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ATTITUDES TOWARDS TIME AT INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS

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Abstract

In the paper the results of the comparative research of the attitudes towards past, present and future at students and international migrants are provided. This study has revealed a number of important trends in attitudes towards the time of Russian-speaking migrants residing in the UK. The main significance of the research is that it comprehensively studied time attitudes of the individual in migrants (integrating memory, mentality, nonverbal associations, language) in comparison with the indigenous inhabitants. It was shown that sweet nostalgia for the past events gives energy and strength for new tasks, the activity and importance of the present events create the impression of a rapid change of events and life intensity. Moreover, migrants look to the future with more hope and optimism than non-migrants do. They set goals, persistently follow them and expect rewards from the future. On this path they are ready to sacrifice today's pleasures for the sake of future achievements. A positive attitude towards time (not only to the past, but also to the present and the future) can act as a coping mechanism for migrants, both for individuals and for a group. In general, time for people living outside the home country can be considered as a valuable resource, not so much related to material but to spiritual values (impressions, emotions, attitudes, etc.).

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1. Introduction

Migration of the population to other countries is a powerful modern world trend, which, according to many scientists, is of positive significance for the global economy. People go for better living conditions, promising work, new opportunities for themselves and their loved ones. The process of getting used to life in a new country is accompanied by difficulties connected with an unusual cultural way, differing social norms and laws, as well as with the loss of social ties and violation of cultural identity. However, many people successfully cope with problems in a foreign country, achieve their goals, and gain happiness and prosperity. In this regard, the issue of psychological phenomena that allow people to cope with difficulties in a new cultural environment is extremely urgent.

One of such phenomena is time perception, or attitudes towards time (Droit-Volet & Gil, 2016; Makri & Schlegelmilch, 2017; Shneor & Efrat, 2014; Espinel et al., 2014; Nestik, 2015; Wang et al., 2016; Gershuny & Harms, 2016). Time as a social category is a relative definition. Acting as one of the foundations for structuring social experience and the mechanism of self-identification of a subject, time, or more precisely its perception by people, is the most important element of the basis of any society, defining and structuring the format of ties and relations of individuals in it. Thus, the parameters of time perception align with the social system in which the individual is immersed (Zabelina, Smirnov & Chestunina, 2016).

In this sense, the attitudes towards time can show the latent deep personal mechanisms allowing to adapt to new social and cultural conditions. Knowledge of these mechanisms will help to increase the effectiveness of adaptation of the international migrants. Since time attitudes are closely interrelated with subjective psychological well-being (Kaufman et al, 1991), the revealed patterns can be important for solving the mental and psychological health problems of the nation, as well as the problems of psychological adaptation to the growth costs of modern society.

2. Problem Statement

The problem of studying of time attitudes at the international migrants has been investigated not very deeply. There are only several works studying psychology and behavior of migrants in temporal aspect.

In particular, the problem of migration can be considered from the viewpoint of “temporal belonging” to another society or culture (May, 2016; Binasisa, 2011; Fenster, 2004). There are attempts to identify mechanisms of adaptation and acceptance of identity in migrants through temporary structures. The solution of the problem is associated with the mechanisms of autobiographical memory (Fenster, 2004), national self-consciousness (Golden, 2002), temporal equality (Zhou, 2015), and other phenomena. However, the focus of research on narrow aspects of the problem (specific temporal mechanisms) does not allow to conduct a comprehensive study of the psychological time phenomenon in migrants, its differences from the perception and experience of time by indigenous inhabitants (non-migrants).

On the other hand, the problem of time perception and attitude towards time has a rich history in philosophy, psychology, linguistics. The ability of a person to localize consciously his or her experience in time (in the present, past and future) was called involvement in mental time travel (Tulving, 1985). Mental time travel is a recognized and studied phenomenon in various fields of study (Trope & Liberman, 2010; Gilbert & Wilson, 2007; Addis, Wong, & Schacter, 2007). Today there is increasing evidence that just about all of human experience is dependent upon and influenced by how individuals perceive time, process their temporally-based perceptions and experiences, and utilize their episodic and semantic memory structures (Furney & Fortunato, 2014).

In this particular research we decided to use the experience of psychology and philosophy for development of the approaches to the problem of social and cultural adaptation of the international migrants. Using the method that integrates elements of memory, mentality, nonverbal associations, language we tried to find particularities of the attitude towards time in migrants.

3. Research Questions

According to the revealed problem we formulated three research questions.

Firstly, the most important question – whether there are differences in attitude towards time at the international migrants and native inhabitants; if yes, what are they exactly.

