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**Social Stereotype in Philip Larkin's Poetry:
A Multicultural Aspect**

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ABSTRACT

The article deals with the study of language representation of stereotyped images, which are essential elements of any national and cultural community and participate in forming cultural norms. The term stereotype images is considered not only cognitive and linguistic-cultural phenomena but also psychological, sociological and ethnopsycholinguistic ones. It studies the significance in the area of stereotypes within the English-language discourse and determines the peculiarities of the representation of stereotyped images in the lyrics of the poet of the 20th century P. Larkin compared to the area of stereotypes within the German-language discourse based on the peculiarities of the stereotypes representation in the poetry of E. M. Remarque as representative of different cultures, comparing and contrasting the cultural stereotype of the same period, using a multicultural approach. The research results can be used in further scientific analysis of stereotypes, methods of identifying and researching stereotypes of poetic language, in the lexicographic description of clichés and stereotypes of mass texts of English and German cultures in multicultural contexts.

Keywords: *Concept, Stereotypes, National character, Multicultural aspects, Conceptual worldview*

Introduction

Stereotype as a sociocultural phenomenon is widely used not only in the field of linguistics. The problem of studying the nature of the stereotype is interdisciplinary.

The concept of “stereotype” was first introduced by the American writer W. Lippman in 1922. Under stereotypes, W. Lippman understood certain patterns that determine the individual's philosophy of life (Fox, 2004). These statements about facts and phenomena in their own or another's ethnic group form established ideas even before the confrontation with reality. Stereotypes are ordered, schematically simplified, culturally determined “worldviews” in the human mind, saving time and intellectual resources in the socialisation and assimilation of complex phenomena of objective reality (Fox, 2004, p. 110).

Such a powerful influence of clichéd patterns on human consciousness is due to the fact that stereotypical thoughts allow the subject not only to spend the time, labour and intellectual resources rationally but also to serve as the core of our personal tradition, a way to protect our position in society. Therefore, it is not surprising that any change in understanding stereotypes is perceived as an attack on the foundations of the universe (Lippmann, 1965, p. 104-109). Emphasising the importance of the social aspect, W. Olbig defines the stereotype as a standard of attitude to any object developed by the social interaction of a particular community - a social group, workforce, etc. (Albig, 1956, p. 48).

Investigating stereotypes is a way of learning the environment in all its diversity, which helps a person create a picture of the world and expand the boundaries of his environment. Stereotypes are often used during socialisation, so they are often perceived as a real fact, that is, an objectively existing reality.

This article traces the conceptual worldview that has a direct connection with the concept of stereotype, the worldview of each nation differs from each other, and it is not surprising that these changes are expressed in both verbal and non-verbal ways.

In the paradigm of linguistic conceptualism, it is crucial to consider the relationship between related phenomena, concept and stereotype. The concept is closely related to the stereotypical national character of the language.

Stereotypes of consciousness are, first of all, a particular idea about reality or its elements from the position of everyday consciousness. However, if we proceed from this idea, it will turn out that behind any unit of language, there is a stereotype or a stereotypical image, and the entire associative-verbal network is nothing more than a "stereotype field" representing the conceptual sphere of one or another national-linguistic cultural community. Therefore, in our opinion, it is imperative to separate the concepts of "stereotype" and "concept".

A concept, unlike a stereotype, requires a higher level of abstraction and is some kind of "idea" or "concept". A stereotype is something more specific, and it is an image.

Linguists classify stereotypes according to various basis. Thus, according to the object of stereotyping, anthropostereotypes (including personality and social stereotypes) and event and object stereotypes (including material and conceptual stereotypes) are distinguished. If our research, we mainly deal with social stereotypes.

Social stereotype results from generalising the individual's personal experience and the ideas established in society. It plays an integral part in the conceptualisation of the world, as it can dramatically reduce the response of time to changing reality and accelerate cognitive efficiency (Hamilton, 1986, p. 130).

From the point of view of sociological knowledge, the social stereotype is interpreted as a stable set of ideas formed in mind both based on personal life experience and with the help of various information sources. Real objects, relations, and events are perceived through the prism of social stereotypes.

The study under review aims at researching the similarities and differences of social stereotypes in the poetry of some of the most famous authors of the twentieth century. It is assumed that the mechanism of stereotyping is associated with numerous cognitive processes, as stereotypes perform many cognitive functions. It should be noted that the conceptual understanding of the culture category is reflected in natural language. More precisely, moral culture and folk mentality are reflected in language units, first of all, with their artistic content. Some social groups understand the world because they look at it in terms of stereotypes; it finds expression and is strengthened in language through language stereotypes.

Recent research and publications. Philip Arthur Larkin is a poet whose name is invariably mentioned by critics among the greatest masters of the poetic word of postwar England. According to many critics, P. Larkin could considerably reflect the spirit and mood of his generation - the generation of the 1950s. There was and even is a term called “larkinism”, which defined a set of qualities and properties inherent in postwar English poetry. The reason for the creation of the poet’s poems is usually an event: a meeting, a trip around the country, or a newspaper article is, in short, everything that makes up the daily life of ordinary people. It is quite natural that such poems bear the stamp of modern English reality, manifested not only in the number of realities but also in the very spirit of poetry, authorial intonations, and assessments.

