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## Challenges and strategies for intercultural communication: A case study on national and gender stereotypes in postmodern women literature

Виклики та стратегії міжкультурної комунікації: дослідження про національні  
й гендерні стереотипи у жіночій літературі постмодерну

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### Abstract

The paper was aimed to investigate the problem of national and gender stereotypes' influence on the choice of strategies for intercultural communication between ethnically or culturally diverse people. The case study took place in the course of trainings, for students, who left for abroad in the wake of the state of emergency, but continued their studies in the university online. The authors applied comparative literature analysis and sociocultural interpretation of the texts of the novels "Fear and Trembling" by Amelie Nothomb and "Good News from the Aral Sea" by Irena Karpa to explore what national and gender stereotypes had been reflected in postmodern women literature, as one of the

### Анотація

Метою роботи було дослідити проблему впливу національних і гендерних стереотипів на вибір стратегій міжкультурної комунікації між етнічно чи культурно різними людьми. Дослідження проводилося під час тренінгів, що були спрямовані на розвиток міжкультурної комунікації студенток, які виїхали за кордон у зв'язку з надзвичайним станом, але продовжили навчання в університеті онлайн. Автори застосували порівняльний літературний аналіз і соціокультурну інтерпретацію текстів романів Амелі Нотомб «Страх і тремтіння» та Ірени Карпи «Добрі новини з Аральського моря», щоб дослідити, які національні та гендерні стереотипи

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forms of mass consciousness and sociocultural discourse embodiment. It was revealed that various societies possessed prejudices against foreigners no matter their educational or economic level, while the stereotypes concerning women were completely different in discovered environments; conflicts and failures in intercultural communication caused by stereotypical perception cannot be solved when people apply assimilation, opposition or subversion as communication strategies. Nevertheless, empathy, integration and transformation of stereotypical patterns of one culture to the foreign one could result in fruitful interaction and enable people's adaptation to life in a foreign society.

**Keywords:** gender stereotype; intercultural communication; national stereotype; sociocultural discourse; postmodern women literature.

## Introduction

In the beginning of 2022 the state of emergency forced millions of citizens' fleeing from homeland to save their lives. Many students, mostly female, left for abroad, but continued their studies in the university online. Academics of the university arranged a special course of trainings, which was designed to facilitate intercultural communication of students in a foreign country, since young women's entering a new social environment demanded maintaining contacts and relations with the natives of a new country.

Intercultural communication is a communication of people in which the methods of communication or the functions of speech events are not identical. There are differences in their implementation and interpretation in certain situations. Intercultural communication involves, beside the command of a language, the knowledge of psychology, material and spiritual culture of another nation, because the ignorance of national and cultural specifics of behavior leads to communicative failures and negative assessments of the situation (Fomenko et al., 2020). Discrepancies in the worldviews of culturally diverse people, embodied in their stereotypes, are accompanied by conflicts between conservative moods and modern tendencies of certain segments of the population, between generations, between people of different countries and nationalities, between men and

знайшли відображення у жіночій літературі постмодерну – як однієї із форм втілення масової свідомості та соціокультурного дискурсу. Було виявлено, що у різних суспільствах існують упередження щодо іноземців незалежно від їхнього освітнього чи економічного рівня, тоді як стереотипи щодо жінок є абсолютно різними у досліджених середовищах. З'ясовано, що конфлікти та невдачі в міжкультурній комунікації, спричинені стереотипним сприйняттям, не можуть бути ефективно вирішені, коли люди застосовують асиміляцію, заперечення чи субверсію як комунікаційні стратегії. Однак, емпатія, інтеграція та трансформація стереотипних моделей однієї культури в іншу могли б призвести до плідної міжкультурної взаємодії та сприяти адаптації людей до життя в чужому суспільстві.

