



DOI: 10.22363/2313-1438-2023-25-2-377-396
EDN: XICTAA

Research article / Научная статья

Integration of Migrants Through the Lens of a Constructivist Approach to Ethnicity

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Abstract. The article rethinks the integration of migrants through the lens of constructivist studies of ethnicity. It is done on the basis of the theoretical language developed by the author, which builds upon other constructivist languages. It is pointed out that ethnicity is the organization of differences around categories, membership in which is predominantly inherited. Categories, according to language, are organized in the form of categorizations, classifications, and taxonomies; categories are associated with attributes, which include stereotypes, indicators, norms, characteristics of relationships with other categories, as well as discourses. Together, categories and attributes form the construction of ethnicity, which is a typical object of analysis and description. Individuals constantly evaluate the surrounding phenomena in terms of conformity with the construction of ethnicity, which is why the construction of ethnicity changes. Integration is a change in the construction of ethnicity or re-categorization of individuals in the space of the dichotomy «migrant» — «local» without changing the construction of ethnicity. In the course of integration, «migrant» categories may be re-categorized as «local»; «local» categories may change the attributes associated with them to include attributes previously associated with «migrant» categories; categories and attributes may not change, while re-categorization occurs at the individual level. How exactly integration will take place depends on a variety of factors that characterize the construction of ethnicity and go beyond it. The construction of ethnicity in Russia is a vernacular taxonomy, which implies the existence of a general category (‘Rossijane’, ‘Russkie’), which includes other categories — defined as the «local» ones. Most of the «migrant» categories correspond to identical in name «local» categories. The integration of migrants in Russia thus takes the form of an individual transition from

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the category of «Tajik migrants» to «local Tajiks». The language created and studied for applicability to the integration of migrants is analyzed for pros and cons and directions for further work are identified.

Keywords: ethnicity, migration, migrant integration, peoples' friendship, attitudes towards migrants

For citation: Varshaver, E.A. (2023). Integration of migrants through the lens of a constructivist approach to ethnicity. *RUDN Journal of Political Science*, 25(2), 377–396. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-1438-2023-25-2-377-396>

Acknowledgements: The research is supported by the Russian Science Foundation, project No. 22-78-10038, <https://rscf.ru/project/22-78-10038/>.

Интеграция мигрантов через призму конструктивистского подхода к этничности

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Аннотация. Интеграция мигрантов переосмысливается через призму конструктивистских исследований этничности и, конкретнее, теоретического языка, разработанного автором и рядоположенного прочим современным конструктивистским языкам. Указывается, что этничность — это организация различий вокруг категорий, членство в которых преимущественно наследуется. Категории, согласно языку, организованы в форме категоризаций, классификаций и таксономий; категории связаны с атрибутами, к которым относятся стереотипы, индикаторы, нормы, характеристики связей с другими категориями, а также дискурсы. Вместе категории и атрибуты образуют конструкцию этничности, являющуюся типичным объектом анализа и описания в исследованиях этничности. Индивиды перманентно оценивают окружающие явления на предмет соответствия конструкции этничности и — в случае несоответствия — модифицируют свои представления, отчего конструкция этничности меняется. Интеграция мигрантов — это или изменение конструкции этничности, или ре-категоризация индивидов в пространстве дихотомии «мигрантский» — «местный» без изменения конструкции этничности. В ходе интеграции «мигрантские» категории могут быть ре-категоризованы как «местные»; «местные» категории могут изменить атрибуты, с ними связанные, и включить атрибуты, до того связанные с «мигрантскими» категориями; категории и атрибуты могут не меняться, при том что происходить будет ре-категоризация на индивидуальном уровне. Как именно будет происходить интеграция — зависит от разнообразия факторов, характеризующих конструкцию этничности и выходящих за ее рамки. Конструкция этничности в России — это вернакулярная таксономия, предполагающая наличие общей категории (россияне, русские как обобщающая категория

и проч.), в которую включаются прочие категории, которые определяются как «местные». Большинству «мигрантских» категорий соответствуют идентичные по названию «местные» категории. Интеграция мигрантов в России, таким образом, принимает форму индивидуального перехода из разряда, например, «таджиков-мигрантов» в «местные таджики». Язык, созданный и изученный на предмет применимости к интеграции мигрантов, анализируется на предмет плюсов и минусов и определяются направления для дальнейшей работы.

