10
Challenging Cultural Stereotypes in the Pluricentric Portuguese as a Foreign Language Classroom
Vander Tavares

York University

Introduction

According to Statistics Canada (2017), Portuguese is the first language of at least 237,000 people in the country. The diverse community of Portuguese language speakers has continued to grow over the years, especially as a result of immigration, which began in as early as the 1950s. The steady growth of the Portuguese-speaking community has had direct implications for the teaching and learning of Portuguese in Canada: in addition to being currently sought as a foreign language, Portuguese has also become a heritage language to students born to Portuguese-speaking parents, in parallel contact with English, French, and many other languages spoken in Canada in the public or private dimensions. The European and Brazilian varieties of Portuguese are the most prominent within the immigrant community, although the two varieties co-exist in a linguistically synergetic environment as the number of Portuguese speakers from other backgrounds continues to rise in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2017).

This chapter offers a contribution to two areas of research within applied linguistics. First, while a number of educational institutions across Canada provide Portuguese language courses today, research exploring the teaching and learning of Portuguese as a foreign language from and within the Canadian context remains underexplored, though it is of great importance in view of the linguistic and demographic trends highlighted above. Second, culture has been a traditional component of foreign language teaching. Yet, considering the complexity of both the term and the task, culture teaching as a topic has attracted ongoing discussion and much debate by instructors/researchers. However, mainstream applied linguistics continues to focus on considerations of culture teaching primarily from a perspective of English as a second or foreign language. By exploring the cultural stereotypes of students of Portuguese as a foreign language in an advanced-level undergraduate course, this chapter seeks to strengthen and diversify research on culture teaching.

Stereotypes and Language Teaching

Almost a century ago, in the field of psychology, stereotyping was introduced conceptually as a necessary cognitive feature in humans (Langenhove & Harre, 1994). Lippmann (1922) held that direct exposure to new experiences by humans was remarkably limited because of the complexity, dynamicity, and extent of the real world, to which humans only have minimal access during their life time. Accordingly, stereotyping would then function as a mechanism to compensate for the knowledge gaps that would otherwise be acquired naturalistically. Despite the view of stereotyping as a biologically intrinsic and automatic coping strategy, Lippmann maintained that it was, nonetheless, "a very partial and inadequate way of representing the world" (p. 72).

Stereotypes are still often seen as overgeneralisations of the *other* (Hughes & Baldwin, 2002), which may be assigned uncritically to individuals of another national and/or cultural group. However, stereotyping is not always the product of a lack of direct personal experience with individuals from different groups. In fact, Peng (2010) suggests that stereotypes "may not be reduced even if direct observation of the target culture proves them to be wrong" (p. 246) (see also Kramsch, 1993), likely because of the level of complexity in individual factors, such as sociocultural and psychological experiences in life, that come into play in our interaction with the world. In the foreign language classroom, where structured input to target language and culture are received primarily *within* the classroom context, the instructor is then tasked with creatively identifying and developing continuous opportunities in which students' stereotypes can be discussed and challenged.

Instructors and researchers generally agree that stereotypes are difficult to change or reduce. For instance, although Chinese and Japanese societies are discussed consistently as collectivist societies, Matsumoto (2002) and Peng (2003) argue that their research exploring cultural attitudes of younger Japanese and Chinese, respectively, toward the self and society as a whole do not support the stereotypical image of these societies as "being collective-oriented and seeking life-long ties" (Peng, 2010, p. 246). Therefore, stereotypes are difficult to change because they "solidify" over time within our broader framework of cultural reference (Itakura, 2004; Lyons & Kashima, 2003), and also because the acquisition and development of stereotypical images are informed by exposure to multiple channels of information related to the target group, such as literature, advertising, and tourism.

Peng (2010) defines stereotypes as "images, understandings or knowledge of culturally different others which are caused by inaccurate cultural knowledge or incomplete information" (p. 246). In this chapter, stereotypes are regarded as both overgeneralisations and underdeveloped

representations which do not accurately portray the other. Central to this chapter is also the understanding that stereotypes resulting from erroneous information can interfere with effective intercultural communication and relationships (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2005).

In the pluricentric Portuguese classroom, students can draw on their own personal intercultural experience to explore and challenge stereotypes. As high as 70% of students in the Portuguese language and Luso-Brazilian studies program at York University come from immigrant families from Portugal, Brazil, Angola, and other Portuguese-speaking countries or territories (Dodman, Cardoso, & Tavares, in press). Often, these students are first-generation Lusophone-Canadians who grow up in the multicultural and multilingual context not only of their immediate homes, but also of distinctively diverse Toronto and Canada (Statistics Canada, 2017). Based on this context of experience, these students bring to the Portuguese language classroom unique introspective cultural perspectives, which become resources for the instructor.

This cultural identity-related introspective resource can be accessed through structured classroom activities like the one presented later in this chapter. The pedagogical process which students experience requires that they first look into the target culture—the one they also occupy, partially or fully, depending on their individual sociocultural and linguistic involvement with it—but from an outsider's Anglophone Canadian viewpoint, and then simultaneously position themselves also as recipients of these stereotypical representations. In other words, the activity affords the students the opportunity to view themselves as the other, but also respond to this assigned stereotype from this *other* position—a type of proficiency of the multicultural self.

Byram and Esarte-Sarries (1991) view language students as ethnographers of the target culture. In this sense, rather than only receiving culture-related input in the classroom, traditionally through fact-like figures, students should also be instructed to develop analytical skills that can help them assess and reflect on cultural material. In addition to assessing input related to the target culture that originates from indirect sources, students should assess discoveries which result from their own exploratory experiences, both individually and in collaboration, which may at times be contradictory to previously consolidated knowledge (Itakura, 2004). This student-led ethnographic work can involve interviews with individuals from the target culture and contrastive reflections that help students view the target culture in less dichotomous or ethnocentric ways (Cardoso & Dodman, this volume; Ho, 2009; Kramsch, 1993).

