

TCKS ON IDENTITY AND THE MOTHER TONGUE IN THE GLOBAL WORLD

Globalization is often associated with integration among different countries, and it expresses itself in political and economic borderless links, social and cultural cooperation. Globalization process is commonly understood as the driving force that promotes the global progressive development. The world is becoming more connected and more dynamic, more technologically advanced and more mobile. However, globalization also brings out conflicting processes which create situations that require efforts to settle them down.

Identity issue and the identification of the mother tongue of an individual have become a commonality in life and manifest themselves on various levels and in a variety of forms. With fundamental changes in political, economic, social and cultural life individuals in societies undergo a process of reorientation and adaptation to new living conditions, including the transformation of values and related changes in attitudes, lifestyles, norms of behavior and behavior itself. Influenced by these factors, the system of national identity is also transforming. This transformation also remodels the understanding of the mother tongue concept and personal identification to the mother tongue language.

The current research focuses on the subject how international university students who name themselves as „Third-culture kids“ (TCKs) understand their identity, what similarities with other people and differences from them they single out and what they believe their mother tongue is.

Who are TCKs?

According to them, TCKs are people who have more than one home. Two or more cultures clash in TCKs. It can be someone who was born in one country but lives in another one. It can also be a person whose parents are of different nationalities or it can be a person who was born and was raised in one culture but ethnically belongs to a different culture. The 21st century is the century of globalization with people moving around a lot. Statistical data provides that the estimated number of TCKs in 2019 was 220 million.

Do TCKs face problems in establishing their identity and naming their mother tongue?

TCKs are often asked questions Where are you from? What's your native language? TCKs say that they have more than one answer to such questions. Let's refer to some examples where TCKs speak about their nationality and their origin.

Q.: What's your nationality“

A.: That's a tough question. My passport says that I am Jordanian, but my origin is Palestinian. My dad is Jordanian-Palestinian and my mom is also Jordanian-Palestinian. I was born and raised in Qatar.

Q.: How many language do you speak?

A.: I speak two languages fluently – arabic which is my mother tongue and English.

Q.: What does identity mean to you?

A.: Identity for me is something that is never changing and that represents me as a person. For me identity represents who you are. It consists of your culture, your values. For me this is very important. I make sure that I do not lose my sense of identity. And this may happen among new surrounding. I make sure that I maintain consciousness regarding what my identity is.

Q.: Where is your home?

A.: Home for me is a place where I feel a sense of comfort. And this is not related to phisical comfort, this is what we call mental comfort, emotional comfort. I was born and raised in Qatar, so a hundred percent Qatar is home. When speaking about Jordan I have visited it about ten times, but when I go there I feel comfort from my extended family. They treat me like I am incredible. And this is why I tell you that for me home is where I feel comfort.

Q.: What is the most interesting thing about your TCK identity?

A.: The biggest pro is adaptability. The biggest con is dealing constantly with identity crises.

Getting adapted, according to TCKs, can also be a challenge. TCKs may move to another country with a completely different culture and ethnical background. Above all, they point out that there are cases when TCKs experience the absence of the sense of belonging to a culture when a person has more than one culture.

Are there any advantages of being a TCK?

Yes, there are quite a few. TCKs are happy that they can speak several languages. They describe themselves as open-minded, embracing differences an

the otherness of other people. They find it easier to adapt to new environment as they have already experienced this reality and not once.

In conclusion, TCKs are willing to build relationships with other cultures since they do not carry a strict affiliation to some concrete cultural identity. They often have cross-cultural competence and they can effectively function in different cultural backgrounds.