

National Stereotypes in Sign Languages

Lucie Břinková

Stereotypes

Representation of an object, formed in a certain shared empirical framework and defining what the object is, what it looks like, what impression it makes, how one treats it; this definition is entrenched in language and forms part of shared awareness of the world.

(J. Bartmiński)

Stereotypes often betray more about their authors than the persons or objects that they relate to.

(J. Bartmiński)

Stereotypes in Czech language

- Linguistic level:
 - Designation
 - Phraseology
- Textual level:
 - Folklore
 - Advertisement discourse
 - Political discourse
 - Belles-lettres
 - etc.

How national stereotypes are formed

Czech spoken language – level of designation (Fillipová)

- a) unmarked word form – etymology (Němec – German)
- b) marked derivatives of neutral ethnonyms (Němčour – Jerry)
- c) primarily neutral ethnonyms containing a secondarily pejorative meaning (Germán – Hun)
- d) ethnonyms not derived from the unmarked form (Sauerkraut – Kraut)
- e) phonically expressive ethnonyms (Dojčák – Jerry/Fritz/Heinie)

How stereotypes are formed

- Czech Sign Language
 - a) unmarked sign form – etymology
 - b) marked sign form – modification in a certain parameter of a sign (handshape, location, movement)
 - c) synonyms: signs not derived from the unmarked form
- Borrowed signs – international/national variants

Sign language – a) unmarked sign form

- 1) Spoken language influence – one does not think about the occurrence of a stereotype

Initialization

- Latvian, Norwegian

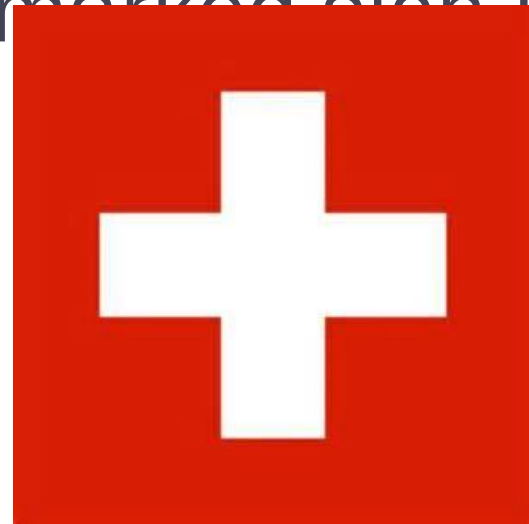
Calques from Czech

- Dane, New Zealander

Sign language – a) unmarked sign form

2) three types of designation in the (Czech) sign language

Flag



Map – territory shape



Cultural-visual phenomenon

→

Sign language – a) unmarked sign form

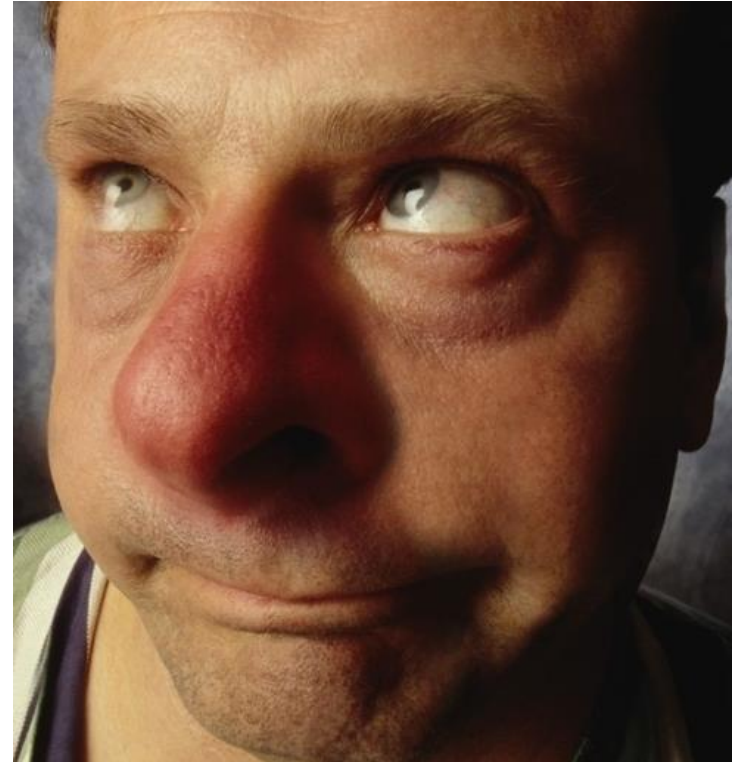
Cultural-visual phenomenon

- What they do:
 - Spaniard (toreador)
 - German (keeps on talking)
 - Irishman (plays harp)