Secondly, it was crucial to reveal features of attitudes towards the past, the present and the future at the international migrants. It is possible that one of them (attitude towards the past, the present or the future) is more active in their consciousness, and another, on the contrary, is blocked.

At last, the third question – what is the value of attitudes towards time (present, past and future) for the purposes of cross-cultural adaptation? Whether these attitudes can act as the mechanism of such adaptation, and if yes, how does it function?

The main hypothesis of the study was a suggestion that migrants perceive their past more positively, than not - migrants. Thus, events of the past act as the psychological resource for the personality giving energy for the present and the future.

4. Purpose of the Study

As a whole, in this study we tried to identify whether the factor of an individual's attitudes towards time are the markers that show the characteristics of a person's life and behavior in a foreign country. In other words, the purpose of this study is to identify the particularities of attitude towards time, as well as its place in the value system of migrants, i.e. adults who live long outside their home country.

259 people took part in the study, 200 of them were Bachelor, Specialist or Master students of the regional Russian university, born and residing in the territory of the Russian Federation (80% are female, the average age is 19 years), and 59 people were living in the UK (in the cities of London and Birmingham) for at least 1 year (100% are women, the average age is 34.4 years). Here's the distribution of the last subsample by nationality (country of birth): 47% - natives of Russia, 13% - Latvia, 8% - Kazakhstan, 8% - Ukraine, 7% - Lithuania, 17% - other countries.

5. Research Methods

As the basic theoretical construct for this study we chose the time attitudes in the theory of J. Nuttin (2004), which distinguishes between temporal perspective, temporal orientation and time attitudes. Attitudes toward time represent a reflection of the complex of feelings of the individual regarding a particular time period of his life. As the idea of time is constructed socially, attitudes toward the past, the present, and the future reflect the values of a person.

As the main methodology of this research we selected the Time Attitudes Scale by J. Nuttin (in the adaptation of K. Muzdybaev). This technique is based on the principle of the semantic differential of C. Osgood. It is a bipolar pair of adjectives, where at one pole there is a positive attitude, and on the other is the opposite, the negative one. In total, respondents had to estimate their attitude toward time by 15 parameters (pairs of bipolar adjectives), which include emotional attitude, value attitude and personal time control. To assess the relationship to one's past, present

and future, a 7-point scale was proposed, where the positive pole is indicated by 1 point, and the negative one – by 7 points (neutral position – 4 points).

The study was conducted remotely through a questionnaire survey in the Google Forms system. The respondents received a unique electronic link to the corresponding questionnaire, clicking it they answered the test questions, after which the results were accumulated in the form of Excel spreadsheets. Further processing of the obtained data was carried out using the statistical package SPSS 24.0 (IBM Corporation, Armonk, NY, USA). To reveal statistically significant differences in time attitude indicators in the two groups, the Student's T statistical criterion was used (Nasledov, 2013).

6. Findings

A comparative analysis of attitudes towards the past, present and future of migrants and indigenous inhabitants is presented in Tables 01 and 02.

Unexpectedly, the most differences in these groups were found on the scale of attitude towards present (Table 01). Several differences are revealed in attitude towards future (Table 02) and only one difference at the tendency level is documented in attitude towards past. Migrants relate their past to fulfilling hopes and desires more than non-migrants, which may be due to nostalgic moods in this group ($T = 1.901$, $p = .060$). Both of them perceive the past as full of hope, beautiful, interesting, active, bright, and quickly passing. This perception of the past is an important resource for understanding the present events and planning the future achievements. It allows to “fuel by” positive past events from time to time (go into photos, discuss some moments from the past) in order to draw the strength and energy for the future in them.

Table 01. The results of attitude towards the present comparison in migrants and indigenous inhabitants

№	Assertion	Migrants	Indigenous inhabitants (Russian sample)	T	p
1.	Pleasant - unpleasant	2.29	2.83	-2,473	,015
4.	Beautiful - terrible	2.54	2.98	-2,125	,036
6.	Quickly passing – dragging on	2.37	3.85	-2,081	,040
7.	Easy - difficult	3.80	4.24	-1,763	,081
8.	Successful - unsuccessful	2.97	3.40	-2,033	,045
11.	Light - dark	2.53	2.91	-1,783	,078
13.	Meaningful - meaningless	2.14	2.57	-1,882	,063
14.	Active - passive	2.22	2.29	-2,900	,005
15.	Mine - someone else's	1.71	2.12	-2,055	,042

Note. The table presents only data for which there are statistically significant differences or differences at the tendency level.

