

Dynamics of sociocultural and linguistic identity in the process of socialisation in a multicultural society

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Abstract

The relevance of the problem of socialisation in multicultural space is extremely high. Its significance is connected with the processes of globalisation and increasing migration. In this situation, the sociocultural and, especially, linguistic identity can be analysed as a bonding and bridging social capital that helps or complicates socialisation, depending on the specifics of the social situation. These assumptions were checked in the empirical research of the sociocultural and linguistic identity of the three groups of ethnic Germans: living in Russia, in the CIS and those who moved to Germany. The obtained data showed the bilingualism of the majority of respondents. At the same time, respondents from Russia and Germany consider both Russian and German languages as native, while respondents from the CIS no longer regard German as their mother language. For them, ethnic, not linguistic, identity is the most essential for socialisation in a multicultural society. For Germans living in Russia, on the contrary, both languages help in communication and in professional activity. For the Germans, who now live in Germany, the Russian language helps in understanding their sociocultural specifics. The future is associated with the German language. Our respondents answer that the main group of socialisation for them is the family. This was especially marked in the answers of respondents living in Russia and Germany. So, we can state that in a complex multicultural environment, the family for them is not only a group for socialisation, but also an object of identity, partly playing the role of psychological defence and support in a changing world. The obtained results also showed a tendency towards individualisation. For the respondents from Russia and Germany, the main identity groups, besides family, are professional groups and groups with common interests. Thus, it can be concluded that linguistic identity plays the role of both bonding and bridging social capital.

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In positive socialisation, sociocultural identity plays the role of a bridging rather than a connecting capital. Mixed linguistic identity is predominantly a positive moment, increasing socialisation in a multicultural environment.

Keywords: Socialisation, transitivity, identity, multicultural world.

1. Introduction

The relevance and significance of socialisation in the modern changing and multicultural space is connected with both social transitivity and expansion of interpersonal and intergroup communication (Bauman, 2008; Belinskaya, 2005; Belinskaya & Dubovskaya, 2009). Globalisation and mass migrations of people have spread out socialisation borders and require the knowledge of culture, the language of the new social environment and the positive attitude towards norms and standards of native and foreign culture (Habermas, 2003).

The fluidity and variability of values and norms are, in many ways, the cause of the growing anxiety and tension of people who find it increasingly difficult to adapt to the ever-changing 'rules of the game' (Berger & Lukman, 1995). Therefore, we can talk about the principle continuity of the process of socialisation. The cardinal and contradictory nature of the changes has led to the uncertainty in the social expectations of people and ambivalence in their attitude to value orientations and norms. This resulted in negative changes in the context of social identity of the older generation, and, as a consequence, the complexity in the transmission of norms and values to the younger generation (Andreeva, 2012; Martsinkovskaya, 2015).

The expansion of migration processes and the associated large-scale transformations of the social and cultural context raise the problem of socialisation not only for children, but also for adults. Therefore, the concept of resocialisation is currently being modernised. The main characteristic of resocialisation is the ability of adequate behaviour in unforeseen social situations. For children, this situation is not directly operative; however, the increasingly manifested resocialisation of adults indirectly, but very powerfully, affects their emotional state, as well as the necessity to expand the set of learned norms, standards and languages. Language socialisation is the focus of many investigations, but the transmission of norms and standards in different social groups is analysed very rarely, although in big and small cities the process of such transmission is quite different (Khuzeeva, 2016).

It is no coincidence that, in recent years, the question of constructing a linguistic identity, primarily the linguistic identity of small nations, has become one of the priority activities of the European community. No less attention is paid to the question of combining of the state and minority languages in the content of their linguistic identity (Andreeva, 2012; Martsinkovskaya, 2013). At the same time, attention is drawn to the desirability of priority development of sociocultural, rather than ethnic, identity because it helps to produce interaction between people of different nationalities among themselves.

