

## **Analysis of Selected Aspects of Cultural Identity in Compositions by Young Learners from the Baltic States based on Data from Baltic Young Learners of English Corpus Project**

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### **Abstract**

*The following article analyses selected aspects of cultural identity. These aspects include family, migration/globalization, and national identity. Since Stuart Hall's work was the most prominent to the formation and development of cultural studies, the particular aspects of cultural identity were chosen according to Hall's theory. Thus, national identity represents a core of the cultural identity, family represents stability, and, as a contrary, migration is chosen as a symbol of instability. The main source for this research is compositions written by 12-year-old Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian young learners within the framework of the BYLEC (Baltic Young Learners of English Corpus) project. The main focus of the research was to compare the constituents of cultural identity in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. These constituents included the references in young learners' compositions towards national identity, family, and migration/globalization. The results indicated that most of the ideas are shared among the Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians. The literature on the topic suggested that Lithuanians and Latvians have more in common, for example, mass migration and similar economic situation. However, the findings in young learners' compositions contradict this tendency. Although in some instances Estonians express a somewhat different point of view from their neighbours in Lithuania and Latvia, it constitutes a small number of examples.*

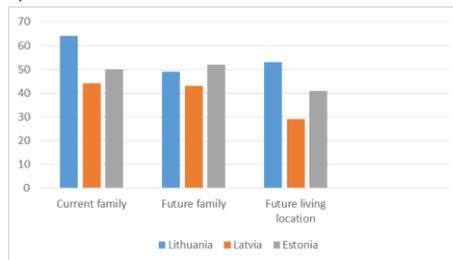
**Key words:** Stuart Hall, cultural identity, family, migration, globalization, national identity, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia.

## **BRIEFLY ON DATA AND METHODS**

The data was collected from the Baltic Young Learners of English Corpus (BYLEC, hereafter) international project involving 12-year- old participants. The project was coordinated by Stellan Sundh from Uppsala University in Sweden. The participating countries were Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, Sweden, and Poland (Sundh BYLEC 2016-2017). The learners had to produce a text on one of the six topics: “A Place I Like”, “Me in the World in the Future”, “My Pet”, “My Friend”, “My e-life: My Favourite Website/Computer Game/App”, and “The Adventure/the Journey of My Life” (Sundh BYLEC 2016-2017). The research focused on the compositions written on the following topics: “A Place I Like”, “Me in the World in the Future”, and “The Adventure/Journey of My Life”. In order to collect the relevant examples, 603 compositions were read: 209 written by Lithuanian, 216 by Latvian, and 178 by Estonian young learners. Naturally, the target examples were found not in every composition. Statistically, out of 209 Lithuanian compositions, 166 provided examples. In Latvian compositions, out of 216 read, the target examples were found in 116 compositions. Finally, out of the total of 178 Estonian compositions read, the examples were found in 143 compositions. While reading the compositions, the special focus was on the three aspects: the references to the current family, the references to the future family, and the references to the location of living in the future. The total numbers in each topic were as follows: Lithuanian compositions: 64 examples on current family, 49 examples on future family, and 53 examples on the future living location. The proportions of examples in Latvian compositions were 44 examples on current family, 43

examples on future family, and 29 examples on future location. Finally, the numbers in Estonian learners compositions were as follows: 50 examples on current family, 52 examples on future family, and 41 examples on future living location. These numbers are illustrated in the **Figure 1** below.

**Figure 1. The proportions of target examples by young learners from Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia**

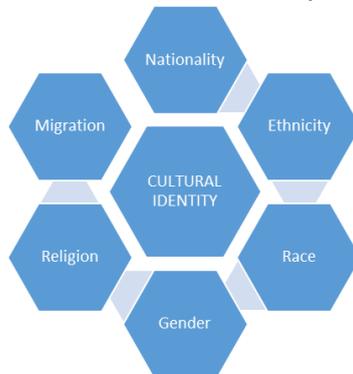


## THE CONCEPT OF CULTURAL IDENTITY

The term *cultural identity* belongs to a category where more than a few definitions can be found. To start with, it is a multi-dimensional term. As noted by Chen (2014), “cultural identity refers to identification with, or sense of belonging to, a particular group based on various cultural categories, including nationality, ethnicity, race, gender, and religion” (Chen, 2014: 1). Also, “cultural identity refers to a sense of solidarity with the ideals of a given cultural group and to the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors manifested toward one’s own (and other) cultural groups as a result of this solidarity” (Schwartz et al. 2006: 6). For Barker (1999), cultural identity is “descriptions we hold of ourselves and with which we identify” (Barker 1999: 6). *Cultural identity* derives from different social identifications, therefore it can be claimed that it is a complex term which can be defined as “multidimensional” (Woodhead and Brooker 2008), “multi-faceted” (Chen 2014), “abstract” (Samovar et al. 2009), “broadly employed” (Kim 2007), and “continuous process

rather than an accomplished fact” (Hall 1990). The **Figure 2** illustrates constituents of cultural identity.

