ambivalence*. One of the directions of this work is considering the *problem of the stereotypes' truth or falsity*. The following issues are the key notions of the phase: stereotypes' verification, sociotype, in-group stereotype, out-group stereotype, the kernel-of-truth hypothesis, the contact hypothesis, stereotypes' truth criteria, deep stereotype, interethnic conflict, image of enemy, basic personality, modal personality, national character, mentality. The problem of the stereotypes' truth or falsity should be considered in a situational context. Students are suggested to evaluate the known stereotypes as true or false and to discuss this in groups. After discussing, the students resume addressing whether their opinions were the same or different, what kind of arguments were used. Then the students can proceed to studying the evolution of the researchers' opinions on the problem of the stereotypes' truth or falsity and the contemporary condition of the problem.

After considering the problem in general, students have to study the stereotypes' truth criteria described in scientific literature. The students can be asked to apply those criteria to the known stereotypes. To do that they have to compare the in-group stereotypes of a certain people with the out-group stereotypes about it (criterion 1), to compare the out-group stereotypes of different peoples (criterion 2), to analyze the history of the inter-group relations of certain peoples (criterion 3), to define the extent to which certain stereotyped conceptions have spread (the uniformity criterion), to follow the changes of stereotypes taking place in history (the depth criterion). Then they have to range the stereotypes according to the degree of their truth or falsity and to discuss the results.

The next step is considering the problem of stereotypes' truth or falsity in various communicative contexts. The exercises of this phase are focused on developing students' analytical skills. They learn to analyze situations concerning the truth or falsity of a concrete stereotype and to doubt stereotypes when applying them to a certain person. The students are asked to detect a stereotype activated in a certain situation and to define the degree of its truth or falsity in this context from their own point of view and from that of the participants.

Practical analytical work on situations leads to the next stage which deals with the *functions of stereotypes and their role in communication*. The goal of this stage is to realize the ambivalence of the functions and the influence of stereotypes on communication. The logic of the stage is the same as that of the previous: it goes from acquiring theoretical knowledge as orienta-

tion base for activities to its practical implementation. There are series of exercises to achieve this. First of all, these are *perceptual* exercises focused on developing sensitivity to implicit stereotypes' representation. There are also *analytical* exercises at this stage. They develop the students' abilities to analyze communicative problems caused by stereotypes and to detect the reasons of failures. Perceptual and analytical exercises are based on situations depicting real life or taken from the literature. Besides that, there are series of *reflexive* exercises focused on analysis of the stereotypes' influence on one's own intercultural experiences. It is important that the students reflecting their experiences realize themselves both as subjects and objects of stereotyping.

It is advisable to dramatize different communicative situations so that the students may act out various alternatives to solve communicative problems. It's more efficient to first do individual analysis of situations, to write down the conclusions, and then to dramatize them. This technique can help to form the discipline of judgments [10], which is the ability not to express one's own judgments outwardly, but to keep them unseen, unexpressed. After dramatizing, the students can reflect and compare their inner judgments with the outer conduct in the situation. This is how the students gain knowledge about the special functions of the stereotypes in mono- and intercultural communication, about their possible positive and negative role. So the stereotypes are getting more and more relativistic due to the deeper understanding of their ambivalence.

The acquired knowledge and skills are to be implemented in creative activities. At the ethnointegrating phase this should be done in non-standard situations. The whole work of this phase will bring the students to the Minimization stage. Having realized the inhomogeneity of human cultures and the ambivalence of stereotypes at this stage, students may tend to deny such categories as Russians, Germans, Englishmen and so on, tend to deny stereotypes and to have a negative attitude toward them. These tendencies are to be accepted calmly because they are indications of the Minimization stage. However it is important not to let students remain at this stage, but to help them to move further and to develop a more useful approach – a neutral approach to the cultural differences and to the stereotypes reflecting these differences.

Minimization is a very important stage of developing intercultural competence but it still remains an ethnocentric one. Ethnocentrism of this stage is more flexible and softer than that of the Polarization stage. At the ethnointegrating phase many elements of one's own culture are experienced as common for different nations. This may cause an ethnocentric tendency to perceive one's own culture as universal. To relativize this position you have to refer to cultural differences one more time but in a new way, on a new turn of the spiral of developing ethnorelativism. There is a need of a deep

cultural self-awareness, of recognition of one's own thinking and conduct as influenced by one's own culture. It helps you to see your own culture as one of many equal cultures where each culture is special and not universal. The universalism needs to be resolved to move to the ethnorelative stages and to the final phase of the stereotypes' relativization technology.

