



GENDER STEREOTYPES IN CONTEMPORARY DISCOURSE: AN ANALYSIS OF LITERARY, MEDIA AND ONLINE TEXTS

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Abstract. *In contemporary society, gender stereotypes remain a key issue in social communication. These stereotypes influence the formation of public consciousness, the distribution of roles within the family and professional spheres, and the behaviour of individuals. The linguistic expression of these stereotypes is evident in all types of text, including fiction, media, and social networking sites.*

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The concept of stereotype was introduced into scientific discourse by the American journalist Walter Lippmann. In his 1992 work *Public Opinion*, he understood stereotypes to be culturally created images of people from other groups intended to explain and evaluate their behaviour. He interpreted stereotypes as a selective and inaccurate representation of reality that leads to its simplification and gives rise to prejudice. According to Lippmann, 'Stereotypes are prejudiced opinions that decisively control the entire process of perception. They label certain objects as familiar or unfamiliar, so that the barely familiar seem well known and the unfamiliar seem deeply alien' (Sokolskaya, 2003: 24).

In the psychological dictionary edited by R.S. Nemov, a stereotype is defined as follows:

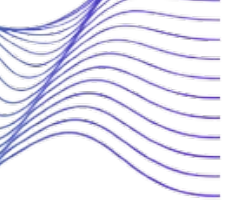
1. A system of relatively stable (fixed), overly simplified beliefs (attitudes, attitudes) concerning a particular social group of people. In this understanding, a stereotype almost always has a negative connotation.

2. A system of opinions, judgements, and assessments accepted and widespread in a given culture concerning the psychological characteristics of the behaviour of a particular group of people. In this sense, the term 'stereotype' can have both positive and negative connotations [Nemov 2007: 99].

In the dictionary of linguistic terms edited by T.V. Zhrebilo, a stereotype is defined as 'one of the forms of information processing and knowledge status' [Electronic Dictionary of Linguistic Terms 2010].

According to the definitions of stereotype found in dictionaries and encyclopaedias, a stereotype is a simplified, standardised image or representation of a social phenomenon or object, usually emotionally charged, highly stable, and allowing people to save effort in perceiving reality. Stereotypes form an orderly, more or less consistent image of the world, thereby helping people to navigate the real world.

In cognitive linguistics, a stereotype is defined as 'a standard opinion about social groups or individuals as representatives of these groups' (Kubryakova & Demyankov, 1997: 89). It is also noted that a stereotype 'has the logical form of a judgement in an



exaggeratedly simplified and generalised form with an emotional connotation, attributing or denying certain properties or attitudes to a particular class of persons' [ibid].

In ethnolinguistics and linguoculturology, stereotypes are 'a representation of a part of the surrounding reality, a fixed mental image resulting from an individual's perception of a typical aspect of the real world, a kind of invariant representation of a part of one's worldview' (Krasnykh, 2002: 177–178). In other words, a stereotype is a representation of reality that exists in our consciousness as a stable, minimised, invariant image, conditioned by national and cultural specificity.

We will analyse statements by female and male characters containing gender stereotypes about their own and opposite gender identities in terms of their stereotypicality, expressiveness, and evaluativeness. In this work, we will adhere to the cognitive linguistic definition of a stereotype as a judgement in an exaggeratedly simplified and generalised form with an emotional connotation. This judgement attributes certain properties, attitudes and cognitive, mental and behavioural characteristics typical of a particular social group to that group.

Stereotypes are a subject of study in various fields of the humanities, including psychology, sociology, linguistics and ethnography. This diversity of fields explains the variety of understandings of stereotypes. Let us consider the main characteristics of stereotypes.

Depending on the subject of stereotyping, they are divided into collective (cultural or mass) and individual stereotypes. According to Western scholars, collective stereotypes are patterns of ideas and beliefs that are widely held within a given culture (Ashmore and Del Boka). However, Russian researchers argue that this interpretation is exaggerated and reflects an extreme position. They therefore propose that stereotypes shared by a sufficiently large number of individuals within social communities should be referred to as 'collective' stereotypes (Semendyayeva, 1986, Sorokina, 2013, Stefanenko, 1999). Therefore, stereotypes characterised by a high degree of consistency can be considered collective. Individual stereotypes are the perceptions of a single individual and may or may not coincide with collective perceptions.

Depending on the object of stereotyping, anthropological, event-related and object-related stereotypes can be distinguished [Donets, Sorokina, 2013]. Anthropostereotypes, for example, [...] e. stereotypes relating to a person, are divided into personal stereotypes (relating to an individual) and social stereotypes, which relate to a social group or its members. The most common classification of stereotypes by object is the identification of various types of social stereotypes, which are divided into gender, age, professional, racial, ethnic, class, and so on. . These social stereotypes can be classified according to the 'us'/'them' relationship. i. According to the subject's belonging to a certain social group. According to this parameter, stereotypes are divided into auto- and hetero- stereotypes.