Ключевые слова: этничность, миграция, интеграция мигрантов, дружба народов, отношение к мигрантам

Для цитирования: Варшавер Е.А. Интеграция мигрантов через призму конструктивистского подхода к этничности // Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Серия: Политология. 2023. Т. 25. № 2. С. 377–396. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-1438-2023-25-2-377-396>

Благодарности: Исследование выполнено за счет гранта Российского научного фонда № 22-78-10038, <https://rscf.ru/project/22-78-10038/>

Introduction

Academic studies of ethnicity are at a point where it is no longer possible to work in the old way, and it is hardly known how to do it in a new way [Wimmer 2013: 1–15; Chandra 2012: 1–47; Varshaver 2022]. The constructivist approach established in post-war science and — if we talk about the audiences of the top world universities — has now won a total victory over “primordialism” or “essentialism” (In many ways invented by it), and has been enjoying the fruits of its victory in some kind of an “end of history” for several decades. Each new article written in the constructivist paradigm, in fact, reiterates that ethnic phenomena are dynamic and are constructed in the course of interactions between people. Constructivism now, figuratively speaking, is an old athlete who, when young people come to visit them, takes out a worn video cassette with a record of a glorious victory won 60 years ago and makes the guests rewatch it.

The content crisis is superimposed on the crisis of the theoretical language: popular phrases and rhetorical figures that allow their users to publish, including various expressions of proceduralized (racialized, in the making, etc.), the subjectivizing focus on identity and various indications of the vernacularity¹ of the studied contexts (how “ordinary people” imagine certain phenomena) do not provide an answer to important questions of the field. These questions include, among many others, the persistency of ethnicity or, more simply, why ethnicity affects people’s lives everywhere and so strongly. The answer to this question requires attention to the mechanisms by which ethnicity “envelops” people’s ideas and behavior, becomes

¹ Vernacular – existing in everyday consciousness.

an unproblematic and often key factor in their lives. But in order to understand how something works, it must be named.

In response to this problem, several variants of the constructivist language began to develop, the most important of which in the past decade have been the projects of Kanchan Chandra [Chandra 2006; Chandra, Wilkinson 2008; Chandra 2012] and Andreas Wimmer [Wimmer 2004; Wimmer 2008; Wimmer 2009; Wimmer 2013]. Chandra also points out [Chandra 2012: 5] that the creation of competing constructivist descriptions of reality is one of the recipes for overcoming the crisis, since development requires creating a space of disagreement and dispute. In a recent work [Varshaver 2022], we criticize the languages of Chandra and Wimmer and offer our own simple and compact language that allows to create descriptions of the social situation on the subject of ethnicity for its subsequent explanation by external, non-ethnic factors. Defining ethnicity as an organization of differences constructed around categories, membership in which is usually inherited, we point out that the unit for describing the reality on the subject of ethnicity is not the ethnic category, but the construction of ethnicity. This includes the whole set of ethnic categories that exist in the community, as well as their various attributes (the ideas that society has about these categories): stereotypes (representatives of the category — what are they), norms (how to behave with a representative of a category, how to behave if you are a representative of a category), discourses (what stories are the representatives of a category associated with), etc.

This laconic description, on the one hand, repeats the work done by other constructivist languages and, in particular, “unties” ethnicity both from groups and from specific people and “prescribes” it in the space of social facts. On the other hand, it repels from the weaknesses of existing constructivist languages (the counter-intuitiveness of the concept of “borders” by Wimmer, the lack of elaboration of non-categorical aspects of ethnicity by Chandra) and creates a convenient descriptive “common denominator” of constructivism, in which a link of ‘categories — the social meanings of categories’, is declared as the most important. This is the basis, but in order to achieve the above goal of explaining the persistency of ethnicity, this language must be detailed, and elements must be included in it that allow, in a key coherent with other elements of this language, to consider ethnicity for aspects that were previously not taken into account (or taken into account superficially). In particular, for example, this scheme does not take into account the variability of category attributes.

This article will provide an up-to-date version of the language that allows to describe the construction of ethnicity in a certain context, while the main direction of its improvement will be a new, expanded and detailed, typology of attributes of ethnic categories. Among other things, for example, it will include the so-called “indicators” — signs by which people recognize representatives

of certain categories in everyday life and signal their belonging to others. Posing the question like this allows us to connect Chandra's theoretical language (which is sensitive especially to such phenomena, but does not distinguish between other types of attributes) with the theoretical language that the author of the article develops and where attributes up to a certain point meant almost exclusively stereotyped representations of category representatives. In addition, in this version of the language, attention will be drawn to the general characteristics of the construction of ethnicity that are not tied to specific categories, such as, for example, the rules for membership in ethnic categories, as well as ideas about whether changes in categorical affiliation are possible during a person's life, or the person is "born" as a category representative, and that cannot be changed.