In conditions of a transitive society, inculturation, acceptance and appropriation of culture are some of the important factors determining the success of socialisation in new conditions (Belinskaya & Tikhomandritskaya, 2001; Andreeva & Dontsov, 2002; Martsinkovskaya, 2015). Therefore, it is culture that can be the basis for the formation of the sociocultural identity of people in a new situation. Unlike culture, the role of language in the process of formation of a sociocultural identity is ambiguous (Dontsov, Stefanenko & Utalieva, 1997). Apparently, we can talk about the complex relationship of languages, culture and identity (sociocultural, ethnic, personal, group, etc.). It seems that for the analysis of sociocultural and, especially, linguistic identity it may be productive to use concepts of bonding and bridging social capital (Portes, 1998; Putnam, 2002; Bourdieu, 2002; Coleman, 2001), which help or complicate socialisation, depending on the specifics of the social situation.

2. The aim of the study

These assumptions were checked in the empirical research of sociocultural and linguistic identity of the three groups of ethnic Germans: living in Russia, in the CIS and those who moved to Germany. The purpose of this study was to examine the role of natives/native languages and cultures in the process of socialisation in a multicultural space.

We assumed that in different sociocultural conditions, the role of language in the process of socialisation will change significantly. The main parameter from our point of view is not the knowledge of the language, but the emotional attitude to it and its connection with the general culture (national and international).

2.1. Participants and methods

This research study was conducted based on the following:

- Association of 'Russian Germans', 125 respondents aged from 20 to 30 years;
- Association of 'Russian Germans' in CIS, 97 respondents aged from 21 to 30 years;
- Association of 'Russian Germans' in Frankfurt and Berlin, 83 respondents aged from 19 to 30 years.

This study was conducted in 2016–2017. All the participants gave their consent to participate in the study.

3. Methods

The 'Socialisation' technique (Martsinkovskaya, 2015), which estimates the level of socialisation and emotional comfort; the 'Attitude to language' questionnaire (Martsinkovskaya, 2015); and the 'Structure of identity' questionnaire (Martsinkovskaya, 2015) were used in this study.

4. Results

The obtained data showed the bilingualism of the majority of respondents. Majority of the respondents answered that their native languages are both Russian and German. They also stressed on their positive attitude towards both the languages. Respondents from Russia and Germany considered both Russian and German languages as native, while respondents from the CIS no longer regarded German as their mother language. They lived in countries that were new, and the native language for these countries was a different mother language (mainly Kazakh language). That is why even the Russian language is not the main language for them. For them, ethnic, not linguistic, identity is the most essential for socialisation in a multicultural society. Therefore, the different social situations led to different attitudes, not only for language itself, but also for its role in the future (Figure 1).

The obtained data also show that for Germans living in Russia and in Germany, languages help to realise their national and sociocultural identity. For respondents from CIS, their national identity is not connected with languages. But Russian and German languages help them to communicate with elder relatives. In Russia and Germany, both languages help in communication and in professional activity. Although for the Germans who now live in Germany, the Russian language helps in communications; however, the professional future is associated mainly with the German language (Figure 2).

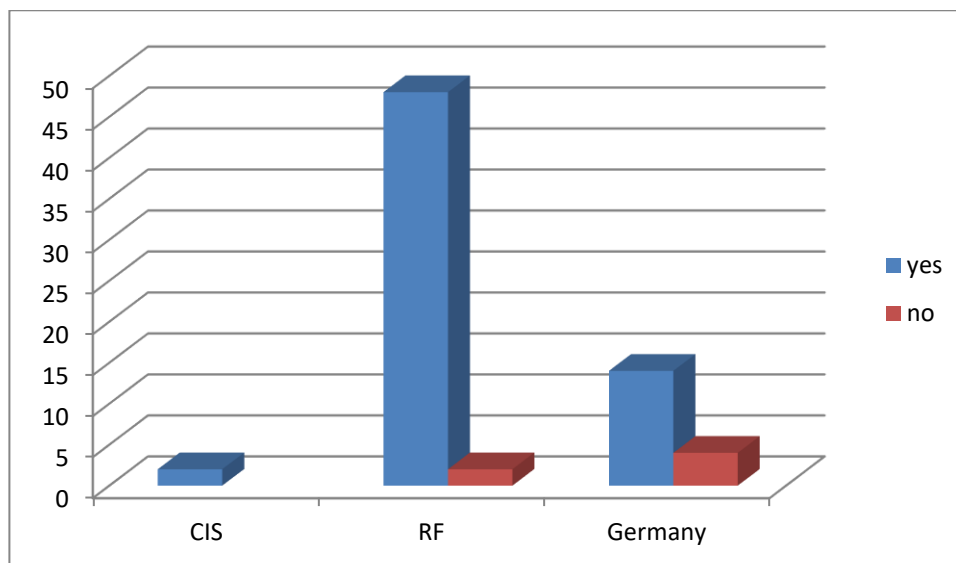


Figure 1. Do you think that your future is connected with native language and culture?