In discussing cultural images in the foreign language classroom, it is essential to reinforce the notion that cultures are not static. Although a number of activities can highlight the dynamic and interactive nature of

culture, the first-generation students of a Lusophone background bring first-hand experience of intercultural contact into the classroom from having grown up within a shared cultural space in Canada. Cultural images can change as cultures interact, and the students in this pluricentric Portuguese language course are the very representation of this cultural phenomenon, sharing subject positions and identities which not only meet at the cultural boundary, but also permeate into each other's bi-cultural space, modifying each other as a result of this dialectical and transformative contact (Pavlenko, 2006).

Plurilingualism and Cultural Images
Although plurilingualism refers to linguistic and cultural knowledge in more than one language, this knowledge is normally seen as a single competence. Beacco (2007) explains that plurilingual competence is comprised of varying degrees of linguistic proficiency in several languages. Thus, being plurilingual is not the same as having achieved a high level of proficiency in all languages one knows, but rather "the ability to use more than one linguistic variety to [different] degrees… for different purposes" (p. 36). A linguistic variety may be used for a particular communicative activity, such as writing a text message or an academic essay, and as direct exposure to the context in which these activities are embedded increases or decreases over time, so does the degree of proficiency in that particular linguistic variety, since contextual use and language proficiency are understood to be related.

Plurilingual and pluricultural competencies are closely intertwined, and may often be theorised by some as a singular competence. A strong argument has proposed that acknowledging and acting upon—and within—plurilingual competences, both at the individual and societal levels in which linguistic and cultural knowledges are integrated, may support better intercultural participation with and understanding of one another in linguistically and culturally diverse societies, especially those currently characterised by active immigration (Flores, 2013; Knowles, 2016). Plurilingual competence is then understood to lead to a communicative context in which cultural differences might have less weight in influencing intercultural relations.

The plurilingual Portuguese classroom is envisioned as a communicative environment where plurilingual inter-comprehension among students may be fostered. The Portuguese language courses at York University bring students together whose objective is to learn or improve their target variety of the Portuguese language, most typically the European and Brazilian ones. Since these varieties naturally come into contact in the classroom, the learning experience affords students an instructor-mediated opportunity to develop not only an awareness of the differences and

similarities among the linguistic varieties, but also an understanding that within these differences, effective communication can still be possible as students acquire and build upon their knowledge specific of language (variety) in context (Araújo e Sá & Melo, 2007).

In a similar vein, as the varieties of Portuguese interact, opportunities for the development of intercultural knowledge emerge. Through interactive and reflective activities in which cultural material—imagery, text, video, and students' lived experiences, for example—is shared, students can learn about the culture of the other in conjunction with its particular linguistic variety. These learning opportunities are expected to expand the plurilingual-pluricultural repertoire of students by integrating knowledge of language and culture into one dynamic competence (Coste, Moore, & Zarate, 2009). In this chapter, students' plurilingual-pluricultural repertoire is expanded through an activity in which cultural images in the form of stereotypes are foregrounded.

Images of the Other: Portuguese and Brazilian People

Stereotypes by Portuguese people toward Brazilians and vice-versa have existed for a long time given the extensive historical ties between the two countries. Stereotypes toward one another have been the product of not only early intercultural contact between the two countries, especially through mass immigration, but also a number of channels that disseminate cultural information, such as literature, tourism, and popular media, which altogether continue to propagate old and new images of Brazilians and Portuguese as two distinct, homogenous cultural groups. These stereotypes evoke images of one another that are as diverse as the kinds of channels through which these images are circulated in the two countries and internationally.

The role literature has played in disseminating stereotypes of Portuguese people—men, in particular—cannot be underestimated. In the romance novel *O Cortiço* (1890) by Brazilian writer Aluísio Azevedo, which tells the story of different ethnic groups working and living together in a Rio de Janeiro's tenement, one of the central characters is an "exploitative and parasitic" immigrant Portuguese man named João (Rowland, 2001). In the novel, João is obsessed with enriching himself, and achieves this by cheating the legal system and exploiting others, but mainly a run-away slave who helps him with the arduous business work. João not only forges the slave's manumission document, but also readily leaves her when the opportunity to marry the wealthy neighbour's daughter presents itself—a move he makes to ascend socially.

Rowland (2001) has argued that the cultural image of the Portuguese as wily and opportunistic still persists today, despite more than a century since the last mass immigration of Portuguese people into Brazil occurred. In

most cases, the Portuguese were depicted in two dominant stereotypes: the wealthy Portuguese immigrant, whose business management was successful due to exploitation and cheating, whom Brazilians were hostile toward because a Portuguese commerce person would supposedly only hire other Portuguese to work in their stores; and the unintelligent Portuguese person who would subject themselves to inferior work for a quick salary, work which local Brazilians would refuse to undertake (Castro, 2013; Rowland, 2001). Of course, in presenting intercultural relations between these two groups, Brazilians were also stereotypically portrayed as having a clever and lazy attitude in relation to work.

Between the Portuguese and Brazilians, one gender has become the major target of stereotypes for each cultural group: the Portuguese man, and the Brazilian woman. Alves and Junior (2019) discuss the prevailing ways in which the Brazilian woman is portrayed in Hollywood productions, including animated cartoons, such as the Simpsons: beautiful, sensual, tanned, and provocative. A research study at the University of Coimbra found that the image of the Brazilian woman in Portugal can often be one of a prostitute, while the Brazilian man's image is one of an unreliable and untrustworthy individual (Oliveira, Cabecinhas, & Ferin, 2011; Vitorio, 2007). The study suggests the tourism and media industries may have contributed to the proliferation of these images over a period of several years.

The stereotype of the typical Portuguese man by Brazilians has also been depicted through a specific physiognomy and physique. Pais (2016) explains this stereotype originated in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as Portuguese immigrants arrived in Brazil: "on the welcome cards [of restaurants] there was a caricature that represents the Portuguese man prototype: big-bellied and bouffant moustaches; the big belly signaling the passion for food and drink; the moustache corresponding to a physical trace of more difficult explanation" (p. 10) [translated from Portuguese]. Research which has sought to explore common cultural images held by the two national groups toward one another has been growing, but still demonstrates that these stereotypes are not easily reduced (Machado, 2018).