The second part of the article will serve as an illustration of the effectiveness of the language developed: we will use it to analyze a rather poor area of knowledge up to theoretical languages, which so far can be designated as "integration of migrants". In it, integration is defined in a general way as a change in the relationships between categories, attributes and people. It occurs in three ideally typical modes: (1) re-classification of categories from "migrant" to "local", (2) expansion of the "local" categories at the expense of the attributes that were previously exclusively "migrant", (3) preservation of the construction of the ethnicity ("local" and "migrant" categories) and re-classification of individuals. The applied conclusion from these constructions is that the integration of migrants is not so much a matter of migration policy, which focuses primarily on migration flows, as a matter of national policy, which focuses precisely on the ideas of the country's inhabitants about who "we are", who theoretically can become "us", and who cannot, and what needs to be done for this. It is this conclusion — in its more detailed version — that will close this article. It will begin, however, with a small summary of the author's view of the current state of constructivist studies of ethnicity.

The Constructivist Paradigm Today

Contrary to popular belief [Berg-Sørensen, Holtug, Lippert-Rasmussen 2010; Williams 2015], constructivism today is not an approach parallel to other approaches, but a paradigm within which studies of ethnicity and social sciences, in general, exist. According to T. Kuhn [Kuhn 1977], who developed the idea of a scientific paradigm, a paradigm is "universally recognized scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners. Once that piece of my puzzle fell into place, a draft of this essay emerged rapidly" [Kuhn 1977: VIII]. A paradigm is thus both a canon and a way of thinking and an idea of good and bad

science that sets the criteria for scientific work. Despite the fact that the classic works on the philosophy and sociology of knowledge, including the “structure of the scientific revolution”, were written in relation to natural sciences, the history of ethnicity research over the past 100 years — adjusted for the specifics of the social sciences — fully falls under this definition.

The history of the paradigm shift, although told in different ways [Hale 2004; Ozgen 2015; Yeros 1999], generally agrees on the following: up to a certain point, research on ethnicity was in the “essentialist trap”. This trap consisted in the fact that as an object of study, the social sciences thought differently named groups — tribes, peoples, ethnic groups, etc., according to the idea implicitly contained in the scientific literature, had agency, that is acted, made decisions and were “actors of history”, while individuals were rather an instrument through which ethnic groups acted and carried out “inter-ethnic relations”. In parallel, primarily in sociology, a set of approaches developed, later qualified as microsociology [Benzecry, Winchester 2017; Gibson, von Lehn 2018]. In microsociology, the key unit of observation is a person that acts under the influence of a variety of external forces and factors, however, these factors — networks, institutions, norms, rationality — are not agents, but are the context of people’s behavior, and it is people and their behavior that are in the ultimate focus of the research.

This kind of primarily sociological and economic theoretical developments penetrated into anthropology, a discipline that is largely “generic” for the study of ethnic phenomena, and from there, constructivist ideas about ethnicity “returned” to sociology and spread to other disciplines as “overall recognized scientific achievements”.² What kind of representations are we talking about? Although the specific ontologies and epistemologies of researchers vary, as does the wording, the ultimate “creed” of modern constructivism in ethnicity studies can be summarized in three points:

1. The focus of research is not groups, but people’s ideas about differences, their behavior based on these ideas, as well as the phenomena that are the result of these ideas.
2. These representations are structured around ethnic categories and the variety of meanings associated with these categories.
3. Both categories and meanings are produced and reproduced in constant interaction between people, which is why ethnicity is dynamic (and if some ethnic phenomena seem stable, we deal with the fact that every given moment of time they are being “reassembled” in a similar way).

² We are also talking about political science, within the framework of which theoretical and methodological innovations related to ethnicity have been disciplinarily centered in recent years. Both A. Wimmer and K. Chandra, whose concepts will be discussed below, are nominally political scientists.

These ideas underlie the constructivist paradigm, they are partly the starting point of ongoing studies of ethnicity, and partly the essential conclusion from them. At the first stages of the paradigm shift each study proceeded from the fact that ethnicity is constructed and described how it is still being constructed (see, for example, [Alleyne 2002; Santiago-Irizarry 2001; Verkuyten, De Jong, Masson 1995]), and that state of affairs was productive, because it allowed us to look at familiar things differently. Now, however, that constructivism has been established as a fundamental framework, at least in scientific world-system centers, the science of ethnicity stands still, not discovering anything essential.

This unfortunate state of affairs has been talked about in the last decade, and the projects of Kanchan Chandra and Andreas Wimmer have been cited as an attempt to stop “beating the dead horse of primordialism” [Wimmer 2013: 2] and move forward. The moving forward, according to these authors, was meant to be ensured through the creation of competing — already exclusively constructivist — theoretical languages, programs, models and explanations. This position was formulated about 10 years ago, and at the moment there are relatively few constructivist languages, which is why every attempt to create a language is developmental for the field of knowledge.