An autostereotype is the image that a social group has of itself, while a heterostereotype is the image that a group has of other, 'foreign' groups. As this article focuses on gender stereotypes, which are a type of social stereotype, we will examine auto- and hetero- stereotypes in more detail. As G.U. Soldatova, 'autostereotype and heterostereotype are not autonomous units, but rather structurally interconnected



components of a single, coherent formation of personal and group self-consciousness' [Soldatova 1998: 12].

Each person forms an image of their own group ('we are like this') and of other groups ('they are like that', usually different). There is usually some degree of opposition between one's own social group and another, which highlights an important function of social stereotypes: intergroup differentiation and the maintenance of a positive group identity.

This leads to ingroup favouritism, which is a conscious or unconscious preference for one's own group over others. Researchers have noted that autostereotypes tend to have a more positive connotation than heterostereotypes. Autostereotypes are most often 'monotonously positive' (Soldatova, 1998: 74) and a 'concentration of socially approved value characteristics' (Okladnikova, 2006: 97). In contrast, heterostereotypes have a 'much wider emotional range... from reverence to hatred' (Nazirova, 2001: 74).

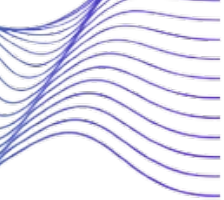
In addition to this tendency in the emotional-evaluative component of auto- and heterostereotypes, researchers have identified another difference. Autostereotypes are almost always 'more diverse and complex', whereas heterostereotypes are 'more monolithic and one-sided' [Aksyanova & Davydova, 2003: 23]. G. U. Soldatova attributes this phenomenon to 'detailed knowledge' of one's own group in the formation of autostereotypes, and an 'information deficit' in the case of heterostereotypes (Soldatova, 1998: 74).

When studying the functioning of auto- and heterostereotypes, it is important to distinguish between stereotypes and counter-stereotypes [Soldatova, 1998]. A counter-stereotype is formed on the basis of personal, subjective experience when an individual observes the behaviour of a member of a 'foreign' group that does not conform to the existing stereotype of that group, i.e. when they receive information that does not confirm the stereotype.

Thus, in the 'us'/'them' coordinate system, a complex set of images and representations functions, consisting of auto-, hetero-, and counter-stereotypes. Based on the content of the affective component, positive and negative stereotypes are distinguished, as well as affirmative and negative stereotypes. It should be noted that stereotypes with different emotional and evaluative content may have the same cognitive component and imply the same property prescribed for a given group. However, this component or property will be evaluated differently by individuals depending on whether they belong to the 'us' or 'them' group, and the choice of wording will differ.

Depending on how they are formed, stereotypes can be divided into intentional and spontaneous (Manukovsky, 2005). Intentional stereotypes are purposefully created to form a particular image of a social group. Spontaneous stereotypes, on the other hand, arise without the influence of any social interests.

In terms of their degree of changeability (or 'stereotype dynamics'), stereotypes can be classified as either stable or mobile (Gladkikh, 2001: 13), or constant or dynamic (Anosov, 2013). True and false stereotypes are distinguished by the extent to which they accurately reflect reality. American sociologist and psychologist C. Jung noted that a stereotype is a 'false classification concept' (Babaeva, 2000), and, in this regard, stereotypes have long been considered deliberately false judgements. However, it was



only with the emergence of O. Kleinberg's hypothesis that the idea that there is a 'grain of truth' in stereotypes began to gain traction [Stefanenko 2000].

We will use these characteristics of stereotypes to analyse statements containing gender stereotypes about men and women. These characteristics will also serve as a basis for conclusions about gender stereotypes prevalent in English-speaking linguistic culture.

Gender stereotypes are fixed ideas about the social roles of men and women, shaped by culture, history and social norms (Simone de Beauvoir, 1949, Judith Butler, 1990). In linguistics and discourse analysis, the following aspects of gender representation can be identified:

1. Lexical stereotypes: the use of words and expressions that reinforce gender differences (e.g. 'strong man', 'fragile woman').
2. Grammatical markers – gender endings and forms that reflect social expectations (in the Russian language, for example, 'director' is masculine and 'nurse' is feminine).
3. Narrative structures: the distribution of roles in a text where men are more often the subjects of actions and women are more often objects of support.
4. Pragmatic aspects: irony, diminutive forms, and evaluative expressions applied to female roles.

Gender stereotypes appear in all types of text, but their intensity and the ways in which they manifest vary. In literary texts, they manifest through characterisation and plot, in the media through thematic and lexical choices, and on social media through emotional and memetic patterns.

By 'gender stereotypes', we mean the culturally and socially conditioned opinions and assumptions about the qualities, attributes and behavioural norms of people of all sexes, as reflected in language. While gender stereotypes are related to the linguistic expression of femininity and masculinity, they are not necessarily identical to them. Gender stereotypes can be analysed using language data, revealing both stability and variability. Different cultures and languages are assumed to exhibit different dynamics of gender stereotypes, as well as qualitative changes in the emotional and evaluative components of gender stereotypes.

1. Gender stereotypes are preserved in various types of texts.
2. Lexical, grammatical and narrative features of language actively reinforce the social roles of men and women.
3. Social media accelerates the spread of stereotypes, making them more visible and emotionally charged.
4. Critical analysis of texts is necessary to create a more equitable discourse.

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