The Activity
This activity[37] required students to listen to a conversation centred on cultural stereotypes. Each individual speech in the conversation was numbered so that students could follow the sequence of events in a series of numbered cartoons in which the story was visually presented. To

---

[37] Ferreira, T. S., Soares, S. C., Melo-Pfeifer, S., & Favero, M. (2015). Lado a lado - Nível A1. Ensino Português no estrangeiro. Porto, Portugal: Porto Editora.

complete the activity, students had to log into the online learning platform, access the activity, listen to the conversation (often with headphones), and answer questions aloud, which were recorded into the learning platform system with the use of microphones. The conversation used in the activity has been transcribed, translated, and provided below. In it, a group of strangers from Portugal, Brazil, and France come together after being assigned the same table at Patricia's wedding reception.

1. **Priest:** I declare you husband and wife.

2. **Simone:** Congratulations! Congratulations to both of you!
3. **Patricia:** Thank you, auntie!

4. **Simone:** What is our table? Oh, here it is. The table of the camellias. How interesting! Each table has the name of a different flower!
5. **Gabriel:** Yeah, how original...
6. **Silvana:** It doesn't matter. It's romantic!

7. **Simone:** Good afternoon! Looks like we'll be spending the afternoon together!
8. **Gabriel:** What fun to spend the afternoon with strangers! This keeps getting better…

9. **Simone:** My name is Simone, this is my husband Caio, and these are our children: Gabriel, Ana Marta and Silvana. We live in Aveiro. I'm the bride's aunt!

10. **Ana:** Nice to meet you! I'm Ana, Gontran is my husband and Jojo is our daughter. We are French. We are in Portugal for this wedding ceremony, because Gustave is my nephew. He's my sister's son.
11. **Gabriel:** And on top of that they're French…

12. **Joanna:** What did you say?!
13. **Gabriel:** Who, me? Nothing... I said I really like French crepes.
14. **Joanna:** Ah, I thought I had heard something else.

15. **Simone:** Oh, yes? Are you French? But you speak such good Portuguese!
16. **Ana:** My parents are Portuguese, but they have been living in France for 40 years now. My sister and I were born in France. But my parents always speak to me in Portuguese, and I try to do the same with Jojo, but it's not always easy.

17. **Gabriel:** Jojo? What a name...
18. **Joanna:** Jojo is for friends. For you, it's Joanna.

19. **Joanna:** I think this napkin is mine. At least in France the napkin is placed on the left side.
20. **Gabriel:** The French and their obsession with etiquette and manners...

21. **Gabriel:** Well, here in Portugal the napkins belong to whoever grabs them first.
22. **Joanna:** It seems true that the Portuguese are rude with no manners.
23. **Gabriel:** Don't you know it's bad to let out the secrets?!
24. **Simone:** Gabriel, hey! Why these manners? Do not mind him, Joanna! Gabriel is in a bad mood. He did not want to come to the wedding.
25. **Silvana:** Yeah, he turned 12 last month, but he thinks he turned 18!

26. **Joanna:** Look, she's Brazilian!? You must be nicer than your brother.

27. **Gabriel:** Oh, this game is awesome! I'm always playing this on my phone!
28. **Joanna:** So, why don't you play it now? If you are so bored…

29. **Silvana:** That's because the smart guy here forgot to charge the battery of his cell phone.
30. **Joanna:** If you want, we can play it together.
31. **Gabriel:** Really?! Cool!

A few hours later…
32. **Gabriel:** That's a good one! I know another one, listen: a French, an English and a Portuguese get on an airplane...

33. **Patricia:** We have a souvenir for you! So, are you guys having fun?
34. **Simone:** Everything is great!

35. **Gabriel:** It's the best wedding ever! If you get married again, invite me and I will come!
36. **Simone:** What, Gabriel?!

A number of exercises followed the conversation presented. The first exercise tested students' listening comprehension skills in Portuguese. In

this exercise, students were required to match items in the first column with items in the second based on what they had heard in the conversation so that they could identify which character held a stereotype toward a given character. The second exercise tested students' analytical skills in relation to the content. In this exercise, students were given three choices and asked to identify which one was the factor influencing the characters' opinions of one another prior to getting to know them. The choices were (a) physical aspect, (b) nationality, and (c) language. The correct answer was nationality. The third exercise required students to identify the cultural ideas emergent in the conversation with respect to: French people (value placed on etiquette and good manners), the Portuguese (rude and impolite behaviour), and Brazilian people (friendly attitude).

The fourth exercise is the focus of this chapter. This exercise shifted the emphasis from testing students' comprehension skills to exploring their individual relationships with cultural stereotypes about the other as well as the self. In part one, students were asked whether they had previously heard those stereotypes associated with French, Portuguese, and Brazilian people. Additionally, students were asked whether they also held these cultural images. In part two, students were asked to share ideas they held (1) toward their own cultural group—which varied according to the students' individual cultural, national, and linguistic backgrounds, though largely Lusophone (Portuguese, Brazilian, and Angolan), but with some students being citizens of more than just one country—but also (2) toward Canadians, since students' personal experiences were situated in the Canadian sociocultural environment. In part three, students were asked first to reflect on whether they believed others had a preconceived opinion of them, and second to identify the possible factors sustaining these preconceived opinions.

Fourteen students completed the activity. The recordings of their oral responses to questions in all three parts were transcribed, translated, and analysed. The process of analysis involved reading and categorising each response under important themes (Creswell, 2013) within the broader topic of cultural stereotypes, such as nationality, dress code, race, among others. In this sense, the analysis focused directly on what students said (content), rather than how they said it (form). As for understanding the process of language and culture learning, this study adopted a constructivist approach, wherein students engage in experiences that foster and centre on individual agency, creativity, social collaboration, and that position students as co-constructors of knowledge (Rüschoff, 1999). Abrams (2002) has proposed that exploring cultural stereotypes through a constructivist approach is appropriate because it leads students to "access their existing cultural frameworks and actively analyze supporting or

contradictory evidence to refine their hypotheses" about the target culture (p. 144).