Below is the author’s theoretical language, which, on the one hand, seems to be broad enough to become the basis for answering various research questions (it distinguishes this language, for example, from the language of Chandra, which reduces ethnicity to identities or categories). On the other hand, it is devoid of excessive vivid metaphors: this is an advantage over the language of Wimmer, who worked with the concept of “borders”, a metaphor that played an important role at the stage of de-essentialization of ethnicity studies, but faced significant limitations in descriptive possibilities and currently has hit its ceiling. This language is currently being developed, and this article will present its current version, significantly improved in comparison with the previous publications of it.

The Theoretical Language

The key element of the theoretical language is the ethnic category. There has been a lot of controversy around the attempts to define ethnicity and distinguish ethnic categories from others. The consensus that has now developed regarding such definitions is that in their formulation one should not start from the signs according to which — in a variety of contexts — categorizations are carried out (for example, language, religion or phenotypic traits), since in each subsequent context the set of signs, defining belonging to a particular category, will be different. On the contrary, definitions are gaining more and more weight among researchers, according to which ethnic categories differ from all others in that membership in them is predominantly

inherited [Fearon 2003; Fearon, Laitin 2000; Chandra 2006], and in this sense, ethnicity is opposed to two other universal social classifications — gender and age [Cosmides, et al. 2003].

This definition has its drawbacks. Among them is the inclusion of surnames in many ethnic categories and, accordingly, the assignment of family-clan categorizations and classifications to ethnic ones. This, however, is consistent with the idea, important for the modern constructivist approach, according to which the categorizations in which people actually live are a compromise between universal and local categorizations. Moreover, if we take into account that universal categorizations or classifications are a product of modernity, it can be assumed that in many pre-modern contexts, the basis of ethnic categories was just generic categorical systems. Another drawback of such definitions comes from the fact that inheritance is not the only way to “replenish the composition” of ethnic categories. Thus, on the one hand, constructivist anthropological studies since the works of Barth [Barth 1969b] have focused on how people change their ethnic categories, as a result of which people who were born Fur become Bagarra [Haaland 1969] and Pashtuns become Baluch [Barth 1969a]. On the other hand, the modern institution of citizenship, which is considered by many researchers as a modern version of ethnicity, although arranged in a way that the totality of the country’s citizens is replenished through inheritance, also allows to enter into citizenship. The third drawback is that other non-gender and non-age classifications are included in the entirety of ethnic phenomena, in particular, for example, class classification. Indeed, according to this definition, classes, to the extent that children inherit the status of parents, turn out to be ethnic categories, but if the consensus increasingly tends to consider racial and national classifications as variants of ethnic ones, it denies class categories.

A possible solution to these problems would be to turn to literature on cognitive and evolutionary psychology [Kurzman, et al. 2001; Goetze, James 2004; Salter 2008], which examines the brain’s spontaneous “us-them” discrimination and the categorization of those people who have been classified as “them”. There is a version according to which representatives of categories that do not belong to “us” are processed by the brain through the same cognitive modules that are used to recognize animal species [Gil-White 2001]. Constructivist researchers have a certain bias towards this literature: mainstream studies of ethnicity avoid any type of perdurabilism — the notion that ethnicity is something besides interests, the realization of which occurs due to the instrumentalization of various elements of the construction of ethnicity; and this, in contrast to the largely imaginary dispute between constructivists and essentialists, is a substantive dispute, the resolution of which will significantly affect our understanding of ethnicity and the human [Hale 2004: 462]. We are, however, still far from the resolution of this dispute as well as the full integration of this framework

into modern constructivist studies of ethnicity, and therefore, for the moment, one should be satisfied with the definition that *ethnicity is the organization of differences around categories in which membership is predominantly inherited*.

Ethnicity is organized around categories, and the categories themselves exist in the context of each other, in the format of categorizations, classifications and taxonomies. The difference between these terms lies in the degree of systematization of the categories, as well as the characteristics of the relationships between them. Categorization is any attempt to distinguish “types” of people, while people can be of several types at the same time or not belong to any type; classification is a universal and unambiguous categorization, suggesting that a person can be a representative of only one category. In this regard, official and institutionalized systematizations — such as census or the institution of citizenship — gravitate toward the status of classification, while a vernacular view that singles out categories describing residents of neighboring villages, religious categories, categories taken from the official ethnic classification, as well as categories describing belonging to nation-states produces categorizations, not classifications. Categorizations often also take the form of taxonomies, that is, representations according to which some categories are subcategories of other categories. Taxonomies can also be more or less structured, produced as scientific, or fully vernacular. It is the categories, contextualized by each other in different forms, that are the object of ethnicity research, but there is also its second aspect — the diversity of category attributes. In previous works, attributes were declared, but they were not properly systematized: in this work we attempt to systemize and allocate attribute types.

