



# **Negotiation of identity and Lithuanian language in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generations of migrants from Lithuania to Kazakhstan**

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# Context

- A very large number of emigrants is characteristic of Lithuania - about 1,300,000 Lithuanians lived abroad.
- After the Second World War, more than 81,000 political prisoners from Lithuania were deported to Kazakhstan, to the Karaganda region.
- Part of them was able to return to Lithuania after approximately 15 years. Another part of them had no chance to return.
- Around 1954 people from Lithuania went to Kazakhstan to work, and later some of them stayed there to live.
- Thus, several thousand people of Lithuanian origin, 2nd, 3rd, etc. generation of migrants, currently live in Kazakhstan and have retained part of their Lithuanian ethnic identity.



# Research material and method

- 2020-2022 the research project “Lithuanian Forced Migration Diasporas in the East and their Identity: The Cases of Trans-Volga and Kazakhstan” (LIP-20-12)
- The project is funded by the Research Council of Lithuania
- This paper presents only one aspect of the data gathered during that project
- The qualitative analysis of 30 in-depth interviews recorded in November 2021 in Karaganda.



# Experience of the target group

- Experience – social/cultural trauma
- Social or cultural trauma can be described as a person's perceived break in the normal social or cultural order (Šutinienė 2002: 58)
- Trauma: 1) negatively affects the group; 2) is unforgettable; 3) endangers existence and can destroy the foundation of values (Gailienė 2015)
- The main target of the totalitarian system was the person. The aim was to “destroy, assimilate and turn the Lithuanian political nation into a mass suitable for totalitarian rule” (Gailienė 2015: 10)
- The same can be said about Lithuanians living in Kazakhstan.
- The target group constructed their identities in an authoritarian



# The aim of the presentation

Presentation aims to analyze how the identity of informants is constructed, **the focus is on that, how Lithuanianness is negotiated in it, and what role the Lithuanian language plays in this case.**



# Narrative practice approach

- The interview data also evaluated using the M. Bamberg's theory (2011) of identity navigation and its three aspects:
  - 1) constancy vs. change;
  - 2) sameness vs. difference;
  - 3) agency vs. passivity.



# Narrative practice approach: constancy vs. change

- „The contribution of a narrative practice approach to identity is that it replaces the question of whether a person really *is* the same across a certain span of time, or whether she or he has changed, with the analysis of how people navigate this dilemma *constructively*“ (Bamberg 2011: 104)



# Narrative practice approach: sameness vs. difference

- „choices of discursive devices often signal a position of the speaking subject in relation to others—others who are being referred to (in what the talk is about) and who are being talked to (in the speech situation under consideration)“ (Bamberg 2011: 104)





# Narrative practice approach: agency vs. passivity

„speakers either pick narrative devices that lean toward a person-to-world direction of fit, or they pick devices that construe the direction of fit from world-to-person.

<...> Choosing devices from discursive repertoires that result in low-agency marking assists in the construction of a victim role—or at least a position as less influential, powerful, responsible, and, in case the outcome of the depicted action is negatively evaluated, as less blame-worthy. In contrast, picking devices from the other end of the continuum, speaking subjects position themselves as *agentive self-constructors*.” (Bamberg 2011: 105)



# Constancy vs. change (1)

- The social trauma led to a change in identity. Change of identity was an important strategy for survival. (Gailienė 2015: 10)
- „even at the end of a period of exile or imprisonment, they are forced to hide their past not only from those around them but sometimes even from their own children.“ (Gailienė 2015: 19):

1. *I: Ну это была не тема для семейных разговоров... (K3\_M17\_KZ)*

*,Well, this was not a topic for family conversations.'*

2. *I: по правде говоря, папа не любил вообще говорить об этом. Мы мало что знаем, потому что он всегда уходил от этой разговора, тем более рассказывать, чё да как это, почему он вообще... У него было такое, я считаю это, **золотое правило, больше молчишь – дольше живешь.** (K1+\_M76\_KZ)*

*,He had such, I think, the golden rule, if you talk less, you will live longer'*

- A mixed family was a good medium to reconstruct one's identity.
- Bad relations with relatives in Lithuania due to mixed families.
- Even for economic migrants Lithuanian part of identity was not comfortable.



# Constancy vs. change (2). 2nd and 3rd generation

- Remnants of Lithuanian identity. Who am I?

3. ну я не знаю, к кому себя больше относить – к русским или литовцам. (K2\_V56\_KZ)

*„well, I don't know to whom I belong more – to Russians or to Lithuanians“*

4. Как бы литовец, а родина Казахстан. <...> В Казахстане живу, литовец, говорю на русском. <...> другой национальности никогда не было, я везде и в паспорте, и везде литовец. (K2\_V56\_KZ)

*„ maybe I am Lithuanian, but homeland is Kazakhstan. <...> I live in Kazakhstan, I am Lithuanian, I speak Russian <...> there has never been another nationality, I am everywhere and in the passport, and everywhere Lithuanian“*

5. ну я всегда знала то, что у меня литовские корни ((K3\_M17\_KZ)

*„well, I always knew that I have Lithuanian roots“*



# The main reasons for raising Lithuanian identity (1)

- The willingness to stand out, to be better, to be European.
- Lithuanian Identity is emphasized by names.