Part I: Relating to Stereotypes
In general, the majority of students, all of whom have been assigned pseudonyms, reported hearing these specific stereotypes before. Within this group of students, those of a Portuguese background either challenged or rejected the stereotypes associated with their nationality and culture presented in the activity. To challenge or reject the negative stereotypes, students drew typically on their positive, immediate family experiences. However, in the case of Clara (1) and Jane (2), their responses suggest that cultural association can still play a significant role in how students see other members in their own multigenerational and multicultural families. In other words, despite being family, the students still viewed their family members primarily through the lenses of cultural stereotypes.

    1. I have my own opinion of French people because my mom is French. (Jane)

    2. I have heard these stereotypes about French people before, that they have a certain etiquette. I've never heard these stereotypes about the Portuguese, that they are brute and rude. I don't think that is true because my family is Portuguese, and they're friendly and kind people. (Clara)

    3. I've heard all these stereotypes about all three groups, but I don't agree with all these ideas. I don't think it's true that Portuguese people lack politeness. In general, they are friendly and helpful. (Camila)

Yet, Clara's response (4) demonstrates that her stereotypical view of her French family members changed after a two-month visit with them. This experience may be considered a kind of ethnographic involvement in which the student had her views changed through first-hand live-in experience, which is one of the many potential gains research has found in exploring experiences of sojourn abroad (Allen, Dristas, & Mills, 2007; Bloom & Miranda, 2015; Shiri, 2015). Another student, Daniel (5), recognises that people behave a certain way not necessarily because of their nationality, but rather individual difference. He challenges the notion that people should be expected to behave in stereotypical ways by arguing expectations around typical cultural behaviour can interfere with one's individual freedom.

    4. When I went to France for the first time, I also thought that everyone there would value and have a certain etiquette. Because I have cousins and aunts who live in Paris, I thought maybe they would also have this way of thinking that they are better and of saying that everything in Paris is right and better. But after spending two months there, living with them, I changed my own opinion [about French people and

etiquette] because they have this habit of saying anything that comes to mind. (Clara)

5. I have heard all these stereotypes many times before. People always say that the French are arrogant because they always want to do things their own way. As for the Portuguese, some people say that they're only good at construction work and nothing else. Lastly, people always say that Brazilians are the warmest people and that they're always happy. Honestly, I don't agree on these because I believe these stereotypes present people in an incorrect way. Just because someone is French does not mean they are well-mannered. Everyone is different. If I said that someone had to act a certain way, that would be wrong, because it limits the freedom we all have as human beings. (Daniel)

Some responses may show a contradictory position in which negative stereotypes are challenged, but positive ones are not. For example, in his response, John (7) states that negative traits are not unique to a particular cultural group when referring to Portuguese people being stereotypically portrayed as rude. Yet, he accepts and agrees on stereotypes toward French and Brazilian people, which may suggest that a positive trait, such as that of friendliness shared by Brazilians, need not be questioned, analogous to good manners by French people, despite the culturally subjective nature of some polite behaviour (Janney & Arndt, 1993; Kasanga & Lwanga-Lumu, 2007).

6. Yes, I've heard these stereotypes about Portuguese and Brazilian people. I agree that Brazilians are friendlier, but I don't think the Portuguese are rude. (Marcos)

7. I agree on the stereotypes about French and Brazilian people. But I disagree on the ones about the Portuguese because any nationality can have people who are rude and disrespectful. (John)

8. I had never heard these stereotypes before, but regardless, I don't agree. People from all nationalities are friendly, but I'm only saying this based on those I've met. (Carla)

Some students' responses demonstrate their awareness that stereotypes are rather common across cultures. This can be exemplified in Juliana's response (9), in which she reports she has heard a language-related stereotype associated with Brazilians, but to challenge it, she compares it to another language-related stereotype associated with another national group: "people who live in China." By doing this, Juliana questions relationships between country and language in which a language spoken in a country is erroneously automatically derived from its name, as in Brazil: Brazilian, China: Chinese, India: Indian, and so on. In here, we see an awareness on her part that stereotypes follow similar patterns and approaches (Jussim, Coleman, & Lerch, 1987).

9. I've heard people say that Brazil speaks Brazilian. They think that people who live in Brazil speak Brazilian, like how we think that people who live in China speak Chinese. But that's not the case. (Juliana)

Lastly, another student, Marta (10), identifies that stereotyping national groups can contribute to the propagation of discriminatory practices, as certain national groups are often only portrayed negatively in relation to their race, ethnicity, religion, and several other sociological aspects (Guo & Harlow, 2014; Stangor & Schaller, 2000).

10. Yes, I have heard these stereotypes before. Unfortunately, we still find people with racist attitudes who judge others based on their nationality. (Marta)

Part II: Identifying Stereotypes

Overall, through their responses, students demonstrate knowledge and awareness of stereotypes associated with their cultural groups, predominantly Portuguese, but with a smaller number of students belonging to more than only one cultural group. Within the Portuguese group, the majority of students focus on stereotypes first around Portuguese cuisine as a fish-based one, and second around an enthusiastic communication style—for some students, the latter may be seen as impolite by non-Portuguese others. However, some responses suggest that students understand that stereotypes cannot always correctly represent an entire cultural group. Other stereotypes had to do with family relationships, social behaviour, and sports.

11. I heard people say that the Portuguese like fish, and that they talk too much, but I don't think these ideas are right because not all Portuguese are the same. (Pauline)

12. I hear that Portuguese men work in construction. Also that Portuguese people like to eat fish and potatoes. (Miguel)

13. I have heard people say that the Portuguese are rude, impolite, and curse all the time. (Mariana)

14. Some common stereotypes associated with my background, which is Portuguese, are, for example, that the Portuguese are bad drivers and that there are many car accidents in Portugal. Other stereotypes about Portuguese people are that they are good at soccer, because Portuguese soccer is always on the news, and that all Portuguese men play soccer. As for the Portuguese in Toronto, the stereotype is that they like to smoke, that they get together and smoke outside their offices. Also, that wherever the Portuguese live, they barbecue sardines on the weekends and that the neighbours can recognise their Portuguese neighbours because of that strong fish smell. Many people think that all Portuguese people eat sardines and codfish. The Portuguese like to get together with family and friends, and discuss a number of topics, one of them

being soccer. I also think that the Portuguese discuss their ideas with a lot of passion and enthusiasm, but that these conversations don't always seem very diplomatic [because] they talk loud. But it's just their way of being. (Sandra)