In general, attributes are heterogeneous phenomena that are associated with ethnic categories in various ways. It is through attributes that ethnicity is “woven into the fabric of the social”, influencing human behavior, which is the ultimate object of interest of the social sciences. At least five types of attributes can be distinguished. First, there are stereotypes — generalized ideas about what the representatives of the categories are. Second, there are indicators — signs by which representatives of the corresponding categories are recognized. Third, there are norms — ideas about the proper behavior either of the representatives of a category or in an interaction with the representatives of categories. This also includes institutionalized norms — for example, preferences or, conversely, unspoken discrimination when entering a university. Fourth, there is the variety of relations between categories — their proximity-distance, similarities-differences, friendship-war, and so on. Each category can be given an ego-network with that category at its center, the other vertices being the other categories, with the edges describing the relationship between the main category and the other categories. Fifth, there are narratives — oral and written descriptions of reality, through which the properties of the category are revealed.

The whole variety of ethnic categories and their attributes in a certain context is called the construction of ethnicity, while the context can be both small and limited and of a broader nature. The restriction of the construction of ethnicity is not of an ontological nature, but is a function derived from the need to outline the object of study. So, for the construction of ethnicity, you can describe a commercial, a paragraph of a textbook, or a conversation between two people, but these constructions of ethnicity will be part of larger construction of ethnicity — at the level of a country, region, or even the whole world. In each case, however, the task will be to identify the ethnic categories by which the various actors describe the world, to systematize them and highlight their attributes. It is important that people can be carriers of competing descriptions of the construction of ethnicity, and these competing descriptions in their diversity are also an element of the construction of ethnicity. In addition, certain elements of the construction of ethnicity can be institutionalized and formalized to a greater or lesser extent, and this is another object for description.

In addition, the construction of ethnicity is characterized by the rules of membership in ethnic categories (whether membership is passed from the father, both parents, or through the principle of self-identification), as well as vernacular concepts (folk sociology) of ethnicity — that is, ideas about how stable belonging to ethnic categories is, how it can be changed over time, to what extent it characterizes people, and so on. This also includes typical imaginaries,³ through which cultural diversity is imagined, as well as metacategories, through which they are addressed. So, for example, in the USSR, diversity was imagined through the metacategory of “nationality”, in the USA such metacategory is “race”, and diversity at the global level is imagined through the category of “nation”. The metacategories and their meanings have important implications for understanding the nature of ethnic diversity.

While socializing, people master categories, learn to associate them with specific people they see on the street, master proper behavior as representatives of categories and, when interacting with representatives of other categories, learn who is the “friendly nation” and who is the “enemy”, as well as recognize narratives. The construction of ethnicity into which they are socialized turns out to be the ultimate reality for them, as a result of which their behavior is influenced by it. At the same time, however, at any moment of time, people are engaged in reinterpretation of reality and “reconciliation” of their ideas with the observed reality (and within this framework, recategorization of specific people may occur), and also (and this is important no less, if not more) with other ideas that are broadcast to them.

³ A sociological term denoting the tools through which collective images and phenomena arise and are realized in social relations. The world map is an imaginary national, the crown is an imaginary monarchy and so on.

As a result, it is possible to change the construction of ethnicity at the individual and — to the extent that it is discussed in communities and networks — at the collective level. Thus, on the one hand, the construction of ethnicity, like any idea that people master at an early age, is characterized by a certain degree of stability, on the other hand, due to the mechanism of reinterpretation, it is subject to change. To the extent, however, that the human mind tends to perceive the status quo as normal and stable, it is theoretically more productive to think of the construction of ethnicity and the relationship between categories and individuals as the product of constant reinterpretation and recategorization. This will also be useful for understanding the procedural phenomenon of the integration of migrants through this language.

The Integration of Migrants through the Prism of the Theoretical Language

The literature on the integration of migrants is extremely rich, while the terms used to denote this concept (integration, assimilation, inclusion, absorption, etc.) are very diverse. Among the main constructivist languages associated with ethnicity, the attempts to re-describe this phenomenon were carried out by such key authors as F. Barth [Barth 1994], A. Zolberg [Zolberg, Woon 1999] and A. Wimmer [Wimmer 2009], within the framework of the language created around the term “boundaries”. According to this approach, integration is a change in the structure of the boundaries or individual positions of people relative to the boundaries. As in other cases (for more detailed criticism, see [Varshaver 2022]), this language functions when describing an intuitive situation of two large imaginary aggregates, whose representatives are nearby and interact, and stops functioning when we need to imagine a reality in which there are more categories, the relationship between them is less explicit, and “attributing” people to them is rather ambiguous. In this respect, the language we introduced earlier has a much greater descriptive power, which is demonstrated below.