**Figure 2. The constituents of cultural identity**



*Source: adapted from Chen 2014:1 and Hall 1990*

*Culture* and *identity* are two concepts which co-exist and supplement one another. As argued by Woodward (2002), “identities are produced, consumed and regulated within culture – creating meanings through symbolic systems of representation about the identity positions which we might adopt” (Woodward, 2002: 3). Systems of representation construct two types of meanings. Hall (1997) argues that the first system enables one to link objects, people, and events to concepts (Hall 1997: 17). As Hall (1997) states, “meaning depends on the system of concepts and images formed in our thoughts which can stand for or “represent” the world, enabling us to refer to things both inside and outside our heads” (Hall 1997: 17). Concepts, as Hall (1997) further argues, are not something random. In contrast, all the concepts one has in mind are placed according to logic and relations to one another (Hall 1997: 17-18). The second system of representation is language. Language enables people within different cultures to share their concepts. As argued by Hall (1997), “our shared conceptual map must be translated into a common language, so

that we can correlate our concepts and ideas with certain written words, spoken sounds or visual images” (Hall 1997: 18). These means of communication can be regarded as signs. Signs are organized into languages which enable one to express thoughts through concepts and use them to communicate meanings to other people (Hall 1997: 18). This sequence is represented in **Figure 3**.

**Figure 3. The sequence in the system of representation**



*Source: adapted from Hall (1997: 18)*

Hall (1990) outlines two different approaches to cultural identity. The first approach views it as a kind of shared culture. In other words, there is an expectation that behind people being individual there is an underlying, collective, “one true self”, whereby people are united by “common historical experiences and shared cultural codes” (Hall 1990: 223). The second approach outlines an opposite point of view. It emphasizes that, although, cultural identity seems to thrive on notions of similarity, elements of *difference* are also crucial to construct cultural identity (Hall 1990: 225). In essence, no one can stay the same during the course of time and one’s past shapes the identity as much as future does. As Hall (1990) argues, cultural identity “is a matter of “becoming” as well as of “being”, also, cultural identity “belongs to the future as much as to the past” (Hall 1990: 225) and it is “always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth” (Hall 1990: 226).

As argued above “cultural identity refers to identification with, or sense of belonging to, a particular group based on various cultural categories, including nationality, ethnicity, race, gender, and religion” (Chen, 2014: 1). Hall

(1990) discusses race, nationality, ethnicity, and migration as parts of cultural identity (Hall 1990, 1995, 1996, 1997). These parts of cultural identity are central in Hall's works. However, other components exist and they shape one's cultural identity.

## NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE BALTIC STATES

Smith (1991) points out that there are five particular features which distinguish national identity from other identities. Those five features are:

1. Historic territory, or homeland;
  2. common myths and historic memories;
  3. a common, mass public culture;
  4. common legal rights and duties for all members;
  5. a common economy with territorial mobility for members
- (Smith 1991: 14)

These five features constitute a nation definition “which reveals the complex and abstract nature of national identity” (Smith 1991: 14) and which can be described as “fundamentally multi-dimensional” (Smith 1991: 14), “dual” (Fabrykant 2018: 3), and “not fixed but as something that is continually negotiated and renegotiated” (Mole 2012: 3). Further on, Rindzevičiūtė (2003) points out that every nation is like an empty vessel, filled with different meanings which construct a nation's identity (Rindzevičiūtė 2003: 74). Miller (2016) argues that national identity consists of imaginary and mythical elements that can be “reshaped to meet new challenges and new needs” (Miller 2016: 448). As Miller (2016) explains, the story nation tells itself about its past is a selective one; this story might be altered according to needs and these alterations influence people's understanding of the substance of cultural identity (Miller 2016: 448). Likewise, Wilson (1997) states that “national historians must sell a plausible product that is both effective

and affective. The trick with historical myths [...] is that they must help constitute the collective identity of a social subject, in this case a nation” (Wilson 1997: 182).

Nation is a rather modern phenomenon, dating back to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century (Schopflin 1996: 220). The concept of nation existed before the 18<sup>th</sup> century, however, not with the same meaning as it is known today. If before the 18<sup>th</sup> century nations were legit by a reference to the loyalty to a ruler or religion, from the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Europe, “states could only claim to be authentic states if they were the expression of the aspirations of a particular nation” (Schopflin 1996: 220). In this sense, the nationhood became a salient factor which held together the whole nation and it could be conceptualized as simultaneously having both, civic and ethnic dimensions (Schopflin 1996, Fabrykant 2018).

The classification of nationality into ethnic and civic dates back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was invented by German historian Friedrich Meinecke, who suggested to divide national identity into two categories: civic, defined by common citizenship, and ethnic, defined by common language, religion, customs, and traditions (Fabrykant 2018: 3-4). In other words, if a country belongs to a civic type of nationalism, it does not matter where a person was born, it matters where he/she lives at the current moment. If a country is an ethnic one, it is based on people living in the same country and having the same traditions, language, customs, etc. European countries represent a mixture of civic and ethnic elements: “sometimes in competition, sometimes overlapping, as a continuous process” (Schopflin 1996: 220).