Juliana (15) identifies a number of stereotypes associated with Portuguese people. First, she refers to negative stereotypes related to group behaviour, which she reports encountering very frequently: rudeness, impoliteness, wiliness. Second, she refers to eating "a lot of cheese" as a stereotype, which she does not challenge because it does not carry a negative connotation for her. In fact, she accepts it and inserts herself into this group, presenting it as a stereotype of accurate representation. Then, Juliana identities stereotypes associated less nationally but more regionally, such as the one in which her interlocutors cannot identify her city of origin and at times even mistake it for a place in Spain, and another stereotype in which a regional dialect becomes the factor behind the stereotype. In her final response, Juliana ascribes the propagation of cultural stereotypes to the media as a primary source (Harrison, Tayman, Janson, & Connolly, 2010; Lee *et al.*, 2009; Winter, 2009).

15. In relation to my country of origin, I always hear the same thing: that we are rude, wily, and that we eat a lot of cheese. Also that we're impolite. I eat cheese everyday, which is something typically Portuguese, it's a stereotype. But the one of everyone being ill-mannered is not true. Nobody in my family is like that, but yes, I have met some who are like beasts.

I always have to correct people when I say I'm Portuguese and they tell me they don't know the city [I'm from] or that it's a province in Spain, and I always have to correct them. There's a village in Portugal named Valverde. They say people from there are known stereotypically because they speak differently.

There is so much on social media and the internet about other countries. There are TV shows from other countries. All this influences us to develop an image [that is] not totally correct because of the ideas that come from outside sources. We hold on to this idea that a country is a certain way just because we see things on TV or the internet. (Juliana)

In Teresa's response (16), we see that cultural stereotypes of a particular cultural group may go beyond simplistic references to food and behaviour, but may also include a reference to more sensitive ideas, such as unequal gender relations in the target culture (Talbot, 2003). In addition to identifying negative stereotypes of impolite behaviour, and of a fish-based cuisine, as other students similarly did, Teresa reports hearing that Portuguese men are "very sexist" and Portuguese women are inferior. However, Teresa challenges this stereotype by drawing on her immediate

family experience in which her father and brother help her mother in the home. Teresa describes the attitude of Portuguese men toward women as a form of pride, although she reports that this is not the case all the time. Lastly, while still making reference to family, Teresa reports hearing that Portuguese men's attitudes toward women in the home tend to change negatively once they get married.

> 16. I've heard stereotypes toward Portuguese people, that they are rude, ill-mannered, and that they curse all the time and only like codfish and custard tart. I've also heard that Portuguese men are very sexist, and so the women have to do everything, women are their slaves. But actually this isn't true. Yes, Portuguese men are prouder but not always. Like in my house, my dad helps my mom and my brother helps around the house, and I hope this won't change when he gets married because I've heard that this happens a lot. (Teresa)

Lucca (17) identifies stereotypes of Italians—one of his ethnic and cultural backgrounds—at three levels: some which may be unique to Italians, some which are relatable to another cultural group, and those which are shared by a much broader cultural group. First, he refers to stereotypes he reports are characteristic of Italians: being noisy, eating pasta, and drinking. Then, he identifies stereotypes that, in his experience as an Italo-Portuguese, both Italians and Portuguese share in terms of close family relationships and feeling content. Finally, he identifies a stereotype based on the habit of smoking that encompasses a much larger group ("Europeans") to insert Italians into this broad cultural group. Lucca's act of relating and comparing suggests that cultural stereotypes may overlap according to the student's self-identification in terms of their cultural identities.

> 17. With respect to Italians, stereotypes are that they are very noisy. Also, that they like to eat pasta, drink, and smoke, like many Europeans do. And that like the Portuguese, they enjoy being with family, grandparents, grandchildren, nieces and nephews. They are family-focused and content. (Lucca)

The activity also sought to explore students' stereotypes of Canadians as the students lived in Toronto. Generally, students referred to stereotypes of polite behaviour, as in Canadians being helpful, nice, apologetic, honest, and kind people. However, Clara's response (18) suggests an awareness that these stereotypes exist, but that they may not represent all Canadians. Moreover, despite York University, Toronto, and Canada as a whole being spaces where various cultural, ethnic, and linguistic groups can be found, the stereotypes identified by the students presented Canadians as one singular group, through simplistic inter-related images, such as the cold weather and hockey (Robidoux, 2002). Because some students were also Canadian in nationality, or identified themselves as such, they included

themselves in their references to Canadians, as John's response (22) reveals.

18. I think that Canadians are friendly and kind, but I don't think all of them are. (Clara)
19. Canadians are very polite, and they like to say "sorry." (Marcos)
20. I hear that all Canadians like Tim Horton's, live in igloos, like hockey, and like to apologise. (Miguel)
21. Stereotypes associated with Canadians are that they are very caring and always want to help other people. (Daniel)
22. As for stereotypes about Canadians, it's that we're friendly and honest in what we say. (John)

Part III: Reflecting on Stereotypes

All students agreed that people held preconceived ideas of them before getting to know them. A closer look at the responses points to four possible major factors which, individually or in conjunction, play a role in informing others' development of preconceived ideas toward the students: physical look, dress code, facial communication, and national background. In connection to students' physical looks, students report that others tend to assume their nationalities based on one or more physical aspect they have, such as skin colour and hair length. Camila (25) and Carla (26) demonstrate an understanding that physical appearance is often an early factor which influences the images people develop of others. Camila goes one step further and explains that not only stereotypes are difficult to change, but that, for some, the opportunity to get to know someone personally may not be sufficient to help alter their preconceived ideas of that same person.