6. *Ты понимаешь, ведь это не просто Иванова Катя.*  
(K2\_V56\_KZ)

*,You understand, it's not just Katya Ivanova'*



# Names

- Parents like to give Lithuanian names to children.

7. у меня литовская фамилия, имя... <...> вот у сына родился внук, мы назвали Альгис. (K2\_V56\_KZ)

*,I have a Lithuanian surname, name ... <...> my son had a grandson, we named Algis'*

- Lithuanian surnames are an object of pride, sometimes the suffixes of women's surnames are kept.

8. мама XXXienė, папа – XXXа, а я XXXaitė. <...> мне очень нравится, что это необычно как-то, звучит очень красиво ну как бы, не как у всех. (K3\_M17\_KZ)

*,my mother is XXXienė, my father is XXXа, and I am XXXaitė. <...> I really like that it is somehow unusual, it sounds very nice, well, not like everyone else'*



# The main reasons for raising Lithuanian identity (2)

- The willingness to move to live in Lithuania, which they call the historical homeland.
- People navigate this dilemma not constructively. They associate their future with Lithuania, but that future worries them.



# Sameness vs. difference (1)

- They are from mixed families.
- They know very little about Lithuania.
- There are no relatives or no contacts with relatives in Lithuania.
- They cannot identify themselves with Lithuanians living in Lithuania. They have the Identity of residents of Kazakhstan.

*9. I: И слышал о том, что даже если литовец умеет разговаривать на литовском в Литве...*

*R: На русском?*

*I: На русском, на русском, да. Он скорее всего постарается не говорить... С человеком, с которым его ничего не связывает. Вот, вот это я слышал. (K3\_V23\_KZ)*

*, I: And I heard that even if a Lithuanian can speak Lithuanian in Lithuania...*

*R: In Russian?*

*I: In Russian, in Russian, yes. He will most likely try not to talk ... With a person with whom nothing connects him. Here, this is what I heard. '*



## Sameness vs. difference (2). Languages

- The people of the target group are monolingual, Russian is often the only language of communication. Some (minority) informants speak Kazakh.
- They have only rudiments of the Lithuanian language, but they don't worry about knowing this language.

10. *R: <...> так сколько языков вы знаете?*

*I: Русский и казахский, и labas vakaras. <...> И вот она [mother] ложилась спать и всегда мне говорила: «Броню... давай помоли... помолимся», а я говорил: «Я же пионер, мама, мне нельзя» (K2\_V56\_KZ)*

*,R: how many languages do you know? I: Russian and Kazakh, and labas vakaras. <...> And so she went to bed and always told me: "Broniu ... let's pray ... let's pray," and I said: "I'm a pioneer, mom, I can't."*

11. *Она [grandmother] говорила по-литовски, но меня конечно, <...> пару слов буквально учила, помню: «Цвеки кап гиваням, ас тавя милю, патукас, мамиця» и вроде-бы все, ой... (K3\_M17)*

*,She [grandmother] spoke Lithuanian, but of course, <...> she literally taught me a couple of words, I remember: «Цвеки кап гиваням, ас тавя милю, патукас, мамиця» .*





# Agency vs. passivity

- The target group is more likely to choose passivity in terms of both identity and language. Some people of the 3rd generation are returning to the Lithuanian language more actively. Children are also sent to study in Lithuania.
- Higher agency occurs when the target group plans to move to Lithuania. for economic reasons.
- The Lithuanian community is active in Karaganda. But only a few are looking for a community to support Lithuanian identity. The community is often needed only to help to find the documents.



# To sum up (1)

- Lithuanian identity is a relic, and the Lithuanian language is a rudiment.
- The target group restores their Lithuanian identity, perceiving it as a part of cultural capital.
- The Lithuanian language is perceived not as a value for identity building, but as a part of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1991), too.
- Uncomfortable Lithuanian identity becomes a comfortable identity.



## To sum up (2)

- Alpha Abebe (2019: 55): „Diasporas can be understood as groups of dispersed people who **share symbolic and/or material associations** to an idealized homeland, which may or may not take the form of an existing“.

The axis of the identity of the target group is material associations with Lithuania as a country of economic prosperity.

- Zhu Hua and Li Wei (2019: 107-108): „For many such individuals and communities, it is not what they have lost that occupies their minds in their everyday lives, but **what they seek to develop and construct for themselves** plays a key role in language choices and related identity-making.

The target group aims to create economic prosperity in Lithuania. For this reason, they raise the Lithuanian part of their identity. For this reason, there is a need to know the Lithuanian language.



**Thank you for your attention!**