If viewing the Baltic States in respect of the civic-ethnic dichotomy, at first glance it seems that the results are rather straight forward. According to Fabrykant (2018),

at first glance, the civic-ethnic dichotomy alone can generate clear predictions on national identity and national pride in the Baltics, since evidently Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian

nation-building projects [...] belong to the ethnic kind (Fabrykant 2018: 4)

There are many factors which should make the Baltic States as representatives of pure ethnic nationalism. These factors include gaining the independence relatively late, small country size, strict citizenship laws, the borderline position – all these factors should but not necessarily make Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia pure ethnic nationalism countries (Fabrykant 2018: 4). Nevertheless, in Latvia, in addition to the national Latvian language, people use Russian language. Russians constitute 25.6%, and Russian language is used by 33.8% people (*Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, CSB*, hereafter). Similar situation is observed in Estonia: Russians constitute 24.8% of population, while Russian language is used by 29.6% (*Index Mundi*). Although this cannot be said about Lithuania, where Russians constitute only 5.8% of population (*Index Mundi*), “the pride of medieval empire, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and the struggle for independence, coexists with Soviet nostalgia and insecurity” (Fabrykant 2018: 4). Despite that in today’s Baltics “the model of ethnic nationalism may resonate with some preconceived ideas and expectations” it does not necessarily reflect the actual situation (Fabrykant 2018: 4). Therefore, the Baltic States, together with other European countries, can be identified as having the features of both, civic and ethnic, nationalisms (Fabrykant 2018, Auers 2012, Raik 2015).

In many cases constructivism and nationalism are bracketed together. Constructivism views national identity as the one created by elites, in other words, intellectuals. As observed by Auers (2012), “intellectuals create a complex narrative that acknowledges and justifies the existence of a nation and lays the basis for a national identity” (Auers 2012: 126). In this sense, language plays a key role as it allows a state to manipulate its identity. On the same note, constructivists argue that the language changes within the frame of

international socialization (Auers 2012: 127). As observed by Mole (2012), “mass, state-wide education was used to produce a standardized form of language, history and culture, out of which this population was constructed” (Mole 2012: 3). Likewise, Strath (2010) points out that the identities are understood by constructivists “i.e feelings of belonging, are constructed in political and cultural processes by means of language, emotions and symbols” (Strath 2010: 22). With the help of education, people were suggested an idea of belonging to the same community and sharing a single identity in order to establish loyal and attached members of society (Mole 2012: 3).

Constructivist ideas were instrumental in the process of joining the European Union and the NATO. This meant that Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia had to amend their policies in order to be welcomed as new members (Minionaitė 2003, Raik 2015). Joining a new Union after escaping one sparked a discussion about national identities in the three Baltic States (Auers 2012, Rindzevičiūtė 2003, Minionaitė 2003). The main concerns, as argues Minionaitė (2003), were losing a newly established independence to the EU, dissolving in the pot of European nations, and becoming “second-class” members (Minionaitė 2003: 209). However, the changes were inevitable in all three States, as national identities are constructed with the “us” and “them” concepts (Minionaitė 2003: 214). In the case of the Baltic countries, this dichotomy was formed with “us” being the “West” and “them” being the threatening “East” (Minionaitė 2003: 214).

The above mentioned international socialization became a noteworthy factor in three Baltic states when they joined the NATO and the European Union. Within the framework of European integration, the West, which by the East has always been associated with democracy and prosperity (Minionaitė 2003: 214), came in the role of “teacher” to the Eastern countries (Auers 2012: 127). Although constructivism was a

phenomenon which affected the whole Europe, its expression was different in Eastern and Western Europe. As argued by Auers (2012), “the nations of Western Europe were economically and culturally equipped [while], the newer economically and culturally underdeveloped nations of Eastern Europe were less prepared to tackle this process [constructivism]” (Auers 2012: 126). Nonetheless, this does not mean that national identities in the Baltic States should be seen as provincial or marginal, laying behind the developments of the Western countries (Rindzevičiūtė 2003: 74). As a result of all three Baltic States being forcibly incorporated into the Soviet Union (Fabrykant 2018: 4), there might be, and in fact will be, some mismatches on particular concepts with the Western Europe, however, it is a result of complicated history and different traditions (Rindzevičiūtė 2003: 74).

Although constructivism was employed differently by the Western and Eastern countries, its concepts of national identity were persistent throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century in all three Baltic States (Rindzevičiūtė 2003, Auers 2013, Schopflin 1996, Raik 2015). In Eastern Europe the national ideas were developed and constructed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Auers 2013, Minionaitė 2003). Before and after this cultural and political movement, the three Baltic States have gone through the same historic path: starting with the independence in 1918, then losing their independence in 1940, and finally becoming sovereign countries again in 1991 (Minionaitė 2003: 211). However, the same history up until 1991 does not mean that these countries are the same. Since the Baltic States regained the independence, they try to distant themselves from the shared Baltic identity, instead seeking to emphasize each country’s particularities (Minionaitė 2003: 212). This suggests that the Baltic identity is not constituting a significant part of national identity in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia (Minionaitė 2003: 212).