In general, the present is seen by the migrants as more radiant than by the native inhabitants: it is more pleasant, beautiful, fast-moving, successful, and active for them. At the tendency level, it can be seen that the present time is perceived as more meaningful, light, and easy. In addition, migrants identify themselves more with the present, they are involved in it, see their important role in the current events. This indicates satisfaction with life as a whole, its fullness and meaningfulness; it also speaks of a sense of significance of what is happening, as well as of satisfaction

with own place and role in life. The perception emphasis on the activity and speed of time is characteristic. Probably, life in a foreign country does not provide an opportunity to “sit back”, but requires a person to be more aware and involved in the daily process.

Despite the existence of differences, average values show that the present is not perceived by migrants as “easy” time. The participants of the study may experience some difficulties in another country, but these difficulties can not eclipse other advantages, bright moments, and pleasures that this life offers.

Table 02. The results of attitude towards the future comparison in migrants and indigenous inhabitants

№	Assertion	Migrants	Indigenous inhabitants (Russian sample)	T	p
5.	Hopeful - hopeless	1.69	2.28	-3,131	,002
6.	Quickly passing – dragging on	2.93	3.48	-2,128	,036
7.	Easy - difficult	1.45	1.75	-3,632	,000
11.	Light - dark	1.85	2.18	-1,716	,089
12	Free - not free	2.12	2.93	-3,488	,001

Note. The table presents only data for which there are statistically significant differences or differences at the tendency level.

The future in the perception of migrants appears to be easier, free, full of hope, fast and light (significance at the tendency level). People, being in a foreign country, are more optimistic about their future. Probably, it is this positive attitude connected with the feeling of free choice of own way, hopes and aspirations, that acts as a personal resource, helping to overcome life difficulties.

The results of the conducted research allow to make the point about the presence of peculiarities in perception and attitude towards the time of people emigrating from their native country. In particular, the obtained data on the severity of nostalgic motifs in migrants (positive memories, bright ideas about the past) are consistent with studies of the role of autobiographical memory in the formation of personal identity (Wilson & Ross, 2003). According to this concept, there is a bi-directional connection between memory and identity. On the one hand, people’s current views, their beliefs and goals influence their memories and evaluations of themselves in the past. On the other hand, these views and beliefs are shaped by the fact that they remember their personal past (Wilson & Ross, 2003). Probably, the appeal of migrants to their past colored in light positive tones allows them to maintain their personal identity, and along with it their self-confidence and optimism.

A similar psychological mechanism is described in another study, however, under conditions of migration of a less global scale (Milligan, 2003). The author states that when a person emigrates, the continuity of personal identity suffers, while nostalgia acts as a means of creating a continuity of identity before the challenge of heterogeneity (Milligan, 2003). In our study of Russian-speaking people in the UK we identified somewhat similar to the mechanism of nostalgia.

In general, the results of the research specify and ascertain the data available in science. In particular, it was found that, in addition to fixing on the positive moments of the past, migrants are more focused on the present and future, it is extremely important for them to achieve the goal, to obtain a result in the future, and for that they are ready to sacrifice the joys of the present moment.

Quite unexpected were the data that migrants are more optimistic and positive in their assessments of time (especially the present): for them it is filled with energy, speed, and events. This effect can be explained in terms of the laws of temporary globalization (Fraser, 2007), where the boundaries of the present are expanding.

7. Conclusion

Thus, the conducted research has revealed a number of important trends in attitudes towards the time of Russian-speaking migrants residing in the UK. The results obtained need to be tested on a larger sample, as well as compared with the results obtained from the samples of other countries. The main significance of the research is that it comprehensively studied time attitudes of the individual in migrants in comparison with the indigenous inhabitants (integrating memory, mentality, nonverbal associations, language). This approach allows us to more accurately predict the behavior of people going abroad, and develop strategies to overcome difficulties in adapting to new socio-cultural conditions of life with reliance on internal resources. In this aspect, the inclusive values of the state and society are realized (Kurnosova, 2017), contributing to increasing the migrants' self-confidence, the adoption of new norms and practices and, at the same time, the preservation of the national identity of the individual.

The main conclusions of the study is about psychological time in migrants as a coping mechanism that helps effective adaptation in a new country. Sweet nostalgia for the past events gives energy and strength for new tasks, the activity and importance of the present events create the impression of a rapid change of events and life intensity. In addition, migrants look to the future with hope and optimism. They set goals, persistently follow them and expect rewards from the future. On this path they are ready to sacrifice today's pleasures for the sake of future achievements. A positive attitude towards time (not only to the past, but also to the present and the future) can act as a coping strategy for migrants, both for individuals and for a group. In general, it can be concluded that the time for people living outside the home country is a valuable resource, not so much related to material but to spiritual values (impressions, emotions, attitudes, etc.).

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