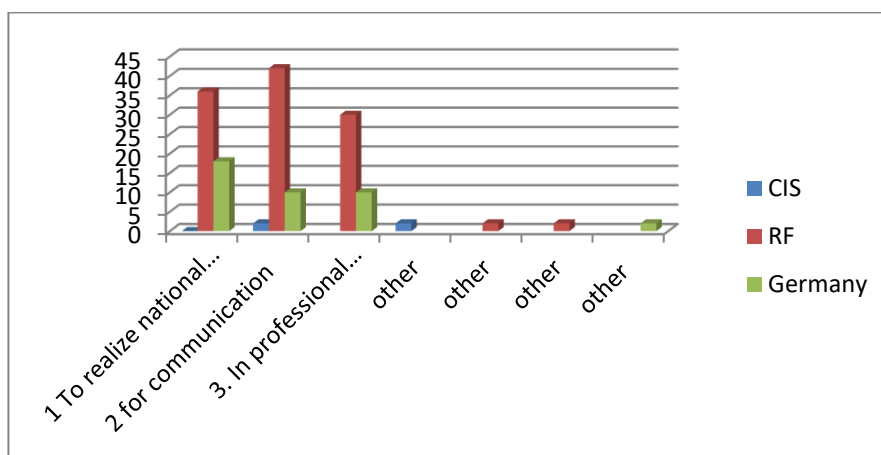


Figure 2. For what do you need your native language?

The analysis of the process of socialisation showed that, for the majority of our respondents from all countries, the main group of socialisation is the family. As it can be expected, the family is also the leading identity group (Figure3).

The role of family was especially marked in the answers of respondents living in Russia and Germany. So, we can state that in a complex multicultural environment, family for them is not only a group of socialisation, but also an object of identity, partly playing the role of the psychological defence and support in a changing world. For the respondents from CIS, the important identity group is nationality, which corresponds with their linguistic identity.

The obtained results also show a tendency towards individualisation. For the respondents from Russia and Germany, the main identity groups, besides family, are professional groups and groups with common interests.

It corresponds with the data obtained to the questions about structure of identity. Personal identity is very important for all respondents, especially from Russia and Germany (Figure 4). Perhaps, the collectivism in the mentality of main CIS countries decreases this tendency in answers of respondents. The poor data in Germany may be connected with the adaptation to a new social environment.