How is the integration of migrants usually perceived? Due to the fact that this concept is used in scientific research, in practical work, and in public discourse, the subject of discussion often blurs and eludes. Nevertheless, it can be argued that whenever we talk about the integration of migrants, we mean the different kinds of relationships and interrelations between people in society depending on their migration background [Heckmann, Schnapper 2003; Heckmann 2006; Esser 2001; Varshaver, Rocheva 2016; Malakhov 2015; Mukomel 2011]. The integration of migrants, according to the proposed theoretical language,⁴ is, in general, the re-categorization of specific people

⁴ Due to the breadth of phenomena that are usually invested in the concept of “integration”, it should be noted that in this article we are primarily talking about those aspects of it that traditionally relate to the so-called symbolic integration.

and ethnic categories, indicating their “migrant status” and “local status”, in the space of attributes. This entails a change in attributes indicating the proximity and distance, similarities and differences of the categories.

In the construction of ethnicity, “being a migrant”, from the point of view of the representatives of “locals” categories, usually means “they are different from us”, which sometimes also leads to the assumption that the representatives of “migrant” categories are similar to each other. Moreover, in some cases, in colloquial representation, “migrants” and “locals” may both have the characteristics of full-fledged ethnic categories, which have interrelations with other ethnic categories. Imagine a situation where there is a certain set of ethnic categories, each of them having — as an attribute — a differently formulated marker that informs that people belonging to that category are “locals”, “natives”, or “foreigners”, “migrants”, “strangers”. In the course of permanent re-categorization, the following developments are possible: (1) the category loses the attribute of “migrants” and becomes a member of “local” ethnic categories, which makes people belonging to it become “locals”, (2) the attributes of one of the “locals” categories expand at the cost of the attributes of “migrants” categories, which leads people belonging to the “migrant” category to re-classify into representatives of the “locals” category, (3) categories and attributes do not change, there is a re-classification of specific people, the “migrant” category remains, if it is “fueled” by new people, and disappears, if all or most of the people, previously belonging to this category, are re-classified. These changes are summarized in Table.

The possible changes during integration

What happens to the construction of ethnicity	What happens to the “migrant” category	What happens to the people, belonging to the “migrant” category
“Migrant” category is re-described as local	The category continues to exist, but as part of the “locals”	Nominal migrants become “locals” without changing their affiliation to the category
The attributes of the “migrant” category are added to the “local” category	The category disappears	Nominal migrants cease to belong to the “migrant” category and move to one of the “local” categories
The categories and attributes remain unchanged	The category either continues to exist or disappears, depending on the arrival of new migrants and the intensity of the individual reclassification into the “local” category	The nominal migrants either continue to be affiliated with the “migrant” category, if they correspond to its attributes, or become “locals”, if they acquire the attributes of the “local” category

Source: compiled by the author based on the results of his studies.

What determines the characteristics of the re-categorizations that can be described as the integration of migrants? Three blocks of factors can be distinguished. The first block is related to those characteristics, constructs of ethnicity that relate to the categories and their attributes. In particular, if the main indicators that allow classifying a person as part of the migrant category are visible to the naked eye, and, in turn, “local” categories are also determined through appearance, the probability of re-categorization of the people is lower than in a situation where the indicators are not visible. The attributes of “locals” categories that form a high acceptance threshold and thus prevent those who previously belonged to the “migrant” categories from moving into the “local” categories comprise another factor. Nevertheless, this is usually solved by finding among the “locals” categories either those that are characterized by a lower entry threshold, or forming new categories — for example, various categories associated with the second generation of migrants (such categories are described, for example, in [Portes, Min 2017]).

The second block of factors includes the general characteristics of the structure of ethnicity, which are not bound to specific categories. The method of imagining diversity in society is an important example of such characteristics. For instance, “multiculturalism”, which describes society as a “patchwork of cultures”, simply allows the migrant category to integrate into society as another “culture” and stand on a par with “locals” categories. If diversity is imagined through the meta-category of “race”, the likely scenario leads to the representatives of the “migrants” category being “assigned” to some “race” and thereby become “locals”, but at the same time they are “discharged” from the “migrants” category, that has no place in the host society. The situation becomes more complicated for migrants if the host society imagines itself ethnically homogeneous, where marginal categories may arise or the “migrant” categories can be preserved after generations: usually in such situations the threshold for entry is either high or — if homogeneity is tied to a phenotype — insurmountable until the society reshapes itself.

