

西南财经大学

2005 年攻读硕士学位研究生入学考试试题

考试科目: 翻译与写作	适用专业: 外国语言学及应用语言学
科目代码: 413	考试时间: 1 月 23 日下午

【请将答案写在答题卷上, 答在试题卷上无效。】

Is a girl called Gloria apt to be better-looking than one called Bertha? Are criminals more likely to be dark than blond? Can you tell a good deal about someone's personality from hearing his voice briefly over the phone? Can a person's nationality be pretty accurately guessed from his photograph? Does the fact that someone wears glasses imply that he is intelligent?

The answer to all these questions is obviously, "No."

Yet, from all the evidence at hand, most of us believe these things. Ask any college boy if he'd rather take his chances with a Gloria or a Bertha, or ask a college girl if she'd rather blinddate a Richard or a Cuthbert. In fact, you don't have to ask: college students in questionnaires have revealed that names conjure up the same images in their minds as they do in yours – and for as little reason.

Look into the favorite suspects of persons who report "suspicious characters" and you will find a large percentage of them to be "dark and foreign-looking" – despite the testimony of criminologists that criminals do not tend to be dark, foreign or "wild-eyed." And whereas we all think we know what an Italian or a Swede looks like, it is the sad fact that when a group of Nebraska students sought to match faces and nationalities of 15 European countries, they were scored wrong in 93 percent of their identifications. Finally, for all the fact that hornrimmed glasses have now become the standard television sign of an "intellectual," optometrists know that the main thing that distinguishes people with glasses is just bad eyes.

Stereotypes are a kind of gossip about the world, a gossip that makes us prejudge

people before we ever lay eyes on them. Hence it is not surprising that stereotypes have something to do with the dark world of prejudice. Explore most prejudices (note that the word means prejudgment) and you will find a cruel stereotype at the core of each one.

For it is the extraordinary fact that once we have typecast the world, we tend to see people in terms of our standardized pictures. In another demonstration of the power of stereotypes to affect our vision a number of Columbia and Barnard students were shown 30 photographs of pretty but unidentified girls, and asked to rate each in terms of "general liking," "intelligence," "beauty" and so on. Two months later, the same group were shown the same photographs this time with invented Irish, Italian, Jewish and "American" names attached to the pictures. Right away the ratings changed. Faces which were now seen as representing a national group went down in looks and still farther down in likability, while the "American" girls suddenly looked decidedly prettier and nicer.

Why is it that we stereotype the world in such irrational and harmful fashion? In part, we begin to type-cast people in our childhood years. Early in life, as every parent whose child has watched a TV Western knows, we learn to spot the Good Guys from the Bad Guys. Some years ago, a social psychologist showed very clearly how powerful these stereotypes of childhood vision are. He secretly asked the most popular youngsters in an elementary school to make errors in their morning gym exercises. Afterwards, he asked the class if anyone had noticed any mistakes during gym period. Oh, yes, said the children. But it was the unpopular members of the class – the "bad guys" – they remembered as being out of step.

We not only grow up with standardized pictures forming inside of us, but as grown-ups we are constantly having them thrust upon us. Some of them, like the half-joking, half-serious stereotypes of mothers-in-law, or country men, or psychiatrists, are repeated to us by the stock jokes we hear. In fact, without such stereotype, there would be a lot fewer jokes. Still other stereotypes are perpetuated by the advertisements we read, the movies we see, the books we read.

And finally, we tend to stereotype because it helps us make sense out of a highly

confusing world, a world which William James once described as "one great, blooming, buzzing confusion." It is a curious fact that if we don't know what we're looking at, we are often quite literally unable to see what we're looking at. People who recover their sight after a lifetime of blindness actually cannot at first tell a triangle from a square. A visitor to a factory sees only noisy chaos where the superintendents see a perfect stream of work. As Walter Lippmann has said, "For the most part we do not first see, and then define; we define first, and then we see."

Stereotypes are one way in which we "define" the world in order to see it. They classify the infinite variety of human beings into a convenient handful of "types" towards whom we learn to act in stereotyped fashion. Life would be a wearing process if we had to start from scratch with each and every human contact. Stereotypes economize on our mental effort by covering up the blooming, buzzing confusion with big recognizable patterns. They save us the "trouble" of finding out what the world is like – they give it its accustomed look.

Thus the trouble is that stereotypes make us mentally lazy. As S. I. Hayakawa, the authority on semantics has written: "The danger of stereotypes lies not in their existence, but in the fact that they become for all people some of the time, and for some people all the time, substitutes for observation." Worse yet, stereotypes get in the way of our judgment, even when we do observe the world. Someone who has formed rigid preconceptions of all Latins as "excitable," or all teenagers as "wild" doesn't alter his point of view when he meets a calm and deliberate Genoese, or a serious-minded high school student. He brushes them aside as "exceptions that prove the rule". And, of course, if he meets someone true to type, he stands triumphantly convinced. "They're all like that," he proclaims, having encountered an excited Latin, an ill-behaved adolescent.

Hence, quite aside from the injustice which stereotypes do to others, they impoverish ourselves. A person who lumps the world into simple categories, who type-casts all labor leaders as "cheats," all businessmen as "reactionaries," all Harvard men as "snobs," and all Frenchmen as "sexy," is in danger of becoming a stereotype himself. He loses his capacity to be himself – which is to say, to see the world in his

own absolutely unique, uncomparable and independent fashion.

