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The tendencies of manifestation of Lithuanian national cultural identity in emigration

Tendencje manifestowania litewskiej narodowej i kulturowej tożsamości na emigracji

Streszczenie

Emigracja staje się obecnie zjawiskiem globalnym dotyczącym społeczeństw na całym świecie, stąd też rozpoznanie cech charakterystycznych manifestowania tożsamości narodowej emigrantów może dostarczyć wskaźników do zrównoważonej egzystencji w społeczeństwie. Artykuł analizuje doświadczenia osób na emigracji, ujawniając tendencje do zmian w obszarze tożsamości narodowej. Badania przeprowadzono za pomocą częściowo ustrukturalizowanych wywiadów, w ramach których zastosowano bloki semantyczne, odzwierciedlając manifestowanie się tożsamości kulturowej oraz ocenę własną Litwinów związaną z doświadczaniem świadomości indywidualnej tożsamości narodowej, ukazując kulturowe i religijne tradycje na emigracji. Jak pokazują badania, kulturowe oraz religijne otoczenie, podobnie jak uwzględnianie tradycji narodowych, są kluczowe w procesie wzmacniania tożsamości kulturowej osób przebywających na emigracji.

Słowa kluczowe: emigracja, tożsamość kulturowa, religia

Abstract

Emigration is becoming a global issue throughout the world, and the cognition of characteristics of manifestations of emigration people's national identity provides preconditions for sustainable existence of society. The article analyses experiences of people in the emigration situation, revealing the tendencies of changes in the national identity. The semi-structured interview comprised semantic blocks reflecting the manifestations of the cultural identity and self-value of Lithuanians: experiences of awareness of the individual national identity; enshrining of cultural and religious traditions in emigration. It has been found out that cultural and

religious milieus as well as the enshrining national traditions are significant in supporting the cultural identity of people living in emigration.

Keywords: emigration, cultural identity, religion

Currently, the community of Lithuanians worldwide encompasses communities of Lithuanians residing in 36 states. Emigrants establish schools, issue press editions, launch online networks to maintain contacts with their community and others. According to the data provided by the Statistics Department, over two thirds of emigrants choose the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Ireland. The research study (RT Tax Lietuva, 2014) suggests that the priority in choosing a county is determined by an advanced system of social security (after losing job or giving birth to a child, residents of these states receive quite high allowances securing dignity in their living); a favourable legal environment for establishment and development of businesses; political and financial stability of the state.

The processes of globalisation and integration taking place in the European Union, the increased mobility of residents, emigration unavoidably raise questions of nationality, cultural identity, retention of nationalism etc. It is obvious that standing out challenges brought about by the twenty-first century make impact not only on people's value attitudes, life style but also on formation of the changes in the cultural national identity. According to Bauman (2006), the problem of cultural identity is usually treated as policy of integration of immigrants into a certain state. Physical existence of an individual in another state means legal dependence to a particular state, gaining specific rights, freedoms, duties etc. Thus, citizens residing in another country face a particular culture and are usually forced to implement significant changes in their lives, to adapt to the changing environment (J. Kuznecovienė, 2014).

Researchers observe that processes of globalisation unavoidably make impact on every nation; however, national values, culture much depend on the principled attitudes of the community and individuals as well as on their striving to keep the identity (identity, traditions, language etc.). Generally, *identity* is the self-perception of an individual. Pruskus (2013) singles out several types of identity: professional, social, ethnical, political, religious, psychological and cultural. The latter one is "individual's belonging to a particular culture or cultural group, forming the value-based relation of an individual to the self, other people, society and the world." (Pruskus, 2013, p. 160) Research works (Vertovec, 2009; Robertson, 2003; Pruskus, 2013 etc.) suggest that the cultural identity is self-attribution to a certain national group holding certain characteristics, features, values or particularities of behaviour. It is emphasised that cultural identity is not the whole of inborn characteristics but rather individual's personal dimension which is being consciously developed and created.

An individual, living in a different cultural environment, is or is not bound to accept the manifestations of the surrounding culture, norms of societal behaviour and value systems. A positive or a negative process of identification with others proceeds; it eventually transforms to a characteristic manifestation of the cultural identity. The

identity of emigrants usually changes in relation to the surrounding cultural environment. Even the cultural identity of different nationals changes in different ways (e.g. individuals arriving for studying, working in prestigious institutions, holding top managing positions, performing hard physical work etc. find themselves in different socio-cultural environments). It can be stated that a changing cultural identity in the context of intercultural communication performs two functions: a) helps emigrants to shape their opinion on each other, b) to foresee behaviour and remain themselves through manifestation of their identity.

