

Stereotypes

by Karen Richardson

Level: Pre-intermediate and above

Target age: Teenagers and above

Time needed: 45-60 minutes

Aim: To talk about stereotypes and ask and answer questions.

Materials: Ideally a computer with Internet connection; alternatively a CD player. A digital camera or mobile phone that can take videos or a voice recorder / mp3 player with recording function.

Background

I planned and taught this mildly controversial lesson many times during the European football championship when I became aware that underlying racial tensions and national pride were ever-present in some of my classes. One group of 12 apprentices, for example, contained young men from six of the countries that were competing in the competition: Germany, Turkey, Russia, the Czech Republic, Spain and Italy. All professed an interest in football, so it was no wonder that some of them were ready to snap or were overly sensitive to comments made by their peers.

Temporarily and artificially reinforcing the stereotypes and preconceptions was not only a way of addressing the tensions head-on, but provided a very revealing insight into how the students saw others and how they believed that others saw them.

It is worth taking a digital or mental snapshot of the board after stage 1 so that you can use this information in later lessons and discussions or as a classroom management tool.

Procedure

1. Brainstorm three stereotypes on the board: *German* (this should be the main nationality of the participants or nationality of the inhabitants of the country you teach in, i.e. *Spanish* instead of *German* if you teach in Spain), *English*, *US American*. Write up key words suggested by the students to describe the most common stereotypes for these nationalities.

This is easier if you set parameters, e.g. I asked that they think only about stereotypical young men in their age group: 16-30 years old.

Some of the stereotypes my students came up

with were:

Germans: *Bavaria, Lederhosen, beer, sausages and cabbage, cars, overweight ...*

English: *hooligans, fish and chips, tea, tattoos, alcohol ...*

US Americans: *overweight, big gas-guzzling cars, burgers and fries, patriotic, guns, not very intelligent, don't care about the environment ...*

(Funnily enough, when I suggested adding "reserve sun-loungers with towels" to the stereotypes, my students insisted that it is the English who do this and not the Germans!)

2. Students transfer the brainstormed keywords to their worksheets and add collocating verbs and prepositions, e.g. *Bavaria = live in Bavaria; guns = carry / own guns.*

3. Watch short video clips about stereotypes and see how they compare with the students' ideas.

We watched one which contained the lyrics and soundtrack of a song about a stereotypical young man in Britain and another about Californians:

- <http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=iGxSP98ymw8> (or go to YouTube and type in *Stereotype Specials*)
- http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=pM_iG5N83do (or go to YouTube and type in *California stereotype experiment*)

These two contrasting videos also have the benefit of exposing the students to different native speaker accents.

Ensure the students are able to understand any essential or colloquial vocabulary before you show the videos. For example, for the first video I needed to input *pint, pissed, VD* and *lamppost*.

Ask the students for feedback about the videos and the stereotypes they contain.

Note: There are many different stereotype video clips available on the Internet so you may want to choose a different one to suit your students. If you are unable to show videos or watch excerpts from DVDs in class due to technical restrictions, find an appropriate song text and play the song.

4. Go back to the board and rub out all the stereotypes except for the ones that were suggested for the majority of the students' own nationality (in the case of my classes, I left the German stereotypes on the board). At this point, use your discretion and remove any subjects you don't want to have to discuss at this moment. For example, in one of my groups

Stereotypes

by Karen Richardson

the word *Nazis* came up. I wrote it on the board as my students genuinely felt this was how the rest of the world saw them. However, I removed this word before the next stage as it would not have fitted with the following task.

Ask the students to write interview questions using the keywords and phrases that are left on the board. In the simplest form this would be: *Eats sausages and cabbage* = *Do you eat sausages and cabbage?*

5. In pairs, students use their questions to interview each other. The rule is that they must answer "yes" to all the questions and follow this with further information. For example, even if they don't eat sausages and cabbage, they have to say that they do and then why they do.

6. Video one student interviewing the rest of the students who have to answer the questions affirmatively as in stage 5.

If you don't have a video camera, you could record them using a voice recorder or mp3 player.

7. Play the video or recording in class and pause it to give language feedback, e.g. *What did you want to say there? How could you have said that differently / more clearly?*

8. Give the students the opportunity to make a second improved version of the recording.

Note: Don't upload videos onto YouTube or any other website unless you have all the students' and the school's permission to do so.

Variations and extensions

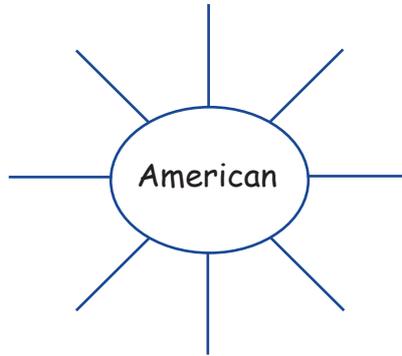
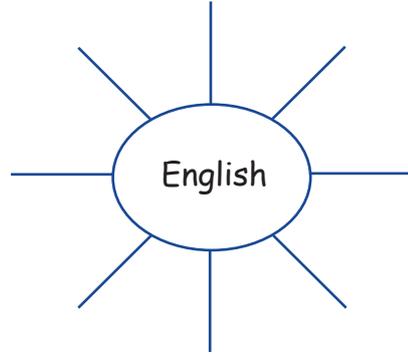
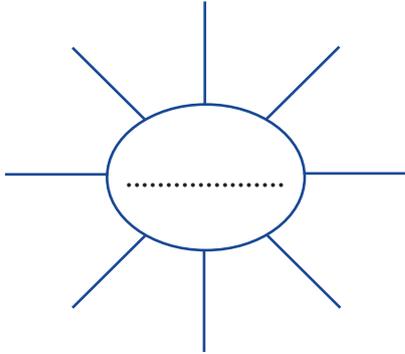
This topic can be taken as far as you feel happy going with it. Only you know what will be acceptable in your teaching situation. If circumstances allow, you can go beyond stereotypes of young men and look at *women in business, immigration and integration* or even *women in the Arab world*. Jordan's Queen Rania has posted interesting video clips on YouTube about this last subject:

- <http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=np9Gix0vnl>
- <http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=jyCB-ULChV4&feature=user>

There are many responses to her videos – but do make sure you know what they contain before you show any in class.

Stereotypes
by Karen Richardson

1. Fill in the stereotype spidergrams. Use key words plus verbs and prepositions.



2. Write interview questions using the information above.

A large rectangular box with rounded corners, containing ten horizontal dotted lines for writing.