There are several factors which influence national identity. During past 15 years, such factor in the Baltic States case was joining the European Union. As a result, it enabled people from Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia to search for better economic conditions in the European labour market. In such context, the mass emigration changed the perception of national identity. As argued by Fabrykant (2018), “mass migration [...] creates a new context for redefining national loyalty and also by putting the achievements of post-Soviet transition as grounds for pride into a less flattering Pan-European perspective” (Fabrykant 2018: 5). At the same time, joining the European Union “forced a reconsideration of national identity politics and imagery in view of European post-nationalism and multiculturalism” (Fabrykant 2018: 5). In addition, mass migration influences national identity as most of the migrants from the Baltic countries are not from ethnic minorities. As noticed by Fabrykant (2018), “while some ethnic Russians emigrated from Latvia and Estonia in the first years of these states’ independence, the subsequent outflow to western Europe is represented primarily by ethnic Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians” (Fabrykant 2018: 6). In such circumstances an issue of loyalty for a birth country arises as long with preserving national purity (Fabrykant 2018). The difference between the three Baltic States, among all the similarities, lies in the fact that Lithuania is more integral than Latvia and Estonia, as already mentioned, the number of ethnic minorities is relatively small. As observed by Fabrykant (2018), such circumstances might lead to “relatively more exclusive national identity expressed in relatively higher perceived importance of all, but especially cultural, criteria” (Fabrykant 2018: 6).

Another factor which is related to globalization and amends national identity is the phenomenon of transnationalism. Portes (1999) defines transnational activities

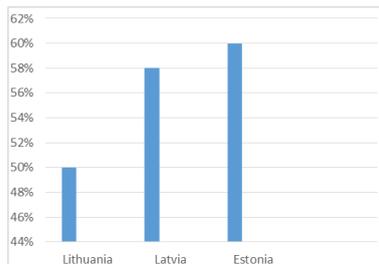
as “those that take place on a recurrent basis across national borders and that require a regular and significant commitment of time by participants” (Portes 1999: 464). As observed by Buhr et al. (2013), “in the context of globalization and transnationalism it becomes apparent that one should regard national identity’s traits as very diverse and multiple” (Buhr et al. 2013: 43). In other words, in the context of transnationalism, there are no borders, there is no clear and fixed conception of home as it could be any country in the world. As pointed out by Castles (2000), “transnational communities are groups whose identity is not primarily based on attachment to a specific territory. They therefore present a powerful challenge to traditional ideas of nation-state belonging” (Castles 2000: 1157).

Although the fear of dissolving among European nations was one of the main topics before joining the EU (Minionaite 2003), as every nation in Europe, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia have specific features which are not characteristic to other nations. The feature which marks out Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia from the other European Union members is that the Baltic States “fought to regain their sovereignty from the Soviet Union, only then to cede it to Brussels in certain key areas” (Mole 2012: opening page). Compared the Baltic States against the Western Europe, the notion of identity in the West was constructed in the disciplines of sociology and social psychology, while the national identity in the Baltic states “was developed within the disciplines of philology and cultural philosophy, embedded in the tradition of German Romanticism” (Rindzevičiūtė 2003: 74).

*International Social Survey Programme (ISSP, hereafter)* has conducted a survey on national identity. The survey was conducted three times: the first one in 1995, the second in 2003, and the latest, which included the three Baltic States, in 2013 (ISSP 2015). The participant number was over

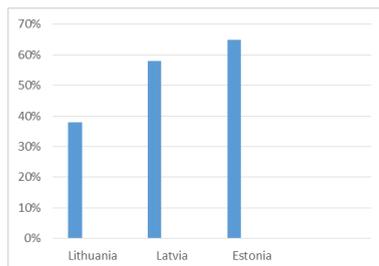
1000 in each country, therefore, the number was high enough in order to draw some conclusions (*ISSP 2015*). The respondents were offered possible responses (very important, fairly important, not very important, not important at all) to specific questions about national identity (*ISSP 2015*). This paragraph illustrates two selected aspects: the ability to speak native language and feeling like a country's national. The ability to speak native country's language was the most important to Estonians (60%) and least important to Lithuanians (50%). The same situation was observed about feeling like a country's national: this was ranked with the highest score by Estonians 65% and the lowest by Lithuanians 38% (*ISSP 2015*). These numbers are pictured in **Figure 4** and **Figure 5** below.

**Figure 4. The importance of speaking the national language and its influence on national identity**



Source: *ISSP 2015*

**Figure 5. The importance of feeling like country's national and its influence on national identity**



Source: *ISSP 2015*

Although Lithuania's score was the lowest in the figures above, the overall rate for the three Baltic States is considerably high. All three Baltic States indicate that speaking the native language is very important, despite the fact that Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian languages cannot be used anywhere else except in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia respectively. As argued by Fabrykant (2018), "since learning to speak a language fluently requires considerable time and effort, fulfilling this requirement for a language not widely used outside of its country of origin indicates strong commitment to the nation-state" (Fabrykant 2018: 12). The survey suggests that "people in the Baltic States can be defined as those who cherish their national identities since people fought so hard to retain them" (Mole 2012: 1).