It is necessary to explore one of his poems to study the role of social stereotypes and their use as an artistic strategy. In analysing a selected poem, the linguistic commentary is a necessity rather than a means of understanding the idea of the work and noting the originality of Philip Larkin’s writing.

Philip Larkin’s poems cannot be described as transparent: each stanza has a certain subtext, which is gradually revealed to the reader, “*Church going*” is not an exception (Thwaite, 1986, p. 8). This poem was written in 1954 with an iambic tetrameter with the rhyme ababcadc; the poem’s language is colloquial. Larkin uses many religious images and words, some are used for their intended purpose, but others are used in a way that is somewhat unusual for the church. Initially, the title can be interpreted in different ways: the act of attending church, the customs that support the church in our lives, visiting the church as a theatre or the disappearance of the church.

In the beginning, we may think that the author presents a confessional stereotype that presents not an idea of the whole community but rather of an individual, not typical of its representatives. We

see such a picture because of Larkin's religious neutrality. He perceives the church as a place for philosophy, not for worship. Larkin's religious understanding has been a common stereotypical ideal of modern religiously neutral people since the post-World War II period and continues to this day, reducing church attendance and significantly reducing the number of active believers.

The lyrical hero, represented by the author himself, convinced that the church does not hold a ritual ceremony, entered "*letting the door thud shut*". The word "*another*" means that the poet visited some churches and used to do so, with the same carpets, seats and Bibles, looking for some difference between one and the other. The author did not have a hat, so he took off his bicycle clips to show some respect.

Next, we see a description of the church scenery, a few books (*little books* refer to biblical books or hymns), *flowers that lay from last Sunday* (now faded, so since then, no one came to throw them away), the rug, the stone, as well as the organ for music played during the service (it is small and neat, so we can conclude that the church is small or poor, but there is no dust, so there must be someone who comes there and takes care of the church).

Among all the physical things, P. Larson notices, he also experiences an *unknown silence* that prevails in space. It seems to the narrator that the church has been absent from the people for a long time. He further describes the church's construction, noting that the building has been renovated and cleaned. Having raised the chair, he imagines himself as a minister, a vicar, and a priest, demonstrating his ignorance, although he knows a lot about church interiors and the real names of church things. Then he puts his signatures on the book, throws six pence into a charity box and leaves.

This cyclist is much more aware than he imagines as he asks himself serious questions about the role of the church in general and its future in this world that seems to ignore religious traditions. A world that is becoming more secular and more materialistic.

The power associated with the church is the power it receives from the dead. Due to the long relationship with the central, vital functions of man around which the sacraments develop, this visit was not worth it. Hence, the author calls it a waste of precious time.

The poet draws attention to his ritual function when he writes, *The echoes snigger briefly*. The atmosphere of the church and the moment near the pulpit makes his comments on the end of religion more pronounced than he realises: he lacks control over his voice, so his phrase *here endeth* echoes religious beliefs and rituals, gradually losing their power. The hero speaks not only of the end of his sermon but also of the end of religion, and he will most likely be the last person to read these words in the church.

Thus, in the poem *Church going*, Larkin presents the confessional stereotype of the church,

depicting it as an old, forgotten and completely abandoned building, which is no longer perceived as a place of worship and sanctuary of religious rites in modern society, but rather as an architectural structure of past chapels.

Philip Arthur Larkin was a well-known poet in his homeland, i.e. England, but his works had been little studied abroad. It would be very expedient for our study to choose one of the most famous German writers of the twentieth century, drawing attention to a little-known aspect of his work, namely the poetic work. Using the multicultural methodology, we used the lyrics of Maria Remarque to compare and contrast the representation of social stereotypes which are taking place in the same period in Europe; using this multilingual approach, we will try to show the peculiarities of cultural differences and similarities of representatives in different European countries.

Erich Maria Remarque is the pseudonym of the famous German writer Erich Paul Remarque, who brought with him the term *lost generation*. He belonged to a group of angry young people who went through the horrors of the First World War and wrote their first books that shocked Western audiences. The complete set of Remarque's works is closely linked to his Osnabrück past and thematically a critical study of German history, thanks to which the preservation of human dignity and humanity in times of oppression, terror and war has always been at the forefront of his literary work. That is why Remarque is considered a reliable representative of *another Germany*.

Remarque's poetry is very little known to his readers and is scattered in some newspaper publications and unpublished manuscripts. The writer published his poems in his youth only out of a desire to see them published. Later, the author became interested in writing poetry only periodically, so this side of him is not properly disclosed. Nevertheless, after a long search, we found a poem that can be analysed in terms of the use of the concept of "faith" and related religious stereotypes of postwar Germany.

Thus, the poem that became relevant to our analysis is *Und wenn der sinnlos rätselvolle Reigen* In this verse, we see the attitude of the lyrical hero to the world and to life, which can immediately fade. However, the author thus shows the reader that it is only an illusion that life is a theatre that talks to us constantly.