The third block of factors consists of those that are not directly related to the construct of ethnicity. These include, for example, the situation on the labor market, which either assumes or doesn’t assume locking migrants in specific positions, spatial differentiation, “ghettoizing” or “mixing” migrants and locals, the human resources of the incoming migrants, and so on. This block of factors influences the construction of ethnicity and the re-classification of individuals through communicative and cognitive mechanisms: intensive communication between migrants and locals, on the one hand, brings them closer culturally (the migrants learn the languages of the host society, the locals get used to the cultural repertoire of the migrants), but on the other hand, makes them more attentive to changes in the lifestyle of specific people, which, in turn, affects generalized ideas, which include the construction of ethnicity.

The Russian Case of Migrant Integration⁵

Let's re-describe the situation with the integration of migrants in Russia using this theoretical language. Over the past centuries, diversity in Russia has been conjured through the meta-categories of “peoples”, “nationalities” or, in the scientific version, “ethne”, which, in return, formed the Russian or Soviet people [Malakhov 2006: 150; Slezkine 2001: 362]. The relationship between ethnic categories, however, was conjured through two basic frameworks, which can be labeled as “imperial” and “people’s friendship”. In the imperial framework, the attribute of the “Russians” category was its leading role in state-building, as well as, in general, a level of culture and the kulturträger function associated with it, while “people’s friendship” assumed equality between categories. At different stages, national politics more or less shifted to one of these poles, just as vernacular ways of conjuring diversity inevitably included both of these frameworks. Nevertheless, with regard to the “multi-diversity” of the people, there were no contradictions between these frameworks, and as a result, the essentialist idea that Russia is inhabited by different peoples, which form together a “single” nation (meaning, the construction of ethnicity in terms of categories is described within the framework of taxonomy) has settled down and is not troubling for the majority of residents.

The collapse of the Soviet Union intensified the migration processes, but in fact the international migration in the perception of the state and ordinary people did not go beyond the ways of imagining internal diversity. The twist happened in the mid-2000s [Mukomel 2005]: on the one hand, the characteristics of migration flows changed, and it became clear that it weren't fellow citizens of another ethnicity that were considered, but real foreigners; while on the other hand, in the discourse, that was largely based on the pogroms in France in 2005, the category “migrants”, along with the variety of its — often contradictory — attributes, such as “migrants are lazy to work” and “migrants are taking away our jobs”, came into use. The “migrants” category gave a second wind to the imperial, hierarchizing discourse about the relationship between categories, which, on the one hand, recognizes the presence of “peoples”, while on the other hand, assumes the primacy of Russians over all others. This discourse, however, is quite easily replaced by the discourse of “people’s friendship”, where migrants turn out to be members of “our big family”, which includes all the peoples of the

⁵ The empirical generalizations in the section are based on the author's long-term research, including: [Varshaver et al. 2021; Rocheva et al. 2017; Varshaver et al. 2016; Varshaver 2016], and also on the following works: [Kosmarskaya, Savin 2021; Arutiunova 2008; Gudkov 2005; Kosmarskaya 2018].

former USSR, or — depending on the generosity of the speaker — the whole world, acting on an equal basis.

This state of affairs is supported by national policy, which inherited the Soviet version of multiculturalism, but also by various means indicating the great importance of the Russian people in this construction.⁶ As a result, both in the minds of the state and the ordinary Russians, a migrant, in order to become a member of the Russian society, is not obliged to give up their cultural characteristics, on the contrary, it is as a “Tajik”, “Uzbek” or “Azerbaijani” that he becomes a “Russian citizen” or — depending on the situation — “Russian”. The ambiguity of the situation is created by the fact that in addition, “Tajiks”, “Uzbeks” and “Azerbaijanis” exist as “migrant” categories, and the difference between local “Tajiks” and migrant “Tajiks” lies entirely in the field of attributes of the “migrant” and “locals” categories, as well as a number of attributes assigned to them. “Locals” have lived in Russia from birth or for a long time, speak Russian, interact with other “locals” and start families with them, comply with the “rules” (not real, but rather imaginary ones), etc. “Migrants”, respectively, have recently moved to Russia, they speak Russian poorly, do not communicate with the locals and are enclosed in a circle of compatriots. At that moment, however, when visitors from other countries (individuals or entire communities) cease to correspond to the characteristics of “migrants” and become “locals”, a “local” ethnic category associated with the country of origin is already prepared for them to enter, and thus, they become “Tajiks”, “Uzbeks” and “Azerbaijanis” partly from the discourse about the “people’s friendship”, and partly from the imperial discourse, however, in both the first and the second cases, they become “natives”.