## **FAMILY IN THE CULTURES OF THE BALTIC STATES**

The Baltic countries, if compared to the other European states, are considerably young. Although Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia participate in various international projects, the Baltic perspective on family is relatively little exploited (Katus et al. 2007: 11). All three countries can be described as the "societies in transition" because in the recent decades "experienced stagnation, liberation, depression, and recovery" (O'Connor 2006: 65). In the past years, due to globalization, a family concept changed all around the world, adapting itself to the changing pace of life and changing circumstances. The Baltic states are not an exception as a family gone through many modifications.

According to sources, men and women in Lithuania marry quite young, or at least younger than people in the Western countries (*Every Culture*). In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, between the 1930 and 1970, a tendency of people marrying at a young age was noticed as a link to the decreasing number of the

children in the families (Račiūnaitė-Paužulienė 2012: 20-21). Statistically, if compared with the other European Union members, in 2017 the highest marriage rates among the EU Member States were recorded in Lithuania which equalled to 7.4 marriages per 1000 inhabitants (*Lietuvos Statistikos Departamentas, LSD*, hereafter). The mean age of the first marriage in 2017 was 34 years for males and 31 years for females (*LSD*). The divorce rate in Lithuania in 2017 was 2.9 divorces per 1000 inhabitants (*LSD*). The fertility rate in Lithuania in 2017 was 1.63 children per woman (*LSD*). Even though the rate of divorce is rather high, marriage and family, if compared to the Latvia and Estonia, “remain[s] most conservative in Lithuania” (O’Connor 2006: 67).

As argued by Stankūnienė (2003), the traditional family features are vanishing, diversified family forms become common (Stankūnienė et al. 2003: 51). The importance of marriage diminishes: between 1955 and 1970 people started cohabitating rather than getting married; this tendency is noticed not only in Lithuania but also in the other European countries (Stankūnienė et al. 2003: 51). The fact that people cohabited, does not mean that this kept them from having children, resulting single mothers/fathers and children growing up in the incomplete families (Stankūnienė et al. 2003: 52). From 1985 onwards, which marks the beginning of a modern family, pre-marriage cohabitation takes place instead of post-marriage cohabitation, also, there are more women who give a birth in their thirties for the first time (Stankūnienė et al. 2003: 52). Nowadays, according to the statistics, the biggest number of children are born for the mothers in two age categories: 25-29 and 30-34 (*LSD*). Stankūnienė et al. (2003) argue that late marriages and family planning are postponed until later due to the fact that more people become educated (Stankūnienė et al. 2003: 52).

The changes in family structure and values began at the same time as in the rest of the Europe, after the Second World War (Račiūnaitė-Paužuolienė 2012: 209). Comparing a traditional Lithuanian family with the modern family, in a traditional family the attention was focused on children, their well-being, while in the modern family children are important too but an attention is also paid to the quality of a relation between the husband and wife (Stankūnienė et al. 2003: 52). **Table 1** indicates the main differences in the traditional Lithuanian and modern families.

**Table 1. The main differences in the Lithuanian traditional and modern families**

Traditional family	Modern family
Getting married at the young age	Decreased number of marriages
Getting married rather than cohabitare	Marriage at older age
A high percentage of marriages	Cohabitation instead of marriage
Children are born to the young married couples	First children are born to older mothers
A small percentage of children born to a single mothers	A bigger part of children are born to the single mothers
	The number of bachelors is increasing in both sexes
	The number of childless couples increasing

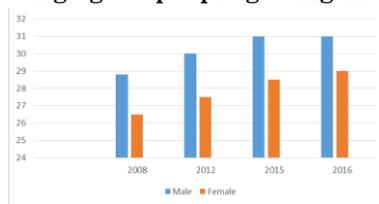
*Source: Stankūnienė et al. 2003: 52 (my translation from Lithuanian to English)*

Considering the features of modern Lithuanian family, it can be stated that the importance of family and its functions is decreasing. However, despite the fact that a Lithuanian family went through the major changes, children and family in its diversified forms are still considered to be central in the social structure (Stankūnienė et al. 2003: 52).

In Latvia, if compared to Lithuania, the marriage rates are lower. According to the statistics, in 2016 the rate was 6.6 marriages per 1000 inhabitants (CSB). The divorce rate in Latvia is also higher if compared to Lithuania. The number of divorces in Latvia in 2016 was equal to 3.1 per 1000

inhabitants (*CSB*). According to this number, half of the marriages end up with divorce. Not only the marriage rate is considerably low but the marriage itself is ageing. The mean age of the first marriage in 2016 was 31 years for the males and 29 years for the females. **Figure 6** indicates the dynamics of the first marriage mean age in Latvia between 2008 and 2016. As it could be noticed, within 8 years the age of the first marriage increased by 2.5 years for the females and 2.2 years for the males.