In the first stanza, we see the inner experiences of the lyrical hero, who reflects on the essence of existence. The author paints the image of a romanticised night, which absorbs all the hero's dreams, because, at that moment, the speaker cuts himself off from the world around him, delving into his own experiences and dreams. An anaphoric repetition of the adverb "*wenn*" indicates that the author lives in his world of sweet night. However, the flash on the horizon, *Und, in der Horizonte maßlos großem Geigen* returns the lyrical hero to the world of reality, and the cathedral, containing a reflection of the

world of dreams, dissolves into the darkness of real life. In this poem, we meet the concept of the cathedral, which symbolises faith in a bright future, in God's help, and in truth, it absorbs all the negativity of the environment and becomes a light in the dark.

The German dictionary entitled *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm* gives the following definition of the lexeme *der Dom - Hauptkirche*, i.e. the main church, and in the complete dictionary of the German language *Duden* we see a slightly broader interpretation of this concept, namely *große künstlerisch ausgestaltete, meist bischöfliche Kirche*, translated as *a large, artistically decorated, mostly episcopal church*. One way or another, the primary meaning of the noun *der Dom* is a building directly related to the church, i.e. to God and religion in general. We also see that Remarque reinforces readers' faith by calling the cathedral a container and a reflection of weather conditions, the will of God in the lines *Und Wetterleuchten glüht in Domen von Opal!* (Grimm, 2016, p. 47).

The poem's second stanza tells about how every day, each inhabitant of society wears a mask that gives them the strength to cope with the heavy burden of the world around them. In the evening, this mask falls off when the lyrical hero returns home, locks the door and can plunge into the world of dreams again and again. This is the key to the true *I* of each of us, and only in this way, according to the author, will we be able to survive all the hardships that the world is preparing for us.

The final stanza is the author's guide to readers. When we try to reach the world of dreams, spending evenings every day thinking about the world of happiness, trying to reach the sweet temptation of the *blue bird*, and hoping to catch it, the lyrical hero says that we burn our hands, that is, all the opportunities that lie ahead. Life is just an illusion; it is just a game; despite our urges to get to the desired romanticised world, we still play our part in a kind of *theatre*. However, we ignore the fact that the way to achieve the goal, their goals - is victory.

Thus, in the poem of Erich Maria Remarque, we see confirmation of anthropostereotypes about the place of religion in German culture. The author shows us that despite the war and its consequences, the society of the 20th century has not lost its established traditions and tries to stay as long as possible ingrained institutions, which is manifested in the fact that despite despair, they cannot let the God out of their thoughts.

This manner of developing the poetic thought of selected writers is very characteristic of their work. Philip Larkin begins his poems by observing some of the events around him. Erich Maria Remarque speaks of his path, which must be accepted and followed, rejecting all the shackles that hold him to earthly goods.

Philip Larkin's *Church Going* and Erich Maria Remarque's *Und wenn der sinnlos rätselvolle*

Reigen... use confessional stereotype of religion that is stable in the cognitive worldview of British and German society.

As a confessional stereotype, the church reduces the time to respond to changing realities and accelerates the cognitive efficiency of individuals. It is a stable set of people's ideas symbolising religion, God, and higher powers. People come to church to get help and to pray to God. In the poems of Erich Maria Remarque, the church and faith in God do not lose their priority; however, Philip Larkin breaks this stereotyped image, simply depicting the building as an architectural structure, which the British no longer come every Sunday, do not pray in hope, but wholly reconciled with the real post-war world.

Conclusions

First of all, it should be noted that a stereotype is understood as a simplified, rigid to new information, culturally determined and emotionally colored representation of any fragment of reality (object, phenomenon, process) that lives both in individual consciousness and in the consciousness of wholes social groups.

A set of knowledge about language is sometimes referred to as a *linguistic model of the world*, in other cases - a *linguistic picture of the world* or *language as an intermediate world* in various concepts. The role of language is not just to inform. It also consists of the internal organization of language information. That is, the language associated with the national and cultural experience is expanded knowledge about the world structure.

The linguistic picture of the world consists of specific stereotypes of ethnic consciousness characteristic of this language, which are transmitted through the language of the culture formed over the centuries.

We can establish that the use of stereotypes of English and German cultures has several features. First, stereotyped images can acquire an antonymic meaning thanks to the stylistic figures used in the poems. Secondly, the worldview of a representative of the English community is partially different from the worldview of the German people. Thirdly, using a stereotype as an artistic strategy affects the reader's perception of the surrounding reality.

In the poems *Whitsun Weddings*, *The Building*, *Church Going*, *Self's the Man*, *Und wenn der sinnlos rätselvolle Reigen...*, *Ich weiß: Es gibt noch letzte Ankerketten...*, *Einsam und furchtbar still ist es um mich geworden...*, *Stufen*, *Im Nebel* there confessional and gender stereotypes which are typical of British and German worldview.

We have noticed the similarity of the stereotype of the behaviour of German and English

societies in their desire to distance themselves from the real world. First of all, the English seek refuge at home, behind the walls of their house, while the Germans keep their desires deep in their heads, revealing their most secret dreams only at night without outsiders, alone.

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