



ERASMUS+ project “English in Modern Times of Fluid Change”

Subjects: Stereotypes and misunderstanding

Grade: 13-15

Time: 45 minutes

Brief Description: How people reinforce stereotypes

After the lesson the students will:

- make differences between stereotypes and facts,
- learn to look up the crucial information in the text;
- talk about the stereotypes and prejudice;
- work in groups and cooperate.

Materials needed:

- colourful sheets of paper
- Internet connection, mobile phones,
- handouts – a text

1. Students read the text in groups:

Here are the most popular stereotypes of Poles and Poland. However they happen to be hugely exaggerated, especially by those who want to ridicule the image of Poland.

First stereotype: Polish people do not speak foreign languages

In some ways it is true that it is not Poland's best feature. Some statistics say that only 8 percent of Poles speak fluently one foreign language. However, the situation is changing and the younger generations know the basics of English. Adults and elderly people speak a little Russian because it used to be the only foreign language at school in communist Poland (besides Latin) which was taught to students. Nowadays, learning foreign languages has

become a trend in Poland. Language schools and university courses are full of people who would like to study foreign languages and use them in practice.

Second stereotype: Poles never smile, but complain a lot

Once more there is a grain of truth in this statement due to the fact that for many years Poles lived in a communist system which led to lack of basic goods forms of suppression (censorship, propaganda). As the system was so oppressive Poles learnt to complain and be constantly dissatisfied with the situation. Nevertheless, the same system developed a kind of sharp and witty sense of humour which was shown in cabarets and comedies.

With the change of systems a big group of Poles who keep complaining still exists, especially when it comes to giving pessimistic opinions about the benefits from joining the EU. On the other hand, young people are more similar to their Western European peers for they don't complain, and they smile a lot.

Third stereotype: Poland is a small country somewhere in the East of Europe

Unfortunately, many people from outside Europe still do not know much about Poland especially about its location on the map of the world and its geographical features. Geographically, the centre of Europe is in Poland, near Warsaw. Poland is situated in the very centre of Europe, not in the East. Such an idea probably was born after the WW II when Poland was made to be one of the inferior countries to the Soviet Union. What is more Poland is one of the bigger countries in Europe, its size comparably as big as New Mexico state.

Stereotypes about Poland - what your countrymen think about Poland in general and Polish people?

Opinions from the Internet

Wroblewskiwrobel:

Some people say that (our) polish girls are among the most beautiful women in the world. That's quite a nice stereotype I think and sometimes I was surprised to hear that poles are well educated. (thanks to communistic education system)

Mary:

I've met a few people from Poland. They were intelligent and funny and had clear goals.

Brian:

Poles are funny. They have a great sense of humour. They get English jokes far more better than anybody else. I love it.

Anonymous:

I was working in Poland as a guide part time. A tourist from the USA, a military officer stationed in Austria said, "I did not have an idea that Poland is bigger than Austria. I thought than Austria was bigger than Poland".

On a couple of occasions when asked, "where I am from?" I answered "from Poland" then people confuse Poland with Holland. I heard several times: "Wow, Holland, I was there!". When I try to correct, "I am not from Holland but from Poland" then, there is a silence.

Steph:

I am Canadian.. I don't really have a stereotype about Polish people.

I used to work for a Polish guy - he seemed alright. I don't think he knew my name though and I worked for him for nearly 3 years..

Dutchboy:

Well, Dutch employers see them as hard workers, which from what I have seen on construction sites around my country is true. A lot of Dutch people still look upon Poles as thieves, and people who take their jobs away by working for less money.

Muley Bob

I don't think people in my generation still have that idea about the Polish. Really I don't have any stereotypes about them. The world has changed so much since the fall of communism in Europe, I think all the old stereotypes are out the window.

2. Students share and present own stereotypes and thoughts about Poland and Polish people.
3. Students answers the questions related to prejudices, stereotypes, gender, aging and nationalities.
4. Students make posters where they can present stereotypes about other countries, at least 5 examples.

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