**Figure 6. The increasing age of people getting married in Latvia**



Source: *Eurostat*

The traditional family model in Latvia consists of married couples with children (Abolina and Zvidrins 2014). Therefore, the Latvian government attempts to strengthen the traditional institution of the family through various measures: in educational institutions teachers are being educated about the importance of a family in order to be able to pass this knowledge to the children (Abolina and Zvidrins 2014). However, the numbers indicate that the situation in Latvia, as in the rest of the Europe, is not getting better. Although, the government tries to promote marriage and its values, more and more people decide to cohabite and have children or to marry and not have children (*CBS*). The current fertility rate is stable as in 2016 it was 1.74 children per woman and in 2017 it dropped just by 0.04% and was equal to 1.7 (*Eurostat*).

Regarding the marriage and divorce rates in Estonia, in 2017 it was 4.89/1000 and 2.52/1000 respectively. Similarly to Latvia, in Estonia half of the marriages end up with divorces.

In Estonia, likewise in Lithuania and Latvia, a marriage is seen as an option and not as a necessity, also one-child or single parent family becomes a norm (O'Connor 2006: 65). In addition, since 1960 a new tendency of cohabitation was noticed in Estonia, when people in their twenties or early thirties start living together as a prelude to a marriage or instead of a marriage (Katus et al. 2007: 9). As a result, a period from 1960 to 1980 was marked by higher age for the first marriage and this pattern was consistent in the all three Baltic States (Katus et al. 2007: 10). The situation with a non-marital cohabitation in the Estonia is very similar to the one in the Lithuania and in Latvia, as more and more young couples decide to cohabitate rather than to get married, however, part of these unions become families in due course, especially when a child is born (Katus et al. 2007: 12).

Changes in the family are reflecting in every society but in a different way. Some countries practice de-institutionalization of a family, choosing to cohabitate rather than to create a family in marriage. The situation regarding a family is quite similar in the three Baltic states. The families are shrinking, the divorce rates are quite high, marriages are ageing, cohabitation and one parent family become a norm. Nevertheless, family is still considered as a central institution, and children remain the nucleus of the family.

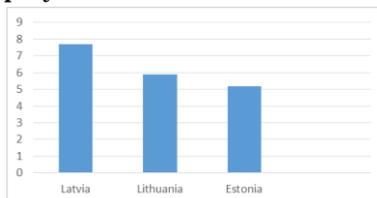
## **MIGRATION IN THE BALTIC STATES**

Migration between countries is not a new phenomenon (Guibernau 2007, Castles 2014). Throughout the history, there were several factors which resulted from migration. The first reason was changing political circumstances, as Engbersen et al. (2010) claim, “after the collapse of the communist regime in Eastern and Central Europe, the differences in affluence between East and West would make enormous migration flows

inevitable” (Engbersen et al. 2010: 7). Also, the new technologies in transportation and communication were invented and it enabled people all over the globe, including the Baltic States, to travel faster and to keep in touch easier (Brickner 2013). The last reason, and probably the most important one, was the European Union’s enlargement which took place in 2004 May and 2007 January. The opening of the labor market in Europe enabled people from Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia search for better conditions abroad (*Stratfor Worldview* 2013). The migration from the Baltics has stabilized in between 2006 and 2008, however, in the face of the financial crisis in Europe in 2009, people were compelled to change their location in search for better economic conditions (*Stratfor Worldview* 2013).

Despite the fact that migration from the Baltic States started more or less at the same time, after some time different migration patterns were observed. During and after the economic crisis in 2009, the migration flows due to the unemployment from Lithuania and Latvia were considerably higher than in Estonia (*Stratfor Worldview* 2013). According to *Eurostat*, this trend is still relevant today: the unemployment level in Lithuania is 5.9%, in Latvia 7.7%, and in Estonia 5.2% (*Eurostat*). This is pictured in **Figure 7** below. Despite the fact that economic crisis was particularly rough in Lithuania (*Stratfor Worldview* 2013), the current unemployment rate is somewhat lower than in Latvia but higher than in Estonia.

**Figure 7. The unemployment rates in the Baltic States in 2018**



Source: *Eurostat*

The typical Baltic emigrant is characterized as a young person (according to *European Migration Network*, 72% of emigrants are aged between 15-44) whose main goal abroad is better wage possibilities. As to the migration destination, specific tendencies were observed: The United Kingdom and Ireland, in particular, London and Dublin, are among the most popular destinations (*Stratfor Worldview* 2013). Similarly, Račiūnaitė-Paužuolienė (2017) observes that after the European Union enlargement, between April 2015 and March 2016, more than 345 thousand people from Central and Eastern Europe are living and working in The United Kingdom (Račiūnaitė-Paužuolienė 2017: 3). This pattern was influenced by the fact that upon addition of the new members to the European Union, Germany did not open its labor market to the new Union members, therefore, “countries such as the UK, Ireland and Norway have experienced large-scale labour immigration, mainly from Poland, but also from other countries like Lithuania, Slovakia, Latvia” (Engbersen et al. 2010: 11).