Usually, due to different socio-cultural environment and cultural differences, people living in other countries undergo a growing inner conflict of identity which makes a negative impact on personal self-value, self-confidence – undoubtedly determining characteristics of the quality of life. The discussed relevance of the problem enabled us formulating **the research object**: manifestation of Lithuanian cultural identity in emigration.

The research aim is to reveal the tendencies of manifestation of the cultural identity in Lithuanian workers belonging to the community of Lithuanian emigrants in Ireland. **The research objectives**:

1. on the ground of scientific analysis to reveal the manifestation of the cultural identity in emigration;
2. to carry out a qualitative research aiming to find out the experiences of emigrants residing in Ireland in relation to the change of the cultural identity.

Research sample

Aiming to find out the tendencies of manifestation of the cultural identity determined by globalisation, the research focused on the target group comprising the community of Lithuanian emigrants living in Ireland because, according to the population census in 2015, approximately 84,958 individuals born in Lithuania currently are living in Ireland. The research surveyed 23 Lithuanians (representatives of workers) residing in the central area of Ireland who have emigrated since 1999 and remained for permanent residence in Ireland. The age of the surveyed varies from 35 to 60. The research sample included 16 women and 7 men. The research involved the informants who already have lived for at least 10 years in emigration. All informants perform unqualified physical job (receptionists, constructors, car washers, hotel cleaning staff, drivers) in Ireland.

Organisation of the research

Following Silverman (2001), personal characteristics of life and daily behaviour which, likely, are changing after emigration, are explored by employing a qualitative research strategy. Aiming to reveal the tendencies of the cultural identity of Lithuanians living in Ireland, a qualitative research has been carried out applying the method of content

analysis and a type of an open, semi-structured interview. The research tactics supposed an assumption to carry out a survey of Lithuanian emigrants making up one group of subjects, enabling us exploring various modifications of manifestation of the cultural identity. According to Denscombe (2010), a qualitative content analysis enables not only explanation of the factors influencing different manifestations of emigrants' cultural identities but also why different results of changes become visible. Thus, the content analysis gave us the possibility to understand the factors influencing informants' cultural identity. A chosen research approach enabled the combination of the analytical-descriptive method used for scientific literature, semi-structured interview which enabled both informants and collectors of information to build a constructive dialogue. Denscombe (2010) states that qualitative research works encompass investigation of both verbal and visual materials. The present research deals with a verbal expression of answers only, covering interaction between an individual and his/her environment, also striving to interpret the statements in the senses rendered by the informants, to reveal what hidden meanings concerning the informants are noticed in their own words. In the course of the research, the researchers attempted to understand an individual, his/her behaviour, feelings, social and cultural environments and their impact. Questions of the semi-structured interview were divided into 3 semantic blocks reflecting Lithuanian cultural identity and manifestation of the self-value in emigration: experiences of awareness of the individual national identity; enshrining of cultural and religious traditions in emigration; changes in manifestation of the self-value in emigration.

The informants have been selected to the survey by employing the methods of snowball sampling and convenient sampling. Part of the informants (12) were surveyed during their visit to Lithuania, 7 communicated with the researchers via Skype program, the rest (4) filled in open type questionnaires in Ireland and sent them to the researchers via email.

Research results

1. Experiences of Awareness of the Individual National Identity

The researchers (Farell, 2011; Bourdieu, 2003; Wodak, 2004) hold it that personal behaviour impacted by social environment, obtained cultural habits are changing alongside the changing society and living environment. Not only cultural habits, cultural identity but also individual's activities, attitude towards oneself change too. A new living environment and cultural environment that surround a person, society one arrives into, new opportunities provide preconditions for a new reflection of the self as an individual in another cultural environment.

The informants name themselves in different ways: "emigrants" (15), "expats" (3), "temporarily living abroad" (2), "members of diaspora" (3). The obtained data shows that majority of the informants call themselves "emigrants". It can be stated that these individuals see their future in Ireland; however, they do not treat Ireland as their native land.

Several informants introduced themselves as representatives of *diaspora*; this means that they name themselves neither emigrants nor expats or temporarily living abroad – just naming themselves diaspora meaning a part of the nation settled in a foreign land, though aiming to retain their national and cultural characteristics. It had been found out that the individuals who attributed themselves to diaspora were those who had been living in the central area of Ireland (the group of residents living there for 10–15 years).