23. When I visit Portugal, people ask me if I'm Mexican because of my skin colour and long hair. (Paulina)
24. As for myself, many people tell me that I'm always happy and content, and they're right about that. I'm also the type of person who reflects a lot on what I should and should not be doing. People also think that I'm Arabic, and not Italian or Portuguese. I don't know why. Must be the beard. (Lucca)
25. I think it's normal to have an opinion about others before you get to know them, but these opinions aren't easily changed even after two people become more acquainted with each other. The reason for stereotypes at first is the physical look, in my opinion. (Camila)
26. Before meeting me, people think I'm Hispanic. But I don't mind it because I think it's very natural for someone to assume before really knowing. (Carla)

For other students, preconceived opinions are formed on the basis of more than just one factor. While the majority of students do not go into detail

in describing the way they dress, they do identify dress code as a possible factor. In this sense, the students note that their choice of clothing is perceived to communicate a message to others that is supposedly reflective of their personality or mood. The same can be said about students' facial communication. For example, Clara (27) reports that she may be perceived as a serious person because of her choice of clothing or because at times she does not look happy. Similarly, John (29) reports that his choice of clothing and facial communication may play the same role in informing people's perception of him. Here, we find an awareness on the part of students that intended or unintended presentation of the self through social behaviour can communicate incorrect ideas (Anderson *et al.,* 2002; Burgoon, Guerrero, & Floyd, 2016).

27. I do feel as though people sometimes have a preconceived opinion of me before they actually meet me. I think many people may think that I'm a very serious person, and that I'm strange. It could be from the way I dress, or because sometimes I look bored or sad, but after they get to know me, I think their opinions change. (Clara)

28. Yes, I do think people have a preconceived opinion of me before they meet me, which is normal. The reason for this could some physical aspect or the way I dress. (Marcos)

29. I do think people have a preconceived opinion of me before meeting me. The majority of people think that I am—how do we say this—arrogant or rude, but I'm not. I'm not sure why people think of me that way. Maybe it's the way I dress or because I'm not always smiling. That's what I think. (John)

Nationality is another common factor which can evoke stereotypes of the other. But first, Juliana (30) reports that most people she meets do not know Portugal even exists. Then she explains that by presenting herself as Portuguese, those who do know about the country tend to think of her in stereotypically negative ways. Plus, she reports that people tend to judge her based on her northern Portuguese dialect. However, to challenge these preconceived ideas of her based on her nationality, she highlights positive experiences she has had: good academic performance and more than one job. Juliana's experience reinforces the notion that stereotypes may not only be inaccurate, but also detrimental. As for Marta (31), because of her skin colour, she becomes a "candidate" to a number of possible nationalities. She reports that when others know she is Portuguese, cultural images around cuisine, music, and sports tend to surface.

30. People who only know others by their nationality have stereotypes. The majority of people I meet have never heard of Portugal, and the ones who have think that I'm wily, impolite, and that I speak strange just because I'm from the northern part of the country. But this is completely untrue because I'm doing well in school, I work three jobs,

and I'm not rude. Totally different from what people imagine or expect when I say that I'm Portuguese. (Juliana)

31. Sometimes people have a preconceived opinion of me, maybe because of my physical appearance, like my skin colour and dark hair. They presume that I'm Spanish, Italian, or Portuguese. Normally when they do know I'm Portuguese, they think of a culture that includes good food, good wine, soccer, and fado. (Marta)

Daniel's response (32) illustrates a number of associations between nationality and stereotypes. First, by referring to himself as a member of a large linguistic and cultural community, which is not a nationality per se (Latin American), but nonetheless carries common cultural images (Dávila, 2012), especially in connection to the Spanish language, he is expected to be a good dancer and a romantic person. While he rejects the former but accepts the latter, Daniel still understands that these are preconceived ideas of him. Moreover, Daniel reports that he has been most commonly stereotyped as someone from Mexico, and sometimes as an illegal resident of Canada (see Timberlake & Williams, 2012), despite being a Canadian citizen. In his experience, he has not been successful in changing these images, even when having an opportunity to clarify these to his listeners, which is then not taken seriously. From being Canadian, Daniel also refers to stereotypical images of Canadians. Lastly, he explains that his choice of professional clothing can sometimes communicate an inaccurate image of him to others as someone who is "always serious."

32. I do think that people have a preconceived opinion of me for a number of reasons. The first reason is the fact that I'm Latin-American. So people think that I can dance salsa and tango, but in reality I'm the worst dancer. Because I speak Spanish, women think that I'm romantic and that's true although they think that before they get to know me. Lastly, I tend to dress professionally because for me it's imperative to have the respect of my professors. By the way I dress, I show that I'm serious, but the problem is that some people think that I'm always serious. But I do like to tell jokes. But I don't understand how people can think in such stereotypical ways. The most incorrect and common association people have of me is that I'm illegal, and that I'm Mexican, and when I correct them, they don't believe me and think I'm joking. I'm [also] Canadian, so then I [must] play hockey, eat maple syrup, live in an igloo, and have a beaver as a pet. (Daniel)

Jane (33) suggests that preconceived ideas which others may have of her may be based on her outfits, physiognomy, and nationality. She explains that the more comfortable clothes she prefers to wear are tied to a certain opinion others could have of her. Also, like Marta, Jane mentions that her nationality could be assumed to be any one among many possibilities because of her physical look—more specifically her brown hair and eyes—

although she confines these only to European nationalities, despite brown hair and eyes being common physical features in all parts of the world. Finally, to explain why people assume that she may be stereotypically a religious person, she draws on a nationality-related stereotype of Portuguese people as being religious.

> 33. People have a preconceived opinion of me because we always have opinions about others. I think it might be related to the way I dress because I like to wear skirts, dresses—I like clothes that are very comfortable—and so I think people have an opinion of me based on this. Also, when people look at me, they see my brown eyes and hair. From that they know I'm from Europe, my grandparents and parents come from Europe: Italy, France, and Portugal, but people always think I'm Italian. Lastly, people also have an opinion about my religion because the Portuguese are very religious. (Jane)

Mariana (34) identifies both physical features and facial communication as factors influencing others' preconceived opinions of her. Because of her height, Mariana reports that others perceive her as physically weak. Additionally, she reports that her low voice makes her come across as delicate and childlike. She explains that this frequent reference to her young look does not usually bother her, but can be offensive in certain contexts. Lastly, Mariana reports that the way she looks at people can communicate a certain idea about her that demotivates them to want to speak to her, making her seem unapproachable.