III. Ethnorelativizing phase

This phase is focused on the recognition of relativism of cultures, cultural values, and national stereotypes. The essence of the phase is dialectic uniting of cultural similarities and differences, both of which are needed to sustain intercultural dialogue. The main goal of the phase is ethnorelative worldview based on a deep recognition of one's own culture experienced as just one of a number of possible organizations of reality. Cultures are considered to be fundamentally equal, inhomogeneous, dynamic, built up in relation to each other. An important task of this phase is the recognition of cultural conditionality of one's own beliefs, judgments, and actions. Each student has to realize himself a person formed by his own culture.

The ethnorelativizing phase is also focused on developing the students as subjects of cultural dialogue. There is a transition from pragmatic purposes of efficient intercultural communication to a higher spiritual level of personal development and enrichment through the dialogue of cultures. Educational process is focused on encouraging the students to enlarge their intercultural contacts, to interact with differences, to see them as a precious opportunity to exceed the framework of one's own culture, to expand their worldview, and to enrich themselves as personalities. Due to the conscious perception of cultural similarities and differences students recognize all the aspects of stereotypes' relativity.

The first methodological step of the ethnorelativizing phase is working on the main *theses of cultural relativism*, including Relativistic Nation Theory [13] and Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity [1]. Students study different publications on this topic and present them in small groups. This work is based on the technology of team teaching. After that the teacher organizes a discussion, where the students debate different points of view on the notions and theses studied before. Then they try to build up correlations between the notions. For instance, it is advisable to consider ethnorelativism in its relation to ethnocentrism and the functions of stereotypes. The students are asked to answer the following questions: "What functions of the stereotypes are related to ethnocentrism? What kinds of consequences do ethnocentrism and ethnorelativism have for one's own group and for intercultural communication? What position is more productive for intercultural communication? How do you evaluate ethnocentrism and ethnorelativism: as something positive, negative or neutral?" To create a practical con-

text for this work you can use the results of the entering tests done at the beginning of the course. The students are supposed to detect the level of ethnocentrism in their ethnic attitudes and their distance to other groups.

The following work is focused on *analysis of communicative situations* whose basics students have already acquired at previous phases. At this phase analytical skills are developed at advanced level. One of these skills is a perceptive ability to keep a double perspective, which means to perceive the situation from two points of view – that of one's own and that of the other culture, to exceed the framework of the native culture without losing the initial cultural identity. This perspective change allows moving to a higher level of communication, to the level of cultural dialogue where both cultures are equal and mutually enrich each other. Shifting perspectives students realize themselves as representatives of their own culture, recognize cultural conditionality of their interpretations and of interpretations of foreign communicative partners. At the end of the situational analysis the students are suggested to decide how to act in this situation, which strategy of conduct to choose – a native or a foreign one, whether to explain their point of view to a foreign partner or not.

The next step is developing reflexive skills of self-regulation and of stereotype suspending. The skills can also be developed in a communicative situational context. The essence of these skills is the ability to suspend an activated stereotype and to check its adequacy in the current situation, the ability to delay the uncritical usage of stereotypes. To develop these skills the teacher can use rather large passages from films or literature interrupting their demonstration / reading in order to switch on the mechanism of stereotype suspending. During the pause the students can share their opinions about the stereotypes activated in this situation. Then they continue watching the film or reading the text, so they can see whether their conclusions were right or wrong.

Developing *compensatory communicative skills* is the next step of the ethnorelativizing phase. These skills are needed if stereotypes have caused a communicative failure. To the compensatory skills belong the following: the ability to discuss the stereotypes of both cultures, to explain implicit stereotypes to a partner if necessary, to define the nuances, to find the necessary information in appropriate sources, to get the feedback, to achieve mutual understanding in spite of any disturbance, to explain one's own opinion and peculiarities of one's own culture. Working on these skills the students develop their readiness and ability to overcome difficulties of intercultural communication.

The ethnorelativizing phase continues with *creative project work*. Working on projects should be done in small groups. These should be research projects. The methodological goal of the project work is to summarize the stuff studied before and to use it in the research context. The topics

of the projects done by the students in the years of implementing the represented technology were various: "The image of Germans in Russian films about World War II"; "Stereotypes of Germans in Russian advertisements"; "The image of Russians and Russia in Japanese comics"; "The image of the French in Russian jokes"; "national stereotypes in British advertisements"; and others. After presenting the results of the project students are asked to create problem situations or cases where the researched stereotypes are activated. Other project groups are supposed to solve the problem of the case.