Emigrants are called by these who identify themselves with globalisation processes, who usually call emigrant everyone who lives in a foreign country. On the other hand, an *emigrant* is an international word translated into Lithuanian as an *expat*. Therefore, there is no big difference between the meanings in self-perception. This group of the surveyed constitutes the biggest part; they have been living in emigration for more than 10 years.

Despite the fact that all informants have been living in emigration for at least 10 years, 2 of them call themselves as “temporarily living abroad”. It can be assumed that these people, even though having emigrated many years ago, still are full of emotions of nostalgia, longing and imagination which are strongly related to the place where they grew up. This shows that their relations to the native land are strong; the living abroad is attributed with a shade of temporality.

According to Inglis, Donnelly (2011), self-attribution to a certain living environment is determined by a number of factors: people anchored in the new place are these who were born and grown up there as well as those who have lived in that place for the bigger part of their life. Such relationship is called by Inglis, Donnelly (2011) as deep rooted. However, having moved to live in a certain place people also hold a strong feeling of belonging to a community. This belonging to a community is characteristic to emigrants who at different times and in different contexts identify themselves with the native land.

2. The Enshrining of Cultural and Religious Traditions in Emigration

Analysing experiences of emigrants living in Ireland in relation to the enshrining of cultural traditions, it is worth grounding on Thapan's (2005), Castells's (2006) statements suggesting that a brought perception of the world, stereotypes of behaviour and dominating models of the inborn culture build a specific view to life in a new country. In other words, a person being aware of the surrounding world (even when the world is changed) is still bound to use the same models of the enshrining of cultural traditions (connections of cultural and religious identities) for a long time, they are usually perceived by emigrants as stable or even inherited. Dealing with informants' experiences characterising the enshrining of cultural traditions, it was found out (Mitchell, 2006) that when living in emigration the traditions, values, moral principles established in the family are revealed through language, religion, attendance of cultural events, perception of the meanings of national symbols, traditions of the cuisine etc.

Even though in the latter decades the weakening of traditional religion is observed, nevertheless, the data shows an increasing percentage of people holding a Christian identity (Storm, 2011, Voas, 2009).

This is reflected in responses of majority of the informants (15); the *religious* aspect is highlighted in the answers: *“Lithuanians are a religious nation; therefore, I attribute myself to the believers”*; *“I often attend the church because here the belief gives me hope”*; *“on Sundays we usually go to the church, meet the community, sometimes I would like to visit the church more often but have no possibilities to do that”*; *“I do not consider myself as highly religious, though sometimes I attend Mass, socialise with others”*; *“belief is highly important to me, I am glad that quite recently we have baptised out nephew in Ireland”*.

It can be assumed that this group of informants hold the remaining significance of retaining the belief as one of major elements of Lithuanian identity, besides the language and customs. The church as if unites people living far from their homes, not knowing the language, sometimes having no friends. It helps to integrate themselves, bringing families and single individuals together, eases each other’s cognition, encourages communication.

The remaining informants (5) submitted responses including a quite irrelevant treatment of religion: *“I am very busy, just no time is left for attendance of the church”*; *“belief is inside me, so there is no need to attend the church”*; *“I do not treat religion as highly significant, I’d rather trust in my capacities”*. It is obvious that belief is not important to this group of informants.

On the other hand, revealed experiences of all the informants demonstrate that the concept of religion is approached in the perception of culture through habits and traditions. In this case, as Mitchell (2006) holds it, religion gives people the ideological basis; on the ground of it the culture is being created. The data analysis suggests that the norms based on Catholic ideology are transmitted via socialisation and treated as characteristics of behaviour, thinking. In the course of time, they are no longer obviously related to religion though considered as personal or universally acknowledged personality traits identified with by any person, not necessarily a Catholic. Usually, they are related to cultural values.

Having explored experiences of the research participants, we found out that majority of the informants (20) treated traditional religious festivals as important phenomena, usually linked to cultural traditions. Certain religious feasts (e.g. Christmas, Christmas Eve, Easter) widespread throughout communities of emigrants attract most of the people and are used for keeping the cultural identity for either personal or family reasons: *“...in our family, among relatives it has always been popular to celebrate both Easter and Christmas. Others celebrate, too”*; *“we try to follow the traditions and we always celebrate Christmas”*; *“usually at Easter we decorate eggs, but no longer attend the church”*; *“we always arrange Christmas Eve (buy herring), but don’t celebrate other other feasts”*; *“we try to maintain Lithuanian culture and traditions – I concern all feasts that we would celebrate in Lithuania”*; *“I can’t imagine anyone not attending the church during the feasts; after all, our grandparents and parents taught us so, such is our culture”*.

