

STEREOTYPE OF A LITHUANIAN IN TEENS' LANGUAGE

Summary

This article, based on the study of data from writing samples by 11-13 year-old teens, explores what kind of a Lithuanian stereotype is etched in younger teens' worldview as reflected through their language, and the extent to which teens identify themselves with the Lithuanian stereotype in their own understanding of their own identity. In efforts to identify shifts in the development of a Lithuanian stereotype, Lithuanian stereotype and its view through teens' language is compared to research data collected by linguists among groups of students and older age groups (35-65 year olds).

For purposes of the study of a Lithuanian stereotype, 246 samples of writing written by 62 teens from 10 different Lithuanian schools were selected. The analyzed samples were originally written by students who completed assignments, in which: 1) they were asked to describe Lithuanians from a list of 37 antonymic traits, which students could (but did not have to) refer to; 2) they were asked how, in their option, Lithuanians are viewed by other nationals; 3) they were asked to describe a representative of another nation; (4) they were asked to create a portrait of a typical Lithuanian.

Analysis of a Lithuanian stereotype was based on J. Bartmiński singled out evaluation criteria of a national representative based on: 1) one's relationship with the material life; 2) mental and intellectual properties; 3) relationship with other people, and 4) attitude towards the world, homeland, religion. Based on these criteria, A. Gudavičius analyzed national stereotypes among groups of students and older age groups (35-65 years of age). After analyzing teens 'writing samples, J. Bartmiński singled out criteria were supplemented by the national identity criteria and physical features ascribed to the national stereotype. Therefore, the contents of a Lithuanian stereotype in teens 'writing was analyzed based on five criteria: 1) relationship to material life; 2) mental and intellectual features, 3) relationship with the national identity, 4) relationship with others and 5) physical features.

Analysis of writings by teens in their early years (11–13 years of age) shows, that the worldview of teens at this age has a developed Lithuanian stereotype. Understanding, that Lithuanians do differ, most of the teens view the stereotype based on supported-by-time, generalized by the majority of their nation's representatives' assessments. Lithuanians, as representatives of their nation, are identified by teens by their ethnic origin, by their belonging to the nation, and by their cultural identity. Teens ascribe features of a Lithuanian stereotype to nation's representatives while supporting their attitudes based on social and cultural arguments. Most teens identify themselves with the Lithuanian stereotype, often times expressing their relationship to it by using a personal pronoun *we*.

Teens characterized Lithuanians by using 67 descriptions: 48 of which were lexemes and word derivatives with a positive connotation, and 19 – negative. While describing the Lithuanian stereotype, 53.4 per cent of students ascribed only positive features, whereas only negative features were named among 3.4 per cent of the teens. Of the positive Lithuanian stereotype features the largest portion of students highlight “tireless work” and Lithuanian intellectual assets, referring to them through such words as “intellectual”, “wise”, “smart”; negative characteristics include being “sad”, “conservative” and “lack of self-worth”. When comparing analysis of data among groups of teens and students and older age groups, one may state, that “being hard working” and “smart” are some of the most solid Lithuanian traits that show the worldview through the Lithuanian language.

Teens often ascribe to their nationals antonymic feature pairs. For example, a Lithuanian is ascribed “openness” and ‘introverted-ness,’ and descriptions of “cheerfulness” and “sadness” frequent writings of the same respondents. It is noteworthy, that “openness” and “cheerfulness”, as the Lithuanian traits, is observed only in samples of writings by teens. The question of whether Lithuanian stereotype features identified only in students' language are the indicators of the shift in Lithuanian stereotype perception can be determined after conducting empirical analysis among older students (16–18 years of age).

When comparing Lithuanian stereotype assessment among Lithuanian teens and students and older age groups, one can state, that teens view Lithuanian stereotype most positively, ascribing to it more positive features than respondents do from other age groups.

KEYWORDS: students' language, stereotype, language world-view.

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