**Ключові слова:** гендерний стереотип; міжкультурна комунікація; національний стереотип; соціокультурний дискурс; жіноча література постмодерну.

women. Most scientists are inclined to think that conflict is one of the elements of interpersonal (intergroup) interaction, however, in the aspect of inter-national conflicts, the concepts of nation and gender become dominant. In the process of communication people perceive each other through the prism of their own culture and standards. At this level, there is a position of the naturalness and correctness of someone's own culture and the unnaturalness and non-acceptance of the interlocutor's diverse communicative culture, considering the customs of their own group as universal; their own norms and values absolutely true (Jenifer & Raman, 2015; Gut et al., 2017). These challenges precondition the need for new acceptable strategies of efficient communication between culturally and ethnically diverse people.

The paper is targeted to investigate challenges and strategies for intercultural communication, which were revealed in the course of trainings by its participants through the study of novels "Fear and Trembling" by Amelie Nothomb and "Good News from the Aral Sea" by Irena Karpa. The objective of the article is to explore national and gender stereotypes and the ways they impact intercultural communication by comparing, analyzing and interpreting the texts of the novels.

## Literature Review

The notion of “stereotype” can be distinguished as a fixed, overgeneralized belief about a particular group or class of people; an opinion about their personal qualities, which can be overly generalized and inaccurate (McLeod, 2015). Stereotypes allow an individual to perceive, “classify” other people according to their belonging to one or another group, socio-economic class, or according to their physical characteristics (gender, age, skin color, etc.) (Koenig, 2018).

The term itself was introduced to define the prevailing prejudice against the event or its evaluation, which united certain strata according to the same perception of reality (Lavlinskiy, 2016). Stereotypes provoke an overly conventional view of people, form expectations and attitudes towards others, contribute to a simplified perception of people and reality (Hentschel et al., 2019). Stereotypes are realized and acquired by an individual in the course of socialization in the group to which he/she belongs (by parents, friends, teachers, mass media, etc.). Moreover, even the individual’s own ideas about himself/herself can be closely related to stereotypes. A stereotype as a concept is a tool that enables identifying and understanding an object or a situation without the necessity for a person to make his/her own decisions, responsibility and opinion. Actually, it is “...an intertextual reference to archaic, mostly atavistic stamps, ... the hidden attitude of the psyche to believe and accept before knowing and testing it from one’s own experience...” (Suprun et al., 2022, p. 373).

National or ethnic stereotypes are defined as generalizations about representatives of ethnically diverse groups, that are featured by increased emotional stability, but do not always adequately reflect the real features of the stereotyped group. The reason for the formation of stereotypes is the striving to protect values that fix concepts, knowledge, skills, and norms of behavior, that is typical for members of a particular ethnic group (Fomenko et al., 2020). A gender stereotype is a simplified, stable, emotionally colored type of behavior and character traits adherent to men or women. Gender stereotypes act as an agreements in the society about the interaction of “masculine” and “feminine” dimensions. On the one hand, they support interpersonal and intergroup understanding and cooperation, as they ensure the stability of ideas in the society. On the other hand, gender stereotypes can negatively affect

self-realization of men and women, act as a barrier in the development of individuality (Haines et al., 2016).

As a form and means of seeing the world, stereotypes embody a complex worldview, which consists of certain cognitive and evaluation modes, specific forms of perception and behavior that are imposed on their carrier by the mass consciousness (Zagorodnova, 2018). Being predominately cultivated in mass consciousness and represented in its multifaceted forms, such as mass media, namely literature, television, cinema, social networks, etc., various stereotypes should be traced and examined to evaluate their impact on dominating narratives in postmodern society. In this point literature is of a special interest, as it is a “comprehensive content linking art, in particular the art of words,” that reflects the tendencies of the modern world. It enables a person to express his/her own position, ideas, aspirations, expectations and dreams. Literature indisputably influences the life of society and contributes into the recognition of the sociocultural discourse of all those changes that the postmodern society cannot avoid (Zubenko & Sytnykova, 2020, p.197).

Amelie Nothomb’s novel *Fear and Trembling* is an autobiographical work. She wrote the book in 1999, devoting it to one year of life in Japan and work for Yumimoto Corporation (Rámila Díaz, 2012). Irena Karpa’s novel *Good News from the Aral Sea* was published in 2019. It is also mostly autobiographical and contains true stories of real women (Tkhoruk, 2019). Both novels were written by women authors and present women as the protagonists, so they are reviewed as the pieces of women’s literature. The peculiarities of women’s literature are distinguished by two approaches to determining its specificity. The first one is based on the assumption that the peculiarity of women’s prose is defined by the specific women’s experience, which is expressed by the author at the level of issues, themes and ideological direction of the work (Kryvoruchko et al., 2021). Proponents of the second approach tend to see the specifics of women’s prose in the remarkable sound of a female voice in the text, i.e., at the level of writing (Michalska-Bracha, 2018); a number of different parameters, in particular, the concept of female personality, “feminine” style of writing, stipulation of female experience, the predominance of a feminine type of imagery (Holmes, 2016). With the beginning of the postmodern era, women writers began to revise cultural stereotypes. Postmodern women literature is considered to be a direct reaction to the stereotypes of mass consciousness as its inner

essence is denying the narrative of realist discourse, cause-and-effect dependence of plot lines, and psychological conditioning. So, it is by no means satisfied with everything stereotypical, constant, which generates a standard, prematurely expected reaction. Self-worth of the author's voice, autobiography, polyphonic monologism, sincere intonation of confession, psychologism (even psychoanalysis) of heroes, the need for dialogue with the national modernist feminist literary heritage – all these are signs of postmodernist artistic practice (Saunier, 2015; Alsanafi & Mohd Noor, 2019).

### Methodology

The participants of the course of intercultural trainings were students, who left for abroad in the wake of the state of emergency, but continued their studies in the university. 78 females, aged 19-24, representatives of various faculties, voluntarily joined the work in trainings, read the novels, shared their insights and experiences, created a mapping for efficient communication strategies, trained their skills of intercultural communication and interaction. The case study was vectored to answer the following questions:

1. What national and gender stereotypes were described in the novels "Fear and Trembling" by Amelie Nothomb and "Good News from the Aral Sea" by Irena Karpa?
2. Do the stereotypes influence the choice of communication strategies in the intercultural environment?

The comparative analysis of literary texts was aimed to find out contradictions and typological coincidences (analogies) within the literary sources, belonging to different time-frames, languages and cultural traditions. The study of stereotypes, forms of explicit and implicit content, cultural influences, interliterary perception, mediation functions of literary tools involved the application of general scientific methods, such as deduction and induction, and more specific methods of dialectical reflection and systematic analysis.

The method of text interpretation enabled the study of the stereotypes as cultural concepts, that have not only linguistic expression, but also ethno-cultural specificity. It is essential, as despite their nature, stereotypes reflect the society to which the author belongs, not only in the images of a particular culture, but also a particular language. Thus, works of art created by representatives of a particular culture become sources of information about national concepts

and the specifics of verbalization of universal concepts, taking into account the "exit" to the geopolitical, ethno-psychological, historical and gender aspects that are outside the literary work (Valuyskaya, 2017).

### Results

Most participants of trainings admitted that both novels presented a predictable situation, where a foreigner, who was unable to complaint with social and cultural standards being very different from her/his own, played the major part.

The plot of the novel *Fear and Trembling* by Amelie Nothomb was based on the relationship between two main characters, – Belgian Amelie and Japanese Fubuki Mori. The female characters were in opposition of Western and Eastern cultures (European and Japanese), that was reflected in the contrast of customs, social laws and features of individual self-consciousness.

Initially the Belgian Amelie was sincerely fascinated by the the Japanese culture, traditions and way of life. However, having come to work for the company, the young girl faced a strict system and rules extremely different from the European ones. She found it very hard to get used to the situation. The main character made many mistakes because she wanted to assimilate, to become a "real Japanese". When she wanted to pretend being a traditional Japanese woman during a tea ceremony, it got the boss back up, as the "white woman" did not have to speak Japanese. It was difficult for Amelie to understand why her command of the language, being an admission condition, caused the conflict: "Perhaps the Japanese brain is capable of forcing itself to forget a language. The Western brain doesn't have that facility" (Nothomb, 2001, p. 2).

The participants noted that the inability to acknowledge the two cultural worlds was an indirect reason for the conflict between Amelie and her boss Fubuki Mori. This revealed the author's concept of national stereotype – Fubuki disrespected Amelie because she was a foreigner, not perceiving her apart from her own chauvinistic prejudices. And Amelie assessed both Fubuki's life and the whole of the Japanese society, based on the European worldview. The psychological conflict representing the whole confrontation of different worlds, their opposition, "moves" the plot of the novel: it was because of Fubuki's negative attitude towards her subordinate, that Amelie, the secretary,

becomes a “toilet cleaner” and was subjected to humiliations. Amelie evoked both sympathy and respect by the readers, because even as she descended the career ladder, she retained her national dignity and inner strength (Bakaeva, 2015).

Irena Karpa’s novel *Good News from the Aral Sea* is dedicated to Filles de l’est (French) – girls from the East. This phrase is used in France to refer to all women from Eastern Europe – Ukrainian, Polish, Slovak, Czech, etc. (Karpa, 2019, p. 141). It is rather pejorative and derogatory: when the French say “Girls from the East”, they immediately imagine either an “elite escort service girl”, or a house cleaner or a bride via the Internet. However, the training participants pointed out that the stories of four Ukrainian immigrants did not fit this stereotype at all. The former Femen (a really existing feministic organization) activist Masha found political asylum in Paris; the former teacher Rita got a prestigious job and financial independence. After leaving the University of Vienna, Bohdana hid from her parents in France and looked for new impressions. The musician Chloe fled to France hiding from justice.

Like the Nothomb’s heroine, at first, they were greatly impressed by the culture of the country where they found themselves: “Masha truly wanted to be a real Parisian. She also eagerly posted baguettes, cups of coffee on the terrace, hats, vegetable stalls in the market and rabbits on the lawn near the Invalids” (Karpa, 2019, p. 45). But gradually they realized that the glossy facade of bright life hid the contempt for immigrants: “The French, who suddenly fell ill with Ukrainophilia after the Maidan, ... rarely refused to eat or drink for free and often considered a rich friend with an awkward accent to be a “mon client russe” (French, My Russian client) – never

mind whether he or she was Croat, Georgian or Ukrainian” (Karpa, 2019, p. 81). They often came across unveiled aggression – “Here we, the legitimate French have nowhere to work – shouted bistro-pasha, and you, Eastern European emigrants, try to scramble ahead!” (Karpa, 2019, p. 121).

They permanently felt separated from the French society remaining only foreigners from an unreliable country. Ukrainian immigrants realized that they “... would never be like them [the French], even if ... found a French job and paid taxes properly” (Karpa, 2019, p. 433). Nevertheless, Irena Karpa’s heroines tried to integrate into the authentic life of the French, attending bohemian parties and family dinners, visiting squatters, getting acquainted with Muslim immigrants and French aristocrats.

Eventually, each of them found ways to earn for decent living, got social connections, won appraisal in the society, based on their personal and professional qualities by making the French overcome their own ethnic stereotypes. Having experienced disappointments, depression and confusion, the main characters of the book achieved national self-identification and self-esteem. The training’s participants revealed that Irena Karpa’s heroines attempted to understand culturally diverse people, see their grounds and reasons, find analogies with their own culture. The author used the technique of allusion, comparing the most famous Ukrainian dish, Borsch, and Madeleine cake from Marcel Proust’s works, as triggers that evoke nostalgia, childhood memories, national self-awareness (Smith, 2016): “Borsch. Ukrainian Madeleine cake” (Karpa, 2019, p. 378). The insights of the trainings’ participants concerning challenges in intercultural communication and strategies to confront them were generalized in Table 1.

**Table 1.**  
*National stereotypes issues in a foreign society*

N	Challenge	Strategy	
1.	Inability of immigrants to complaint with social and cultural standards	Notomb’s novel	<b>Assimilation.</b> The admiration for the foreign culture, the attempt to assimilate into it, to become a part of it.
		Karpa’s novel	<b>Integration.</b> The fascination with the foreign culture is coming along with own national self-identification and self-esteem.
2.	Local people’s chauvinistic prejudices, contempt for immigrants	Notomb’s novel	<b>Opposition.</b> Assessment of the way of life and the whole of the Japanese society, based on the European worldview.
		Karpa’s novel	<b>Empathy.</b> Attempts to understand position, grounds and worldview of the culturally diverse people.

Source: Authors own conception

All participants acknowledged that a significant place in both books has been given to gender issues, regarding them as socio-gender characteristics of sex with its inherent features of lifestyle, actions, plans, aspirations, etc., that stipulate not only individual features of men and women, but also determines the relationships between them.

Taking place in a male-dominated environment, the contradiction between two women, Amelie and Fubuki Mori, is rather misogynistic, predetermined by gender stereotypes. Amelie represented a Western person who had cultivated the trend of women emancipation. Immersed in the daily life of another country, its way of living, peculiarities of mentality, the main character was surprised to discover differences in attitudes towards women, prohibitions, inviolable moral rules (Saunier, 2015). She was horrified by the position of women in the Japanese society: “Do not hope for joy, your pleasure will hurt you. Do not hope for love, it is not worth it, you will be loved for what you seem, not for what you really are. Hope you will work. Given your gender, you have little chance of reaching the heights, but hope to serve your company. Work will bring you money, and it will not give you any pleasure, but it may attach more importance in case of your marriage – because you are not so stupid as to think that you can be chosen for your real value” (Nothomb, 2001, p. 111).

Playing on the contrast of European and Japanese women’s self-consciousness, Amelie Nothomb also resorted to subversion. The writer deliberately took Fubuki’s image beyond the stereotype she described. The training’s participants noted that Fubuki is portrayed as a woman who had achieved incredible professional success, but in order to realize her goals in a patriarchal and far from feminizing society, she had to take on some masculine functions and put her career above family values, which was completely unusual for Japanese women. The cult of men in Japan implied a meager role of women in decision-making, and therefore women were not entrusted with responsible work and did not assume freedom of thought (Rámila Díaz, 2012). Talking more of responsibilities of Japanese women than their rights, the author criticized the severity of the society: “If you’re not married by the time you’re twenty-five, you’ll have a good reason to be ashamed; if you laugh, you won’t look dignified; if your face betrays your feelings, you’ll look coarse; if you mention the existence of a single body-hair, you’re repulsive; if a boy kisses you on the cheek in public, you’re a whore; if you enjoy eating,

you’re a pig; if you take pleasure in sleeping, you’re no better than a cow and so on” (Nothomb, 2001, p. 111).

Similar patriarchal demands on women, presented as traditionally Ukrainian ones, though in an openly sarcastic way, were investigated by the training’s participants in I. Karpa’s novel: “Faithful and devoted working women can successfully cope both with the work and the household. Because if you do only one thing in Ukraine, you are considered to be incompetent, stupid or lazy. We need to keep up with everything. To crown it all, you should take care of your husband. Children – of course. But a Man is your leading star and the greatest value” (Karpa, 2019, p. 50).

The participants stressed that none of the heroines wanted to fit this stereotype. Bohdana, who announced that idea, rebelled against her pre-arranged role of a “woman-guardian of the family hearth”. For some time, Rita had been playing a traditional Ukrainian female role, living with an abusing husband, that led her to a loss of self-esteem and total frustration in life (Krupka, 2021). Chloe was in a way an androgynous character; her description emphasized the masculine traits of personality and appearance that resulted in her marginalized position in the traditional Ukrainian society. Masha actively defended women’s rights by participating in Femen, an organization known for its extreme performances. Thus, participants concluded that Irena Karpa also used the technique of subversion – games with a stereotype – on the gender representation of her heroines.

Living in France, the Ukrainian protagonists enthusiastically discovered the worldview of the French women, their ability to respect and appreciate their own gender identity: “A French woman wants to be beautiful or even just spend free time reading a book. Facing the need to cook new dishes for her sweetheart, she makes the reservation in a restaurant under her name but on his credit card. As far as a Ukrainian woman, estimating that her sweetheart can get sick with heartburn eating in a restaurant, is inspired spinning a million plates in the kitchen – downloads a new cooking app and happily claps her hands: “Trap! I am so happy!” (Karpa, 2019, p. 312). They highly evaluated the desire of French women for freedom including financial one: “... the idea of becoming again financially dependent on her husband caused her panic” (Karpa, 2019, p. 442); their ability not to hang on other people’s opinions, not to be ashamed of

their potential, age or appearance: “The French call it ‘to be or not to be classy – and for those who are not classy, it does not matter how much clothes cost” (Karpa, 2019, p. 288).

So, the training participants traced the transformation of certain patterns of the Ukrainian protagonists’ native culture to the French one, despite the fact that in a foreign

society completely different domestic stereotypes dominate. Furthermore, it was due to their ability to transform own stereotypes that they managed to adapt to the life in a foreign society. Text interpretation of the novels concerning gender challenges and strategies of their solvation, resulted in data presented in the Table 2.

**Table 2.**  
*Gender stereotypes issues in a foreign society*

N	Challenge	Strategy	
1.	Misogynistic conflict in the society with a masculine culture	Notomb’s novel	<b>Subversion.</b> Taking on some masculine functions to confront a meager role of women; open criticism
2.	Emancipated views on the position of women in the French society	Karpa’s novel	<b>Transformation</b> of certain patterns of their native culture to break stereotypes and go beyond their limits

Source: Authors own conception.

**Discussion**

When representatives of different cultures initiate communication, it is quite likely that certain problems will arise, associated with contradiction in these cultures, namely: misunderstanding, prejudices, demarcation, resentment or mental or social isolation. In this sense, stereotypes influence migrants’ choice of communication and adaptation strategies in the foreign cultural space (Lavlinskiy, 2016).

If a migrant chooses an assimilation or a subversion strategy, personal identity tends to approach a diffuse, “blurred” identity with uncertain life goals, low self-esteem, lack of inner integrity and coherence (Blynova et al., 2020). Personal identity acquires signs of mature positivity when a migrant integrates into the foreign cultural space, he/she is inclined to show empathy to culturally diverse people and the ability to transform own stereotypes. These strategies can help to overcome the framework of a person’s cultural identity, so he/she no longer remains a “stranger” in new cultural spaces and can find a new self-esteem in relation to new cultural groups. As a “foreigner” perceives the elements of another culture, his/her self-esteem shifts from an exclusively cultural to an intercultural state. This intercultural identity is flexible and quite mobile because it is no longer based on belonging to the original or foreign culture (Bilotserkovets et al., 2020).

The comparative analysis of texts of the novels under review has revealed that national and gender stereotypes are inherent in any culture,

they are originated from a particular culture, and then influence the minds of people, hindering or helping to build intercultural contacts.

Regarding the role of national or ethnic stereotypes in intercultural communication, researchers emphasized that peculiarities of the cognitive process categorization of culturally diverse people enabled the reconstruction of the ways how people perceived themselves and others (Gut et al., 2017). National stereotypes provoke expectations about representatives of another culture in the process of communication or a certain situation, they may reflect some realities, but in general they are not identical either with the national character or with the representation of the worldview of this people. Racial and ethnic stereotypes are manifested at the level of individual behavioral reactions, which leads to neurotization of an individual and society as a whole. They belong to the category of stereotypes that discriminate against members of national, racial or ethnic minorities, singling out the following four stages of portraying racial and ethnic minorities in the mass media: non-recognition, ridicule, regulation, respect. Non-recognition characterizes the complete exclusion of racial and ethnic minorities from television and the press. Ridicule means the glorification of the dominant group of their own image by humiliating and stereotyping minorities, portraying them as incompetent or uneducated. Regulation is depicting minorities, who appear as defenders of the existing order (for example, police, detectives, spies). Respect features giving national and racial minorities the full range of

roles (both positive and negative), inherent in most heroes (Jenifer & Raman, 2015).

Sociocultural text analysis enabled authors to single out the typical stereotypes about women and femininity: objectification of the female body, infantilization, “glass ceiling”, the image of the “woman-guardian of the family hearth” (Chornodon et al., 2022). The objectification of the female body points out an important fact of gender stereotypes, that women are often portrayed as young beauties, whose duty is to remain always young and attractive to please men. At the heart of this critical attitude is the idea that a woman should not allow herself to grow old. This is apparently evident in advertising – in the field of mass media with the most stereotypical gender images (Saunier, 2015). Infantilization of women introduces the transmission of femininity as the manifestation of virginity, vulnerability, naivety. In this regard, women are always victims of violence. Having a “glass ceiling” on the way to career success is a phenomenon characterized by the difficulty of women to reach higher positions in their careers, which are usually occupied by men (Abbas et al., 2018). The image of the “woman-guardian of the family hearth” portrays women who dedicate their lives to their husbands and families, performing unpaid reproductive work (Chornodon et al., 2022). Thus, the inferiority of women is often rooted in society’s worldview and cultural heritage, which is one of the fundamental pillars of the mentality. In different parts of the world, society’s attitude towards women is characterized by violence, devaluation and rejection of their own “I” due to the desire to be accepted by others; some other societies are marked by the acquisition of a crumb of rights and freedoms for long periods of time, which, in general, do not improve the situation (Alsanafi & Mohd Noor, 2019).

Formed on the wave of the struggle for women’s emancipation, postmodern women literature revealed itself as a social, philosophical, human rights, aesthetic revision of logocentrism, that is based on male worldview and thinking. There are progressive trends in postmodern women’s literature even in the traditionally patriarchal societies to portray women. The women-writers are striving to remove the social, cultural, and religious bonds that are imposed upon them by convictions and taboos of their own culture as the only comprehension of life and reality, as they “... move away from a system that desires to control and mistakes its own viewpoints for the truth” (Amin, 2015, p. 11). Nevertheless, postmodern women’s literature in Eastern

Europe, namely in Ukraine is characterized by “post-feminism” as a young trend without clear programming (as opposed to feminism), based on a woman’s right to choose between a career or family or a combination of both, and a reluctance to subordinate her life to puritanical and misogynistic ideologies. It is a sociocultural space in which women (especially the younger generation) perceive gender equality as something that is rightfully theirs (Dragojlovich, 2017; Revakovich, 2012).

## Conclusions

Comparative analysis of texts of the novels “Fear and Trembling” by Amelie Nothomb and “Good News from the Aral Sea” by Irena Karpa, carried out in the course of intercultural trainings, was focused on the sociocultural discourse that reflects the mass consciousness of other countries, attitudes and stereotypes of the nations. The participants admitted that while all societies still have prejudices against foreign migrants and regard them being inferior to themselves, no matter their educational or economic level, the stereotypes concerning women are completely different. Thus, the apprehension of the concept of “stereotype” only in a negative sense is becoming more and more disputable. Being aware of the traditions and customs of another culture, a person can facilitate his/her adaptation to a new linguistic or cultural environment. She/he will be free from misconceptions about the rules of conduct in an unfamiliar society, will not try to transfer own stereotypical standards of perception to the environment.

Interpretation of the novel “Fear and Trembling” by Amelie Nothomb has revealed that it describes protagonists’ inability to overcome ethnic and gender stereotypes. Stereotypical perception of culturally or ethnically diverse people had imposed assimilation, opposition or subversion as communication strategies by interlocutors that doomed their intercultural contacts to failure. Nevertheless, the novel “Good News from the Aral Sea” by Irena Karpa showed heroines who were inclined to overpower their national and gender stereotypes through the need to develop such an identity, which goes beyond the boundaries of ordinary cultural identification and is characterized by a high degree of interculturality. Empathy, integration and transformation of stereotypical patterns of one culture to the foreign one facilitate intercultural communication and interaction of people in a foreign environment.



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