It can be stated that the informants perceive religious festivals as needed and necessary; though, not referring to religious motives but rather mainstream traditions. It is obvious that majority of Lithuanians living in Ireland identify religious festivals with the retention of cultural traditions. To put it in other words, the religious background as if loses its meaning and is constructed as a cultural identity only.

Having transcribed and analysed experiences of the informants according to their age and gender, one important aspect was revealed: it was found out that both older and younger informants were in favour of celebration of religious festivals, i.e. (as the informants stated) continuation of *cultural traditions* in family. Also, it was found out that most often the role of women was observed in the process of continuation of the traditions: *“the mother does everything”; “it’s the business of the wife to prepare for Christmas Eve”*.

Moreover, the informants also listed other cultural events as important in the enshrining of cultural traditions. Representatives of the younger generation (9) are in favour of concerts of Lithuanian music: *“...here I always try to attend Lithuanian concerts”; “in Lithuania I would listen to Lithuanian music only on the radio. I enjoy attending concerts delivered by arriving Dambrauskas, Džordana or other singers”; “I like attending concerts of Lithuanian songs; it seems that here they sound in a different way”; “when residing in Lithuania it was not so interesting to go to Lithuanian events”*.

Authors (Čiubrinskas 2011; Brubaker, 2004; Kuznecovienė, 2014 etc.) hold it that the cultural identity usually can be revealed through emphasising citizenship as employed for individual’s identification with a particular state and actions of a citizen – obeys its norms, takes part in certain activities, uses particular symbols which do not exist without the sense endowed by that individual. To be true, the informants (12) of the survey indicated Lithuanian symbols (basketball, amber, the national flag) as the meaning of the enshrining of the cultural and civic identity. Majority of the informants listed basketball, Lithuanian flag, amber, a branchy spit cake šakotis etc. as a major and most important symbol: *“Everyone recognises us as representatives of the land of basketball. I have a T-shirt with a Lithuanian flag to wear sometimes. In Lithuania I would probably not wear it.”; “While living in Lithuania, during the basketball championship I would hoist a flag on my car, but here I would be misunderstood, unless Lithuanians would notice me”; “at home I have the national flag and show it to my guests, tell them our history”; “I always bring amber souvenirs from Lithuania – because they are part of our culture”; “I buy a branchy spit cake šakotis for festive occasions”*.

Even though not all informants explained what the symbols meant to them, nevertheless, it is obvious that when talking about traditions of the enshrining of the culture, the meaning of Lithuanian symbols is presented as a phenomenon giving sense to Lithuanianness, national-cultural identity.

Having transcribed the experiences reflecting the cultural identity of the informants, the dimension of food, its production and meaning in the emigration situation appeared. It was found out that majority of the informants living in Ireland listed nutrition habits as part of the cultural identity while living in a foreign country. Hence, responses of the part of the respondents (7) included an indifferent view to the Lithuanian tradition of food: *“We can buy Lithuanian food but we usually eat out”; “I miss the cold beet-root soup but here is no kefir like in Lithuania”; “at the beginning I only missed bread very much; but already got accustomed”*.

Analysis of respondents’ responses also revealed an indifferent point of view to Lithuanian food. 3 informants stated that they did not give the prominence to Lithuanian food; moreover, their higher salary enabled them to not save money and choose eating out: *“I don’t understand what’s the different in what to eat? Here are plenty of*

cafes and the selection of food is huge"; *"my salary is sufficient and I don't even think that I will eat potatoes when living in Ireland"*; *"I can tell that food here is way much better and healthier than in Lithuania"*.

Also, a cosmopolitan (2) point of view to the characteristics of nutrition has been noticed: *"I just even more wish to know the cuisine of a different country"*; *"I try to eat traditional Irish food. Because I live here, I must be interested in what is eaten by them"*.

A point of view to cuisine by some research participants (4) was slightly different: *"I try that my family and especially children would not break of Lithuanian food"*; *"I often buy Lithuanian food because we can purchase it here without a problem"*; *"I cook potato pancakes and sometimes a flat potato dish to my friend, though I not always succeed in it"*.