> 34. People do have preconceived opinions of me, almost always because of my height, voice, and the look in my eyes. In relation to my height, they say I'm not strong and that I can't harm anyone because I'm not tall enough. My voice, they say I have a very low voice and that I might be [treated like] a doll, pampered, and that I might be, like, fourteen years old or so. I'm eighteen and in university, but they would never give me more than fourteen or fifteen years old. For me, this is a compliment but it can be unpleasant to hear depending on how people use it. The way I look [at people], people have said they hesitate to speak with me because sometimes I have a mean look, so they prefer to stay away, which I find strange because yes, I can be a little bit unpleasant, but before anything I try to be friendly and polite. (Mariana)

Conclusion

This chapter discussed cultural stereotypes from the perspective of students of Portuguese as a foreign and heritage language during an in-class activity. In the activity, a pre-designed conversation of a cross-cultural nature was used to illustrate the relationship between nationality and cultural stereotypes. From there, students' relationships with stereotypes were explored through a series of questions in which students were asked

to identify, relate to, and reflect on stereotypes: those they held toward others, and those they thought others held toward them, with a focus on those directed toward their *national* and *cultural* identities. From this process, a number of stereotypes emerged.

Activities aimed at exploring stereotypes in the foreign language classroom present great potential for critical reflection and discussion. In the context of this class, students generally demonstrated a critical understanding of stereotypes and stereotyping: the ways in which they may be formed and propagated, and in which they can portray the other typically inaccurately and damagingly. Often, the students challenged stereotypes after identifying them. One reason for this might be related to students' dual position: they not only identified, but also received, the very same stereotypes, considering their direct or indirect association with the target culture, most notably through family relationships.

Therefore, activities focused on challenging cultural stereotypes may be more effective if they can be designed to position students, to the extent that is possible, as recipients of one or more aspect of the cultural images which they identify. While this could be challenging in classes where host and target cultural practices present more differences than similarities, as a point of departure, students can be asked to reflect first on preconceived ideas others may have of them. As the last part of the activity showed, in discussing these preconceived ideas, stereotypes related to nationality emerged naturally. The instructor can then use this opportunity to introduce the necessary follow-up activities that help connect preconceived ideas of others and of ourselves, such as those characterised by religion, gender, behaviour, and dress code, to issues of nationality, culture, ethnicity, and race.

Nonetheless, as the research discussed previously in this chapter has emphasised, stereotypes are hard to reduce and change. An analysis of the students' responses supports this finding on the basis that even when students challenged cultural stereotypes directed at them, they normally did so by drawing on other stereotypes as a response. Moreover, students did not question cultural stereotypes that were perceived as positive images, especially those marked by polite behaviour. Finally, in any instance, the instructor plays an important role in helping promote an awareness in the students that stereotypes, even when portraying a large cultural group in a positive light, are by nature used to homogenise and reduce.

Because of this, a critical approach to understanding stereotypes and stereotyping should be encouraged across all cultural images, instead of being expected only when an unfavourable image of the other (or the self) is evoked. Not questioning positive stereotypes because they may be seemingly harmless or even beneficial can directly affect our personal relationships with certain national groups by uncritically and inattentively

categorising them into a dichotomy of "good and bad." This facile categorisation can saturate not only our view, but also our treatment of the particularly "bad" cultural or national group through micro and macro social practices informed by a continuous and delicate relationship that brings stereotypes together with our beliefs and attitudes toward the other.

References

Abrams, Z. (2002). Surfing to cross-cultural awareness: Using internet-mediated projects to explore cultural stereotypes. *Foreign Language Annals, 35*(2), 141-160.

Allen, H., Dristas, V., & Mills, N. (2007). Cultural learning outcomes and summer study abroad. In M. Mantero (Ed.), *Identity and second language learning: culture, inquiry, and dialogic activity in educational contexts* (pp. 189–215). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Alves, C., & Junior, E. (2019). O estereótipo nosso de cada dia: Uma abordagem intercultural para o ensino de PL2E. *Ensaios em Português como Segunda Língua ou Língua Estrangeira, 12*, 1-17.

Anderson, P. A., Hecht, M. L., Hoobler, G. D., & Smallwood, M. (2002). Nonverbal communication across cultures. In W. G. Gudykunst & B. Mody (Eds.), *Handbook of international and intercultural communication* (pp. 89-106). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Araújo e Sá, M., & Melo, S. (2007). Online plurilingual interaction in the development of language awareness. *Language Awareness*, *16*(1), 7-14.

Beacco, J. (2007). *From linguistic diversity to plurilingual education: Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe.* Strasbourg, France: Council of Europe.

Bloom, M., & Miranda, A. (2015). Intercultural sensitivity through short-term study abroad. *Language and Intercultural Communication, 15*(4), 567-580.

Burgoon, J. K., Guerrero, L. K., & Floyd, K. (2016). *Nonverbal communication*. London, UK: Routledge.

Byram, M., & Esarte-Sarries, V. (1991). *Investigating cultural studies in foreign language teaching: A book for teachers.* Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Cardoso, I., & Dodman, M. J. (2020). Teaching Portuguese language and Lusophone literatures at York University: Creating opportunities, reshaping paths, (re)writing our stories. In I. Cardoso, A. Rato, & V. Tavares (Eds.), *Teaching and learning Portuguese in Canada: Multidisciplinary contributions to SLA research and practice.* Princeton, NJ: Boa Vista Press.

Castro, F. (2013). Construções espacio-identitárias no cinema português: A imagem territorial do emigrante luso-brasileiro nas comédias de Lisboa. *Avanca,* 876-884.

Coste, D., Moore, D., & Zarate, G. (2009). Plurilingual and pluricultural competence. *Studies towards a Common European Framework of Reference for Language Learning and Teaching.* Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: choosing among five approaches.* Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Dávila, A. (2012). *Latinos, Inc.: The marketing and making of a people.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Dodman, M. J., Cardoso, I., & Tavares, V. (forthcoming). Communicating and understanding the other through experiential education: Portuguese language and culture in Toronto. In M. Jeon, M. Figueredo, & F. Carra-Salsberg (Eds.), *Globally informed design and praxis in languages, literatures and linguistics curricula.* University of Toronto Press.