The forces of migration and globalization changed the Baltic States societies. On the one hand, since 1990, due to the low fertility and high death rates, Lithuania lost 166 thousand people, while 679 thousand people decided to leave the country (*EMN*). These numbers constitute around 23% of the whole population which was lost within 28 years (*EMN*). On the other hand, globalization threatens to the small countries that do not possess great economic strength (Jasiulevičienė et al. 2013: 10). In the context of Europe, Lithuania, as well as Latvia, are among countries where the difference of immigrants and emigrants (net migration) is negative. In Lithuania the net migration is 7.7 and in Latvia it is equal to 5.4 (*EMN*).

The situation in Latvia is very similar to that in Lithuania. According to *CSB*, since 1991 Latvia is facing high mortality rates and low birth rates, ageing population, and at the same time, the number of immigration and migration is

negative (*CSB*). As noted by Znotina and Užga-Rebrovs (2012), “ever since the regaining of the independence of Latvia its population was set for decrease due to the two principal reasons - negative natural growth and negative migration balance” (Znotina and Užga-Rebrovs 2012: 34). As it comes to the ageing, Latvia is among 10 countries in the world with the most ageing society as the median age in Latvia in 2018 is 43.6 years (*CBS*). Latvia is also facing high emigration flows. To illustrate, since 1991, 600 thousand people have left Latvia – the number which is very similar to Lithuania’s discussed above (*CSB*). The main reasons for leaving the country is rather straight-forward: low salaries and lack of future vision (Karnite 2006). As to the wage size, from the 33 European Union members, Latvia is 7<sup>th</sup>, while Lithuania 14<sup>th</sup>, and Estonia 15<sup>th</sup>, counting from the 1<sup>st</sup> place as the smallest (*CSB*). Since 2011 the number of unemployed people in Latvia is gradually declining and average monthly salaries are increasing, however, these factors do not stop the emigration (*CSB*).

If the above discussed Lithuania and Latvia are facing negative net migration, Estonia, on the other hand, has a positive one. According to *Statistics Estonia*, “10,470 persons immigrated to Estonia and 5,440 persons emigrated from Estonia in 2017” (*Statistics Estonia*). In comparison, if Lithuania and Latvia have a negative birth/death rate, a situation in Estonia is different. In 2015 and in 2017 a positive population rate was observed (*Statistics Estonia*). In addition, if more Lithuanians and Latvians tend to emigrate to The United Kingdom and Ireland, Estonians, due to country’s geographical location, migrate to Finland (*Statistics Estonia*). The only aspect which is similar to Lithuania’s and Latvia’s, that young working people tend to be the ones to leave the country. In Estonia “the most active group of migrants are 20–39-year-olds” (*Statistics Estonia*).

As argue Epstein and Gang (2010), “culture and identity play a central role in our understanding of migration as an economic phenomenon” (Epstein and Gang 2010: 1). However, aside from the economic factors, migration changes cultural identity of those who emigrated, those who were left behind at home, and those who live in the target countries (Epstein and Gang 2010: 1). New circumstances affect all three groups, with the possible results of assimilation, separation, and the unpredictable local people reaction to migrants (Epstein and Gang 2010: 1-2). In the context of the new multi-national and multi-religion environment, one starts questioning his/her cultural identity (Račiūnaitė-Paužuolienė 2017: 6). Living in such environment, as Račiūnaitė-Paužuolienė (2017) further argues, becomes a challenge to an individual seeking homogeneous identity (Račiūnaitė-Paužuolienė 2017: 8). If addressing this issue from the perspective of those people who are living in the Baltic States, the main problem arises from the fact that countries, due to the lack of local workers, need to attract them from foreign countries while at the same time need to preserve indigenous cultural identities (*Stratfor Worldview* 2013).

## RESULTS

**NATIONAL IDENTITY.** There was a part of young learners’ compositions in which they expressed an idea to live in several countries. Such a phenomenon is called *transnationalism*. The phenomenon of transnationalism was not a very salient factor in children compositions, however, there were two (0.03%) examples out of the total of 52 found in Lithuanian, four (0.09%), out of 43, in Latvian, and eight (0.15%), out of 51 examples, in Estonian compositions. The idea of transnationalism was not particularly dominant in the compositions, however, it was not absent either. The idea of transnationalism was the most salient in compositions by

Estonian young learners. Further investigation of young learners' compositions revealed that the proudest of their nationalities are Estonians. While none of the Latvians and Lithuanians expressed an idea of being proud of their nationalities, 3 examples (out of 41 target compositions) were found in Estonian essays. This number constitutes 0.07%.

**FAMILY.** Out of the total of 603 compositions, 303 compositions (115 Lithuanian, 87 Latvian, 101 Estonian) refer to the family, current and future one. From the total of 178 Estonian compositions, 101 referred to the family (56%); from 216 Latvian compositions, 87 referred to the family (40%); finally, from 209 Lithuanian compositions, 115 referred to the family (55%). Interestingly, from 52 Lithuanian and 43 Latvian examples in which children wrote about their future lives, none of the children mentioned that they will not want to have children of their own. The opposite situation was observed in Estonian compositions, where out of 52 examples, 6 expressed an idea of not wanting to have any children. This number constitutes 11% in total. Statistical data shows that around 50% of families in Latvia and Estonia divorce, and approximately 39% of Lithuanian marriages end up with divorce. The children compositions do not illustrate this fact. As little as one example was found throughout all 603 compositions. In Lithuanian compositions, out of 63 essays which were written about a current family, children referred to the nuclear family 50 times (79%), there were no references to extended families (0%), and other types of family, like a single mother or divorced parents were mentioned 9 times (14%). In Latvian compositions, out of 46 compositions, 40 mentioned nuclear (86%), 0 mentioned extended (0%), and 4 mentioned other types (8%). In Estonian case, out of 49 compositions, 44 mentioned nuclear (89%), 2 extended (0,04%), and 4 other types of family (0,08%). If analysing compositions according to the

references to an idea on the number of future children, out of 52 Lithuanian compositions, five children (0.09%) wrote about having one child, 21 (40%) children wrote about having two children, and seven (13%) children expressed their idea on having three or more children. In Latvian children compositions, out of 43 essays, four (0.09%) children referred to having one child, 11 (25%) children expressed their idea about having two children, and six (13%) children expressed an idea about having three or more children in the future. The following findings were made in Estonian compositions: out of 51 compositions, six (11%) essays referred to an idea about having one child, 19 (37%) essays referred to an idea about having two children, and six (11%) compositions revealed an idea of having three or more children. Thus, the major part of essays has referred to an idea of having two children, then the second group of having three or more children, and the least number of children referred to an idea of having one child in the future. To sum up, from the total of 52 Lithuanian compositions 33 (63%), from the total of 43 Latvian compositions 21 (48%), and from the total of 51 Estonian compositions 31 (60%), referred to an idea having children in the future.

**MIGRATION.** The idea of a family member or a close relative living abroad was central in learners' compositions. From 53 Lithuanian, 29 Latvian, and 41 Estonian examples, an idea of a relative living abroad was expressed in six (11%) Lithuanian, three (10%) Latvian, and six (14%) Estonian compositions. Furthermore, out of 53 Lithuanian compositions, in 25 there was expressed an idea about living abroad, and in 20 compositions living in a home country. From 29 Latvian samples, 17 (58%) responded to an idea living abroad, and 8 in a home country. Finally, in Estonian case, from 41 compositions, 18 children would like to live abroad, while 15 would like to live in Estonia. These numbers would constitute

47% of Lithuanian, 58% Latvian, and 43% Estonian children wanting to live abroad. On the contrary, 37% Lithuanian, 27% Latvian, and 36% Estonian children expressing an idea about staying in their home countries in the future.

## CONCLUSIONS

The literature on the national identity discussed two possible nationalities: ethnic and civic. The theoretical background indicated, that the three Baltic States have the features of both nationalisms (Fabrykant 2018). As the examples of children compositions revealed, the proudest of their nationalities were Estonians, neither Lithuanian or Latvian learners expressed an idea of being proud of their nationalities. Transnationalism was another national identity's feature which was discussed. This phenomenon was mentioned in some learners' compositions. If compared the three Baltic States, the most visible it was in Estonian learners' compositions, constituting eight examples out of 51 compositions. Four examples found in Latvian compositions, and two in Lithuanian.

Out of all three aspects of cultural identity which were analysed in this article, the concept of the family was the one where more similarities rather than differences were found. The theoretical material indicated that every second family are divorced in Latvia and Estonia. Learner's compositions did not support this idea as only several examples were found. As much as the young learners expressed an idea of family significance in their current lives, they indicated that their own future family is also important. More than half of the Lithuanians and Estonians expressed an idea that they would like to have a family, including their own children. This number was slightly lower in Latvian learners' compositions, however, it constituted nearly 50% of all the compositions.

The discussion on migration and globalization suggested that there are more similarities among Lithuanians and Latvians. The migration phenomenon became a central object in the three Baltic States, especially after the admittance to the European Union. Young learners' ideas, expressed in their compositions, reflected the tendency to leave a home country rather than to stay. To illustrate, 47% of Lithuanian, 58% Latvian, and 43% Estonian learners would like to live abroad, while 37% Lithuanian, 27% Latvian, and 36% Estonian learners would rather stay in their home countries. Thus, the bigger part of the learners would choose to emigrate and the results are quite the same in all three States.

To conclude, in the context of cultural identity, most of the ideas are shared among the Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians. Although in some instances Estonians express a somewhat different point of view from their neighbours in Lithuania and Latvia, it constitutes a small number of examples. The future research, based on the Baltic Young Learners of English Corpus project, might address the learner's ideas from different perspectives. For example, it can be investigated how learner's ideas reflect the social reality in each country, or how, as suggested by the supervisors of this project, specific societal factors, for example, a family, influence young learners' foreign language skills. Therefore, this research captured only a few aspects, while the rest of them could be investigated in further research.

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