

Is my home (where) my language (is)? on Some Identity Aspects of the Croatian Emigrants Descendants

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ABSTRACT

Phenomena such as language and identity are often related. For instance, language is one of the very important criteria for determining someone's ethnicity so it is possible to talk about pervasion of ethnic identity and mother tongue.

Reflections on language are often followed by ideas about its diffusion and by that fact state borders don't have to be a criterion of its spatial finiteness. Members of the Croatian minority language communities live in many countries (e.g. Italy, Austria, Hungary). Presence of Croatian language in those countries is, among other, a result of migrations in the past.

People were emigrating from Croatia in several occasions towards different destinations in the world. Despite of a new and broader cultural milieu in distant countries, they kept part of their identity through the communication with their closest family members. Among many questions that Croatian emigrants were confronted with, it is believed that identity is one of the most complex. Many descendants of those emigrants were attending language courses in Croaticum – Centre for Croatian as a second and foreign language in Croatia. In their case Croatian language is their heritage language (Jelaska 2005: 27).

The aim of this paper is description of what kind of images, attitudes and knowledge some Croatian emigrants' descendants had when they came to the homeland of their ancestors and how Croatia and Croatian language look like through their newly gained perception. The data for this paper are reached by open-ended questionnaire, unstructured interview and biography method. Qualitative analysis of those data could serve as a model for the interpretation of how the descendants of Croatian emigrants see themselves, among other, through communication in languages that identify them.

Language identity is a field of interest of many disciplines (e.g. sociolinguistics, philosophy). In this paper reflections on language identity are gaining ground in glotodidactic experiences.