Sign language – a) unmarked sign form

Cultural-visual phenomenon

- What is characteristic of (what is said about) them:
 - Russian (alcoholic red nose)



Sign language – a) unmarked sign form

Cultural-visual phenomenon

- What they wear:
 - Slovak (hat)
 - Korean (headwear)
 - Dutch (hat)
 - Peruvian (Indian)
 - Mexican (clothing braces) – not in the head area



Sign language – a) unmarked sign form

Cultural-visual phenomenon

- What they look like:
 - Chinese (slanted eyes), old sign
 - Bulgarian (moustache)
 - Mongolian (eyebrows)

How stereotypes are formed

- Czech Sign Language
 - a) unmarked sign form – etymology
 - **b) marked sign form – modification in a certain parameter of a sign (handshape, location, movement)**
 - c) synonyms: signs not derived from the unmarked form
- Borrowed signs – international/national variants

Sign language – b) modification in a certain parameter of a sign

SLOVAK

- handshape “gesture – raised middle finger”
- obscenity, vulgar rejection

Note:

- a Czech viewed by a Slovak:
- changed articulation location and movement
- Czechs have noses in the air



How stereotypes are formed

- Czech Sign Language
 - a) unmarked sign form – etymology
 - **b) marked sign form – modification in a certain parameter of a sign (handshape, location, movement)**
 - c) synonyms: signs not derived from the unmarked form
- Borrowed signs – international/national variants

Sign language – c) synonyms: signs not derived from the unmarked form

- GERMAN
 - older generation
 - Fascist
 - Member of the SS army units
 - younger generation
 - Has a cochlear implant
 - Oralist



Follow-up and conclusions at the workshop

Bibliography

- Bartmiński, J. (2009): *Aspects of Cognitive Ethnolinguistics*. Ed. J. Zinken. London – Oakville: Equinox.
- Klein, Z. (1998): *Atlas sémantických gest*. Praha: HZ Editio, s.r.o.
- Kuchařová, L. (2006): *Znaky států Evropy v Českém znakovém jazyce*. Praha: FF UK, [unpublished bachelor's thesis].
- Ong, W. J. (2006): *Technologizace slova: mluvená a psaná řeč*. Vyd. České 1. Praha: Karolinum.
- Šůchová, L. (2011): Znakové jazyky: a kognitivní lingvistika: problematika konceptuálních metafor. *Jazykovéřdné aktuality*, XLVIII, No. 1 – 2, 5 – 15, available from: http://www.ujc.cas.cz/js/jaz_akt.htm
- Vaňková, Irena, Iva Nebeská, Lucie Saicová Římalová a Jasňa Šlédrová. 2005. *Co na srdci, to na jazyku. Kapitoly z kognitivní lingvistiky*. Praha: Karolinum.
- Wilcox, S. (2007): Signed Languages. In: Geeraerts, D. – Cuykens, H. (eds): *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics*. Oxford – New York: Oxford University Press, p. 1113 – 1136.

WORKSHOP:

Food for thought?

- Your nationality x Czech
- Your nationality in different sign languages? What do the signs talk about?
- German? Excursion into history: do you have a „neighbour“ against whom you define yourself, for example: based on a certain historical event or an event in the Deaf community?
- Can we find one nationality for which there is an identical stereotype/ sign in all sign languages
 - Borrowed sign - Australia
- Sociolinguistics:
 - Young vs. Old generation – signs

How stereotypes are formed

- Czech Sign Language
 - a) unmarked sign form – etymology
 - b) marked sign form – modification in a certain parameter of a sign (handshape, location, movement)
 - c) synonyms: signs not derived from the unmarked form
- Borrowed signs – international/national variants