

THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF THE MIGRANT IDENTITY IN CROATIA

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ABSTRACT

The paper identifies the discursive strategies which shape the migrant identity in Croatia. Within such a concept, discourse is seen as a linguistic fact, an area of the social power manifestation and the ideological tool of (de)legitimation. Because of the need for identifying the ways of the construction of migrant identity and the structure of the social images (ideologies) of that vulnerable group, the emphasis is on the analysis and the problem of discourse control and changes of the migrant perception in Croatia. The starting point is the analysis of the texts on the Internet portals and in the daily press about migrants in the period from August and September 2015 to January 2017. Informal conversations during that period with the residents of one Zagreb block are also taken into consideration. The collected texts are divided in two groups. The first group contains the texts about Croatian politicians and their points of view regarding the migrants; the second group consists of the texts about foreign politicians published in the Croatian media. The texts of the Zagreb residents are analysed in the same way. In view of the comparative linguistic (discursive) analysis of the data, it is concluded that there are three migrant micro identities which represent the components of the migrant identity as a whole. Each of the three micro identities (aspects of the complete migrant identity) is primarily connected to the specific period between September 2015 and January 2017, but it is confirmed that all three micro identities coexist in synchrony. The following identified discourse constructed identities are: the first related to the perception of migrants as people who need help, which comprises the first chronological micro identity; followed by the change in the migrant identification according to the understanding of that group of people as a (potential) danger; the third and final micro identity is structured around the understanding of the migrants as a foreign body, which should be removed. In the text analysis, certain linguistic expressions dominate the specific period as characteristic for each discursive micro identity. Additionally, the correspondence between the written and spoken texts is observed, and the structured (linguistic) ideologies are recognized among three prevailing components of the migrant identity. It is shown that all three micro identities coexist at the moment, but one is dominant.

Keywords: migrants, identity, Croatia, media, discourse

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