Certain “breakdowns” occur in situations where migrants do not fit into any of the “classic” categories, through which diversity was described in the Soviet Union. For instance, it is usually difficult to fit Black Africans into the “family of peoples”, nevertheless, the tendency here remains the same — a vernacular ethnic category is created, a “locality” is attributed to it, and the classified person is placed exactly inside it. As, for example, it was described in the film *«Assa»: This is Vitya. My friend, Vitya. Why are you so shy? Is it because he’s Black? Don’t worry! He’s our Black, Soviet, socialist! You could say that you’ve seen a new kind of Black. Not Michael, not Joe, mind you, but Vitya.*⁷ This is a generally accepted model, but deviations do exist, and in particular, in parallel with multiculturalist ideas, the reduced concept exists,

⁶ Decree of the President of the Russian Federation dated 19.12.2012 No. 1666 “On the Strategy of the State National Policy of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2025” (ed. 06.12.2018). *Collection of Legislation of the Russian Federation*. 24.12.2012. No. 52. p. 7477. Retrieved February 23, 2023, from <https://base.garant.ru/70284810/>

⁷ Assa (movie). *Wikipedia*. Retrieved February 23, 2023, from https://ru.wikipedia.org/?curid=128896&oldid=127751862

according to which Russia is populated by representatives of the category “Russians”, the characteristics of which do not indicate blood or appearance, but culture, and in this sense, migrants become “Russians” through integration: however, on one hand the “Russians” in this situation, turn out to be an umbrella category, which in turn may include other “nationalities”, on the other hand — this perspective, which can be described as “assimilationist”, although exists, but seems to be mostly marginal at the moment. Thus, in Russia, the integration of migrants is generally carried out through the reinterpretation of migrant categories as locals, followed by the reclassification of special migrants from the first category to the second.

Discussion and Conclusions

This article presents an updated version of the theoretical language, which, according to us, acts as the optimal basis for analytical work with ethnic phenomena. This language was applied to the field of migrant integration, whereby the process was re-described as the re-categorization of individuals and categories in the space of categories and attributes, describing people as “locals” and “migrants”. We showed how such re-categorization is possible, as well as what determines its course and outcome. In addition, this language was devoted to the one formed around the category “boundaries” and is often used to study the integration of migrants, and although, due to the limited size of the article, no case was given where the advantages of the “language of categories-attributes” are obvious, it could be implied that the “language of boundaries” is insensitive to the variety of new categories that inevitably arise during the integration of migrants, and also does not have a proper analytical apparatus, allowing to analyze categories in the context of each other (here it is important to distinguish categorization-classification-taxonomy).

At the same time, it should be noted that these languages do not contradict each other in essential things (the ternary model summarized in Table 1 is very close to the Zolberg model, according to which boundaries can be blurred, shifted or crossed individually (by individuals), and the “language of categories-attributes” more likely allows to escape the suboptimalities of the “language of the boundaries”, and, in particular, the excessive metaphorical power of the key concept.

Nevertheless, the theoretical and empirical analysis of the categories that arise during the integration of migrants is an important task for the future. The same can be said about the analysis of the language for colonialism, which in this case consists of implicative alignment from and within the framework of imagination of the receiving society. The same way that integration is an interactive process, migrants’ opinion on diversity is an important factor, that helps explain its course and outcome. This, however, does not contradict the fact that all people, regardless of belonging to the

“locals” or “migrants”, identify diversity through categories and their attributes, which means that there is need to include different perspectives in descriptions created in the language and, accordingly, the development of the language, and not its essential change. This is exactly how the further task can be formulated — the description of various phenomena and processes, in this language, related to the integration of migrants and those in other planes (for example, it would be useful to use this language to interpret the phenomenon known as “structural inequality”), which will help its development, detailing and specification. To use the metaphor of the popular Python programming language, the basic language has already been created, now it is time to create useful libraries based on it. Moreover, the micro sociological re-description of integration is an important task, where it will be useful to turn to qualitative sociological tools, in particular, the study of biographies and family histories, however, within the larger task of modeling, the integration from micro sociological positions and integrating this optics with the “language of categories-attributes”.

Can we talk about the results of the conducted re-description for the practice of diversity management? Yes, without a doubt. The main conclusion is that the integration of migrants, in terms of policies and programs, is only partly about working with migrants, and partly, and for the most part, about working with the construction of ethnicity existing in the host society, which has a key impact on the course and outcome of the integration of migrants. Inclusiveness of the host society, expressed, in particular, in imaginative differences that presuppose the possibility of full participation in it even of recent migrants, as well as in the society’s view of itself partly as a set of like-minded people, and partly as a multitude, permanently or temporarily residing in a certain territory, regardless of phenotypic and cultural characteristics, in a broad sense promotes a more effective integration of migrants. Such inclusiveness is achieved by using the construction of ethnicity — with categories and their attributes, as well as ways of conjuring diversity and rules of entry, all the things that have become evident through the presented theoretical language.

Received / Поступила в редакцию: 22.02.2023

Revised / Доработана после рецензирования: 31.03.2023

Accepted / Принята к публикации: 15.04.2023

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