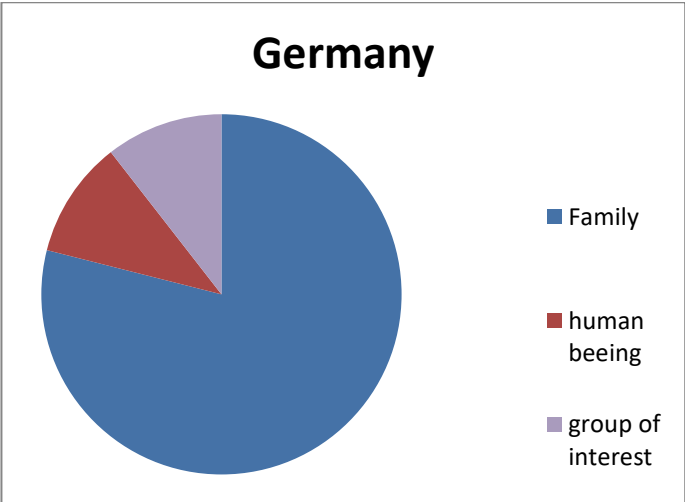
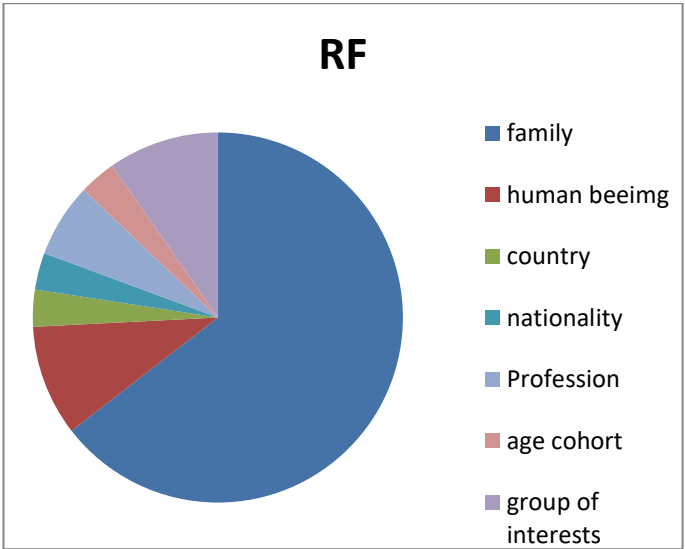
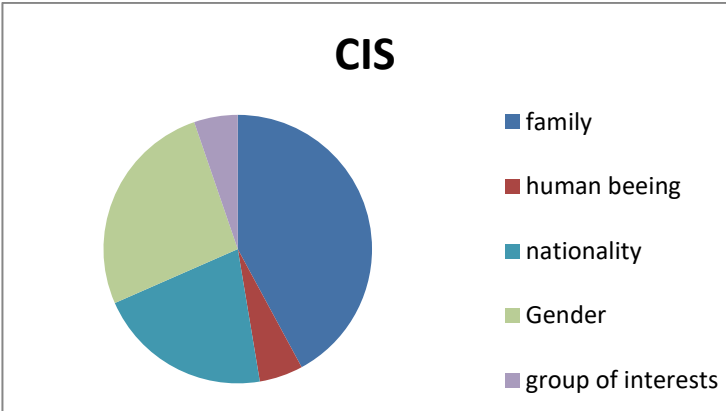


Figure 3. The structure of sociocultural identity



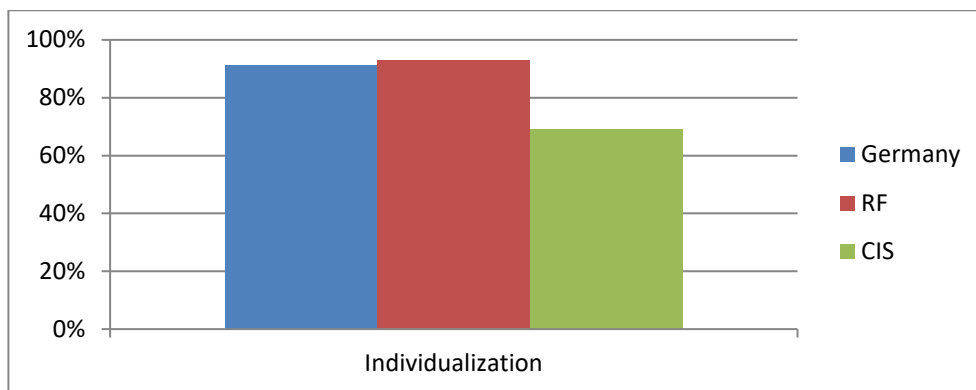


Figure 4. Personal identity

Figure 5 shows the comparative analysis of the contents of whole identity.