Instead, he votes for the man who fits his standardized picture of what a candidate "should" look like or sound like, buys the goods that someone in his "situation" in life "should" own, lives the life that others define for him. The mark of the stereotyped person is that he never surprises us, that we do indeed have him "typed". And no one fits this strait-jacket so perfectly as someone whose opinions about other people are fixed and inflexible.

Impoverishing as they are, stereotypes are not easy to get rid of. The world we type-cast may be no better than a Grade B movie, but at least we know what to expect of our stock characters. When we let them act for themselves in the strangely unpredictable way that people do act, who knows but that many of our fondest convictions will be proved wrong.

Nor do we suddenly drop our standardized pictures for a blinding vision of the Truth. Sharp swings of ideas about people often just substitute one stereotype for another. The true process of change is a slow one that adds bits and pieces of reality to the pictures in our heads, until gradually they take on some of the blurriness of life itself. Little by little, we learn not that Jews and Negroes and Catholics and Puerto Ricans are "just like everybody else" – for that, too, is a stereotype – but that each and every one of them is unique, special, different and individual. Often we do not even know that we have let a stereotype lapse until we hear someone saying, "all so-and-so's are like such-and-such," and we hear ourselves saying, "Well – maybe."

Can we speed the process along? Of course we can.

First, we can become aware of the standardized pictures in our heads, in other people's heads, in the world around us.

Second, we can become suspicious of all judgments that we allow exceptions to "prove." There is no more chastening thought than that in the vast intellectual adventure of science, it takes but one tiny exception to pull down a whole edifice of ideas.

Third, we can learn to be cautious of generalizations about people. As F. Scott Fitzgerald once wrote, "Begin with an individual, and before you know it you have

created a type; begin with a type, and you find you have created – nothing.”

Most of the time, when we type-cast the world, we are not in fact generalizing about people at all. We are only revealing the embarrassing facts about the pictures that hang in the gallery of stereotypes in our own heads.

I. Translate the underlined sentences into Chinese. (40 points)

II. Answer the following questions in your own words. (20 points)

1. Where, according to the author, do stereotypes come from? How can we avoid stereotypes? (10 points)

2. In what way do stereotypes affect our vision of the world? (10 points)

III. Read the following paragraph and answer the questions. (40 points)

“Heaven is where the police are British, the cooks are French, the mechanics are German, the lovers are Italian and it's all organized by the Swiss. Hell is where the police are German, the cooks are English, the mechanics are French, the lovers are Swiss, and it's all organized by the Italians.”

1. Do you think the joke above amusing? If you do, is it because of what you know about these nationalities personally, or what you know of their reputation? Explain why the joke was written in that way. (10 points)

2. Do you have tourists from other countries where you live? Which nationalities? What are they like? Describe the stereotypes of some nationalities you know in about 150 words. (30 points)

IV. Translate the following passage into English. (50 points)

美国人呼吸、生活、行动似乎都有自相矛盾之处，但最矛盾的莫过于热衷于我们自身的神话。我们真诚地相信自己是天生的机械师，心灵手巧无所不能。我们的一生都是在汽车里度过的；可是，我们大多数人，至少我们中有许许多多，对汽车知之甚少；引擎熄火了，连检查一下油箱都不会。按照我们目前的生活方式，离开电一切都会乱了套；但是，难得有一位男人或女人在断电时知道如何去查出烧断了的保险丝然后再换上一个好的。我们毫无保留地相信我们是拓荒者的后代，继承了自强自立的精神和照料自己的能力，尤其是在与自然打交道方

面。可是，在一万个人中也找不到一个知道如何宰杀猪牛，再切成块片以便食用，更不用提宰杀野生动物了。

这种矛盾之处随处可见。我们可以认为我们的政府软弱、愚蠢、专横、虚伪、低效，但同时我们又深信它是世界上最好的政府，恨不得把它强加给其他所有的国家。我们说起“美国生活方式”，俨然它就是天堂完美秩序的人间翻版。我们叫嚷我国是法治而非人治的国家；然而只要能逃避法律的制裁，我们都会不假思索地去违反任何法律。我们自豪地坚称我们的政治立场依据事物的是非曲直而定，可是我们不投某人的票常常是由于他的宗教信仰、姓名甚至他的鼻子的形态。

因此，我们无论在生理上还是精神上永远处于躁动矛盾的状态。我们拼命工作，许多人劳累而死，然后作为补偿，我们玩命娱乐，形同自杀。我们既自立自强，同时又完全依赖他人。我们咄咄逼人，又毫无防卫能力。美国人溺爱孩子，但并不喜欢他们；反过来，孩子过分依赖父母，对父母又满腔怨愤。我们为自己的财产、住房和教育而沾沾自喜；然而没有一个男人或女人不希望下一代活得更好。美国人相当友善好客，乐于接待客人和陌生人；然而，当一个人奄奄一息地躺在人行道上时，人们只会围上一大圈，冷漠旁观。我们不惜巨资把困在树上的猫或掉进下水道的狗拯救出来；但当一个女孩在大街上尖声呼救时，回应的只有砰然关上的门扉，紧闭的窗户，还有无声的寂静。