

FOREWORD

Features of modern humanities are determined by efforts to overcome a long-term crisis, the reasons for which are extremely diverse. They are to be found in the trends for societal development and in the demand for the science that is rooted in reality and is related to real life, as well as in the inability of the humanities to resolve fundamental issues of the human world perception and the methodology of its exploration, and the overly excessive numbers of specialists with the education in the sphere of the humanities in the past and the reluctance of modern young people to acquire education in this sphere. The list of reasons can be continued, and they fully confirm the significance of the crisis of the humanities in public consciousness.

The strength of the humanities is in the focus on an individual and everything that shapes their world perception. An individual is a universe formed by the environment but the one who is capable of developing and influencing that environment. The humanities understand an individual and the space of their existence in interaction; the human activity is analysed as a projection of opposite vectors, that is, both emphasizing the impact of an individual on the environment and the impact of the environment on the individual. Focus on an individual is an important feature of the humanities, which ensures the existence of the science for as long as the humanity exists.

Modern trends in the global development have proved the need for transformations in the humanities. One type of this transformation is interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research that examines an individual from the perspective of different sciences, providing a link to actual real-life events and offering new, unconventional ways of solving complex problems. Research papers included in this collection offer a deep scientific study and examination of various spheres of society (language, literature, history, art, culture, etc.) and other urgent issues in the transdisciplinary perspective, which allows finding innovative solutions to the problems of co-existence and interaction between an individual and the environment.

Using the techniques of comparative paremiology Jelena Koroļova and Oksana Kovzele focus on the Latvians', Latgalian's and Russians' paremias that are believed to constitute a spiritual triangle "myth – language – culture". The researchers present a comparative analysis of Russian and Latgalian paremias, primarily proverbs, about life in the context of Latvian proverbs recorded previously and included in folklore collections and phraseological dictionaries by Latvian folklorists. The uniqueness of the empirical linguistic material lies in the fact that the entire corpus of the Russian paremias contains more than 7,000 units having been recorded since 1977 from the Old Believers living in the south-eastern part of Latvia – Latgale and from the Orthodox living in the former territory of Latvia – Pytalovo (currently the territory of the Russian Federation).

A literary vector of the issue is presented by Jihan Zakarriya who provides as postcolonial ecocritical reading of two Scottish writers' novels while focusing on the concepts of childhood and identity and analysing the children characters depicted in a constant state of query and dissidence. The formation of identity in the confrontational framework of the Self and the Other provoked by the traumatic past is based on the aspiration for deeper understanding the present.

Following the idea that past experiences shape our identities and affect what we are today, Silvio Tamaso D'Onofrio reflects on the concept of History in antiquity and nowadays to contribute to a critical re-reading of historiographic bases and to foster a critical discussion that also gives investment in the teaching of History in classroom. The study emphasizes that it is the past that has answers to the questions of the present; hence, the mission to build the future may be successfully accomplished only when the past has been critically re-considered.

The success or failure of integration can affect the future identities of children and young people, therefore a critical and open dialogue is crucial among all members of the society, especially schools, students and teachers. By employing ethnographic approach, the issues of identity, integration and acculturation among African refugee youth in Utah (the United States) have been analysed in the article by Caren J. Frost et. al. Based on data obtained during the interviews, among the central themes that are closely related to the integration process in its connection to the school experience and to notions of belonging are: frustration with ineffective language-learning frameworks, unclarity in the school system processes, importance of religious affiliation and extracurricular activities, and notions of alterity.

Individuals have a choice to create their identities according to their own beliefs about the world. The meaning of the concept of identity cannot be considered as full-bodied without its constituent part – the “other”. Burcu Gumus explores tattooing as a means for not only expressing individual beliefs and opinions, but also for demonstrating a group identity. Her study based on the analysis of the data from in-depth interviews and participatory observations carried out in İstanbul (Turkey) is aimed at understanding the social construction of the human body through tattoos as a means of self-expression. The author examines the processes of owning and exhibiting of Atatürk tattoos (signatures, portraits) and their impact on the individuals’ experiences.

Personal, social, and cultural experiences can also be reflected via dietary practices and eating habits that are interpreted in complex and diverse ways. Antra Mieze analyses the concepts of “healthy” and “unhealthy” nutrition and investigates pupils’ eating habits in Latvia’s schools focusing on their understanding of “healthiness” and “un-healthiness” of food. The results of multiple case studies reveal that while reflecting upon and defining these concepts pupils most often use adults’ pre-constructed interpretations but at the same time they actively re-contextualize and transform them.

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