Flores, N. (2013). The unexamined relationship between neoliberalism and plurilingualism: A cautionary tale. *TESOL Quarterly*, *47*(3), 500-520.

Guo, L., & Harlow, S. (2014). User-generated racism: An analysis of stereotypes of African Americans, Latinos, and Asians in YouTube videos. *Howard Journal of Communications*, *25*(3), 281-302.

Harrison, C., Tayman, K., Janson, N., & Connolly, C. (2010). Stereotypes of Black male athletes on the Internet. *Journal for the Study of Sports and Athletes in Education*, *4*(2), 155-172.

Ho, S. T. K. (2009). Addressing culture in EFL classrooms: The challenge of shifting from a traditional to an intercultural stance. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, *6*(1), 63-76.

Hughes, P. C., & Baldwin, J. R. (2002). Communication and stereotypical impressions. *Howard Journal of Communication*, *13*(2), 113-128.

Itakura, H. (2004). Changing cultural stereotypes through e-mail assisted foreign language learning. *System, 32*, 37-51.

Janney, R. W., & Arndt, H. (1993). Universality and relativity in cross-cultural politeness research: A historical perspective. *Multilingua-Journal of Cross-Cultural and Interlanguage Communication*, *12*(1), 13-50.

Jussim, L., Coleman, L. M., & Lerch, L. (1987). The nature of stereotypes: A comparison and integration of three theories. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *52*(3), 536-456.

Kasanga, L. A., & Lwanga-Lumu, J. C. (2007). Cross-cultural linguistic realization of politeness: A study of apologies in English and

Setswana. *Journal of Politeness Research, Language, Behaviour, Culture, 3*(1), 65-92.

Knowles, V. (2016). *Strangers at our gates: Canadian immigration and immigration policy, 1540–2015*. Toronto, ON: Dundurn Press.

Kramsch, C. (1993). *Context and culture in language teaching.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Langenhove, L. V., & Harré, R. (1994). Cultural stereotypes and positioning theory. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour, 24*(4), 359-372.

Lee, M. J., Bichard, S. L., Irey, M. S., Walt, H. M., & Carlson, A. J. (2009). Television viewing and ethnic stereotypes: Do college students form stereotypical perceptions of ethnic groups as a result of heavy television consumption?. *The Howard Journal of Communications, 20*(1), 95-110.

Lippmann, W. (1922). *Public opinion.* New York, NY: Harcourt Brace.

Lyons, A., & Kashima, Y. (2003). How are stereotypes maintained through communication? The influence of stereotypes sharedness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 85*(6), 989-1005.

Machado, I. (2018). Ressentimentos e estereótipos: ensaio sobre as representações a respeito do português no Brasil (século XIX). *Topoi, 19*(37), 125-143.

Matsumoto, D. (2002). *The new Japan: Debunking seven cultural stereotypes.* Yarmouth, Maine: Intercultural Press.

Oliveira, F., Cabecinhas, R., & Ferin, I. (2011). Retratos da mulher brasileira nas revistas portuguesas. *VII ENECULT-Encontros de Estudos Multidisciplinares em Cultura*, 1-15. Salvador, Bahina: Universidade Federal da Bahia.

Pais, J. M. (2017). As piadas como denunciadoras de conflitos identitários. *IX Congresso Português de Sociologia,* 1-13. Faro, Portugal: Associação Portuguesa de Sociologia.

Pavlenko, A. (Ed.) (2006). *Bilingual minds: emotional experience, expression, and representation*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Peng, S. Y. (2003). *Culture and conflict management in foreign-invested enterprises in China: An intercultural perspective.* Berne: Peter Lang.

Peng, S. Y. (2010). Impact of stereotypes on intercultural communication: a Chinese perspective. *Asia Pacific Education Review, 11*(2), 243-252.

Robidoux, M. A. (2002). Imagining a Canadian identity through sport: A historical interpretation of lacrosse and hockey. *Journal of American Folklore, 115*(456), 209-225.

Rowland, R. (2001). Manuéis e Joaquins: A cultural brasileira e os portugueses. *Etnográfica, 1*, 157-172.

Rüschoff, B. (1999). Construction of knowledge as the basis of foreign language learning. In B. Mißler & U. Multhaup (Eds.), *The construction of knowledge, learner autonomy and related issues.* Tübingen, Germany: Stauffenberg Verlag.

Shiri, S. (2015). The homestay in intensive language study abroad: Social networks, language socialization, and developing intercultural competence. *Foreign Language Annals*, *48*(1), 5-25.

Stangor, C., & Schaller, M. (2000). Stereotypes as individual and collective representations. In C. Stangor (Ed.)*, Stereotypes and prejudice: Essential readings. Key readings in Psychology* (pp. 64-82). Philadelphia, PA: Psychology Press/Taylor & Francis.

Statistics Canada. (2017). Immigration and ethnocultural diversity: Key results from the 2016 Census. Retrieved June 1, 2018, from https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/ daily-quotidien/171025/dq171025b-eng.htm.

Statistics Canada. (2017). Census in brief: Linguistic diversity and multilingualism in Canadian homes. Retrieved February 24, 2019, from: https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016010/98-200-x2016010-eng.cfm.

Statistics Canada. (2017). Immigrant population in Canada, 2016 Census of population. Retrieved February 24, 2019, from: https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2017028-eng.htm.

Talbot, M. (2003). Gender stereotypes: reproduction and challenge. In J. Holmes and M. Meyerhoff (Eds.), *The handbook of language and gender* (pp. 468-86). Oxford: Blackwell.

Timberlake, J. M., & Williams, R. H. (2012). Stereotypes of US immigrants from four global regions. *Social Science Quarterly*, *93*(4), 867-890.

Ting-Toomey, S., & Chung, L. C. (2005). *Understanding intercultural communication*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Vitorio, B. S. (2007). *Imigração brasileira em Portugal: Identidade e perspetivas.* São Paulo, SP: Editora Universitária Leopoldianum.

Winter, C. 2009. *Branding Finland on the internet: Images and stereotypes in Finland's tourism marketing*, Master Thesis, Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä.