Cultural differences in the recognition of facial expressions of emotions: No influence of stereotypes

UNIVERSITÉ GRENOBLE ALPES

BOURENANE Selma, LUISET Kelly & TCHERKASSOF Anna

Univ. Grenoble-Alpes, France

Facial expressions of emotions (FEE) are universally recognized; yet recognition accuracy does vary across cultures (Prado et al., 2014). According to a social-cognitive perspective, the interpretation of any individual information is biased by the stereotype that is attached to that individual. Thus, a facial expression can be understood only if one considers the relationship that links the sender and decoder and the (stereotyped) representations they hold towards each other (Hess & Philippot, 2007).

The aim of the present research is to study whether the stereotypes Algerians hold towards French people has an influence on their recognition's accuracy of emotions displayed by French people. The stereotypes are studied according to the social value approach (Beauvois, 1995). Emotions are displayed by spontaneous and dynamic FEE.

Method

70 Ss from Algeria (n=35) and France, both city- and country dwellers (n-urban=20; n-rural=15):

❶ rated 11 videos (10 sec.) of French people expressing naturally induced FEE (disgust, boredom, fear, surprise, joy, and a neutral face) on a 13 items forced choice questionnaire.

❷ filled out a 51 items stereotypic questionnaire (from 0 = *completely disagree* to 7 = *completely agree*) assessing their stereotypes toward French people (α = .77).

Results show **better** emotion recognition **accuracy** scores (Hu) for **French** participants as compared to Algerian participants. Among the latter, **urban** participants recognition scores are **better** than rural participants' ones.
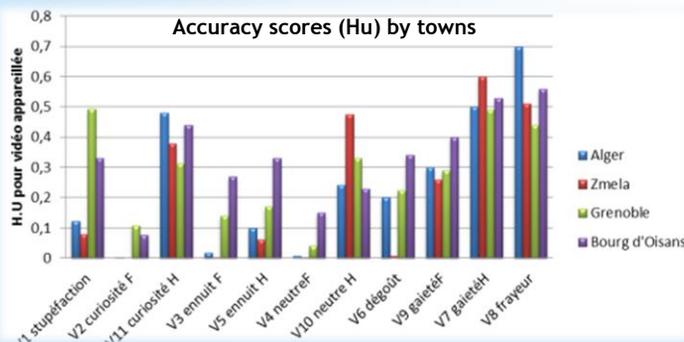
Results show significant differences for stereotypes both between the two populations and between urban and rural subgroups. Notably, **Algerian** people attribute mainly **social utility traits** to the French people whereas **French** people hold **non desirable stereotypic traits** vis-à-vis themselves.

Accuracy scores (Hu) by towns

« French people are quick-witted and hard-working »

« French people are capricious and annoying »

A multinomial logistic regression (MLR) shows **no effect of stereotypes on emotion recognition scores**.

This study, using facial expressions presenting a **high ecological validity**, shows **cross-cultural differences** in **FEE recognition** between Algerians and French people and, in particular, an in-group advantage. The degree of the **in-group advantage** in emotion recognition varies **depending on the specific emotion tested**.

Consistent with the literature, this study also shows the existence of **cultural stereotypes.** More specifically, Algerian and French people draw **dissimilar inferences** about French people.
However, the **interpretation of out-group member's FEE is not biased by stereotypes**. Thus, as predicted by the universality perspective, the impact of facial information is too significant for stereotypes to affect emotion attribution.

• Beauvois (1995). *Psychologie Française, 40*, 4, 317-391.
• Hess & Philippot (2007). *Group dynamics and emotional expression*. Cambridge University Press.
• Prado et al. (2014). *Motivation and Emotion, 38*, 420-428.

Anna.Tcherkassof@upmf-grenoble.fr