

Discursive construction of migrants' identity and the image of their Motherland

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Various political, economic, historical or personal reasons have stimulated people to look for better places to live, work and study, making migration a characteristic feature of some processes in national economies, and of political changes in Europe. Consequently, migration has also become a topic discussed in media, politics and private communication. It has also become a subject that influenced the discourse and changed it. It has influenced the discourses of those in the country; but incomparably more has it influenced the discourse of migrants themselves.

The present study is an attempt to analyze the representation of the image of the motherland in the discourse of migrants. Their discourse has specific features that may help understand the influences that the experience of migration has made on migrants' identity (on identity, cf. Ainsworth, Susan – Cynthia Hardy 2004; Vertovec 2001), mentality and social viewpoint.

The study is conducted within the CDA model (van Dijk, 1993), so that it attempts to contribute to a better understanding of a pressing social issue. It is also informed by discourse-historical method (Wodak, 1990; de Cillia – Reisigl – Wodak, 1995; Wodak – Weiss, 2005).

The data come from the topic oriented, tape-recorded interviews conducted with the Poles who worked in the UK. A rather formal atmosphere of such interviews may be a distorting factor. To decrease that, the interviewers tried to create a friendly atmosphere, approximated to the relaxed tone of a private conversation. Still, some respondents were reluctant to express any negative opinion on a matter under discussion.

The analysis of the interviews has showed that there are several common patterns in migrants' discourse. First, the concept of the motherland is a very strong referent for the Polish migrants. The host country is often confronted with the homeland, the comparison becomes the framing of the discourse evidenced by the set of comparative adjectives.

Secondly, the discourse of the Polish migrants is characteristic of "us – non-us" dichotomy construction. They tend to refer to the objects of denotation using personal and possessive pronouns, e.g. "we", "with us", "our people", "our youth", etc. Through this linguistic strategy migrants identify themselves strongly with their motherland and its society, and contrast themselves with a foreign land.

Thirdly, a stay abroad has given migrants a perspective on their motherland. It enabled them to reevaluate their own country and to understand it better. This function is realized through discourse of change, development and improvement.

Finally, the experience of migration has significantly influenced the mentality of migrants. They tend to adopt patterns of behavior they have seen abroad and considered appropriate. They then transfer those patterns to their everyday life in the homeland. This is motivated by the conceptual metaphor *MIGRATION IS LEARNING* (on conceptual metaphors see Lakoff 1993, Koller 2003). It reflects the tremendous value of living in a foreign country to a person's outlook, growth and character.