At the end of the ethnorelativizing phase the students have to sum up the *results* of the whole course. They have to do some tests which diagnose the quality of the content acquisition and the level of ethnocentrism / ethnorelativism of each student. The diagnostics can be done with the help of the same techniques as at the beginning (see the first step of the technology). The results should be announced to the students. After that the students are given some creative tasks to reflect upon the results and to compare the studied materials with personal experiences in intercultural communication. The tasks can be done in different forms: essays, poems, posters, dramatizations, letters to the teacher, to a foreign friend, and so on.

The minimal sufficient educational result by the end of the ethnorelativizing phase is achieving the stage of *Acceptance* of cultural differences. Peculiar features of the stage are the following: high interest in differences; experience of culture as a context; recognition of stereotypes' relativity; critical attitude toward one's own stereotypes; and tolerant attitude to the stereotypes of the partners in intercultural communication. A more advanced result of implementing the relativization technology is the stage of *Adaptation* to cultural difference. The issue that needs to be resolved to move to this stage is the recognition of values' relativity and of the fact that human perception and conduct depend on these values. To my mind it is possible only to start working on this stage during the educational process, but not to finish it, because to form the behavioral level of Adaptation, one needs a lot of communication practice with representatives of other cultures, which is not always possible to acquire outside the country of the language studied.

So we considered all the components of the stereotypes' relativization technology such as the goals, the content, the progression of actions, the complex of exercises, and the planned results of each phase of educational process. The presented technology was approved in experimental empirical work at Zabaikalsky State University in 2010-2013. Pedagogical diagnostics were focused on measuring the following parameters: the complex indicator of acquisition of knowledge and skills which belong to the content of teaching stereotypes' relativization; the complex indicators of ethnocentrism, and that of ethnorelativism. The technological efficiency was assessed by comparing the results of the appropriate tests before and after experimental teaching with the help of mathematical statistical methods. The results

proved the efficiency of the developed technology in relativization of national stereotypes, reduction of ethnocentrism, increasing ethnorelativism and intercultural competence in general.

Literature

1. BENNET, M., 2004. Considering the Measurement of Cultural Phenomena and Intercultural Competence. *The Intercltural Perspective in a Multicultural World. 11th NIC-Conference*. Eilef Gard, Birte Simonsen (ed.), pp. 9-17.
2. BENNET, M., 1986. Towards ethnorelativism: A developmental approach to training for intercultural sensitivity. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 10 (2), pp. 179-196.
3. BENNET, M., 1993. Towards ethnorelativism: A developmental model of intercultural sensitivity. R.M. Paige (ed.). *Education for the intercultural Experience*. 2nd ed. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, pp. 21-71.
4. BENNET, M. and PAIGE, R. (ed.), 1993. *Cultural Marginality: Identity issues in intercultural training*. Education for the intercultural Experience. 2nd ed., Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, pp. 109-135.
5. HAMMER, M., 2008. The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI): An Approach for Assessing and Building Intercultural Competence. M.A. Moodian (ed.). *Contemporary leadership and intercultural competence: Understanding and utilizing cultural diversity to build successful organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 245-261.
6. SOROKINA, N. and KOSTINA, I., 2011. *National stereotypes and intercultural communication*. Chita: ZabSU publishing house, 140 p.
7. SOROKINA, N., 2012. *Stereotypes in intercultural communication*. Chita: ZabSU publishing house, 56 p.
8. SIKEVICH, Z., 1999. *Sociology and psychology of national relations*. Saint-Petersburg: Mikhailov publishing house, 203 p.
9. ASMOLOV, A., SOLDATOVA, A. and MAKARCHUK, A., (ed.), 2009. *The art of living with different people: psychological technique of tolerance*. Moscow: Moscoviya publishing house, 311 p.
10. BONDYREVA, S. and KOLESOV, D., 2011. *Tolerance (introduction to the problem)*. Moscow: MPSI publishing house. Voronezh: MODEK publishing house, 240 p.
11. ELIZAROVA, G., 2005. *Culture and teaching foreign languages*. Saint-Petersburg: KARO publishing house, 352 p.
12. NEUNER, G. and HUNFELD, 1993. *Methods of teaching German as a foreign language*. Berlin, München: Langenscheidt KG publishing house, 184 p.
13. ZDRAVOMYSLOV, A., 1998. Grounding the relativistic theory of nation. *Relativistic theory of nation: a new approach to research on ethnic and political dynamics of Russia*. Moscow: ROSSPEN publishing house, pp. 5-25.