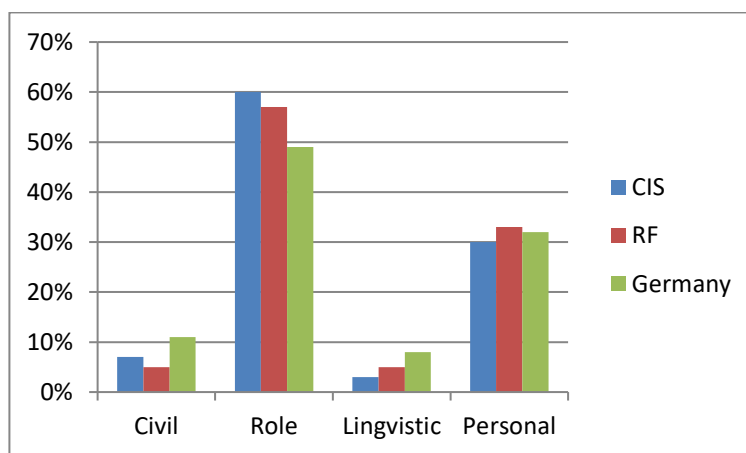


Figure 5. Content of identity in different groups

As we can see, the linguistic and civil identities do not mean much to respondents from all countries. But it is important to mark that not personal, as they say, but role identity plays a leading role, especially in CIS.

5. Discussion

The analysis of the role of sociocultural and linguistic identities shows that they can be viewed and function as both bonding and bridging social capitals. In the context of a monocultural environment, it is the sociocultural identity, i.e., the identification of oneself with a given culture, with a specific social environment, that helps to establish trustworthy contacts. We can also see that in some aspects such variants are arising in CIS, where ‘Russian Germans’ completely identify themselves with the main culture and social environment. This is why we can say that their identity implies the mutual acceptance of a person and a group. Such mutual acceptance is also connected with the development of positive social emotions towards norms and standards of behaviour, ways of organising interactions and constructing new contacts. Thus, in this situation, the sociocultural identity functions as a bonding social capital, especially when joint activities are needed for achieving an important goal or for overcoming obstacles.

In a situation of transitivity, which occurred during the formation of CIS after SSSR, it is the sociocultural identity which created a bonding social capital, that helped ‘Russian Germans’ to maintain their national integrity and for the older generation to maintain the continuity of individual

stages of life. This is why national (ethnic) identity is more important for them in comparison to linguistic identity.

However, with significant transformations, this form of social capital can become a source of social isolation, isolation of the ‘mother’ culture from other social and cultural groups. It can also perform as either stigmatised or aggressive positions towards others. Fortunately, there is no stigmatised or aggressive phenomenology in the answers of all our respondents. But may be the leading position of family and role identity as the socialisation phenomenology is the mark of negative consequences of such a connection of sociocultural identity with bonding social capital.

In this respect, linguistic identity is much more flexible. It presupposes, first of all, the possibility of adequate communication between members of one group, linguistic or social. The presence of semantic dominants and slang words, and adverbs, which are also present in the language and enter into the linguistic identity, increases the confidence of contacts between members of the group and optimises their interaction. That is why the position of ‘Russian Germans’ in Russia and Germany, for whom the linguistic identity is very important, seems more productive.

It is due to the fact that the functioning of identity in the context of bridging social capital becomes more optimal for intra-group and inter-group communications and interactions in the modern world. Constant changes in groups and social structures presuppose the flexibility of both sociocultural and linguistic identities, especially when people change the place of residence and/or constant contacts with people speaking another language. The main positive socialisation of the majority of people, who moved from Russia to Germany, may be connected to the fact that socialisation in the framework of bridging social capital is not connected to refusing or forgetting of the native language or culture, as it is implicit in the classical concepts of identity. It was often stated earlier that there are only two variants of socialisation in a multicultural society – identification with one group, culture, language or marginalisation of a person.

Our results show that the study of sociocultural and linguistic identities within the framework of bridging social capital can explain the positive dynamic of socialisation in a multicultural society (Germany, Moscow) because our respondents have a good knowledge of new cultural standards and language, and the ability to flexibly use the available knowledge in constructing new contacts and cooperating with people belonging to a different culture.

6. Conclusion

Thus, it can be concluded that linguistic identity plays the role of both bonding and bridging social capitals in different social circumstances. In positive socialisation, sociocultural identity plays the role of a bridging capital rather than a connecting capital. Mixed linguistic identity is predominantly a positive moment, increasing socialisation in a multicultural environment. Ethnic and linguistic aspects of culture can act as intolerant parameters that obstruct the development of sociocultural identity in a multicultural space.

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