Nevertheless, dealing with the research data, it can supposed that the emigrants' point of view to the tradition of food in emigration can be treated as one more element of the cultural identity. For instance, the table at Christmas Eve, in Lithuania and Ireland alike, is one of the most popular traditional moments of the festive event: *"we always try to fast"*; *"in Lithuanian shops we buy special Christmas Eve biscuits"*; *"we make poppy seed milk"*. Further, customs related to Christmas Eve dinner were mentioned: *"sometimes we even lay hay"*; *"we go to listen to the neighbours' dogs"*; *"we break Christmas wafers"*; *"we remember the relatives who stayed in Lithuania"*.

Thus, we can state that nutrition traditions also become the manifestation of the cultural identity; and religious festivals are treated as cultural celebrations and simply turned into family traditions.

Conclusions

Analysis of literary sources allows stating that the problem of cultural identity is usually treated as policy of integration of immigrants into a certain state. Citizens living in another state face a particular culture and are usually forced to make significant changes in their lives, to adapt to the changing environment. The cultural identity is the attribution of the self to a certain national group holding certain characteristic features, traits, values or types of activities. Researchers emphasise that the cultural identity is not only the whole of inborn characteristics, but also the personal dimension which is being consciously developed and created. The carried out research shows that, when living in emigration, traditions, values, moral principles established in families are revealed through language, religion, attendance of cultural events, perception of the meaning of national symbols, the making of food etc. The experiences of the informants bring the evidence that traditional religious festivals are usually embraced as cultural awareness through habits and traditions. Religion gives the ideological basis to ground on when creating culture. The data analysis reveals that the norms based on Catholic ideology are transferred via socialisation and treated as characteristics of own behaviour, thinking. In the course of time, they are no longer being obviously related to religion, just treated as personal or universally acknowledged personal traits which can be related to cultural values.

Summary

The processes of globalisation and integration taking place in the European Union, the increased mobility of residents, emigration unavoidably raise questions of nationality, cultural identity, retention of nationalism etc. It is obvious that standing out challenges brought about by the twenty-first century make impact not only on people's value attitudes, life style but also on formation of the changes in the cultural national identity. The problem of cultural identity is usually treated as policy of integration of immigrants into a certain state. Researchers observe that processes of globalisation unavoidably make impact on every nation; however, national values, culture much depend on the principled attitudes of the community and individuals as well as on their striving to keep the identity (identity, traditions, language etc.). The discussed relevance of the problem enabled us formulating the research object: manifestation of Lithuanian cultural identity in emigration. The research aim is to reveal the tendencies of manifestation of the cultural identity in Lithuanian workers belonging to the community of Lithuanian emigrants in Ireland. Aiming to find out the tendencies of manifestation of the cultural identity determined by globalisation, the research focused on the target group comprising the community of Lithuanian emigrants living in Ireland because, according to the population census in 2015, approximately 84,958 individuals born in Lithuania currently are living in Ireland. The research surveyed 23 Lithuanians (representatives of workers) residing in the central area of Ireland who have emigrated since 1999 and remained for permanent residence in Ireland. The age of the surveyed varies from 35 to 60. The research sample included 16 women and 7 men. The research involved the informants who already have lived for at least 10 years in emigration. All informants perform unqualified physical job (receptionists, constructors, car washers, hotel cleaning staff, drivers) in Ireland. The informants have been selected to the survey by employing the methods of snowball sampling and convenient sampling. Part of the informants (12) were surveyed during their visit to Lithuania, 7 communicated with the researchers via Skype program, the rest (4) filled in open type questionnaires in Ireland and sent them to the researchers via email.

The carried out research shows that, when living in emigration, traditions, values, moral principles established in families are revealed through language, religion, attendance of cultural events, perception of the meaning of national symbols, the making of food etc. The cultural identity usually can be revealed through emphasising citizenship as employed for individual's identification with a particular state and actions of a citizen – obeys its norms, takes part in certain activities, uses particular symbols which do not exist without the sense endowed by that individual. The experiences of the informants bring the evidence that traditional religious festivals are usually embraced as cultural awareness through habits and traditions. Religion gives the ideological basis to ground on when creating culture. The data analysis reveals that the norms based on Catholic ideology are transferred via socialisation and treated as characteristics of own behaviour, thinking. In the course of time, they are no longer being obviously related to religion, just treated as personal or universally acknowledged personal traits which can be related to cultural values.

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