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## LOST IN IDENTITY: A CASE STUDY OF CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S SELECTED WORKS

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### ABSTRACT

The article addresses the phenomenon of identity as it is described in modern multicultural literature and analyzes language means applied to actualize the basics of the notion of identity – opposition *we-they*. The phenomenon of identity, the spotlight of different scientific works due to its immense complexity and multifaceted nature, is of special interest for linguistic studies due to the unique ability of literary texts to reflect the reality and the power of language means to convey certain ideas and messages. The sense of belonging which is as essential for human beings as any other, is strictly determined by the opposition *we-they*. For the purpose of more profound understanding of this dyad that seems to govern and regulate personal and social interactions between people a number of approaches suggested by different scientists – sociologists, philosophers – have been examined. It seems that the presence of the “Other” predisposes a person’s existence and self-realization as it would be probably impossible to define oneself without recognition from the “Other”. The availability of the “Other” as the required element of our existence, the way we see it, determines the outcome of the interaction at any level. The boundaries that are set by the opposition “*we-they*” mean striving for recognition. The figure of the “Other” regarded as the enemy is triggered off by a wide range of conceptual metaphors (the metaphor of roots, of mirror, of haziness etc.) verbalized by various language means. Language itself is seen as one of the main means and a powerful tool of setting boundaries and defining oneself and has its specific role in the texts analyzed.

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**Key words:** identity, multicultural discourse, “we-they”, language means, communicative tactics, literature.

*«We know what we are, but not what we may be»  
W. Shakespeare «Hamlet»*

**INTRODUCTION.** The XXI century literary discourse can without doubts be characterized as multicultural (polycultural) discourse. The main topics that contemporary writers are predominantly occupied with are those of identity, self-identification, preserving one’s own self within two oppositely directed tendencies that rule the world nowadays – on the one hand, it’s globalization that has established itself in many different spheres of life, on the other – the eagerness to preserve authenticity and certain uniqueness of the community during this globalization.

A literary text created by the writers with multicultural identity generates a somewhat unique chance of seeing “a literary model of the reality” (Gasanova, 2013:10), of seeing from inside a complex and sometimes the contradictory inner world of a person that has found herself/himself between two worlds and must decide which one she/he really belongs to. Since any literary text is inextricably connected with the subjective point of view of its author, it’s possible to say that the model of reality that the author builds with the help of certain tactics and strategies, involving certain language means, reflects the reality in a particular way, because modelling such a limitless object as the reality is by means of a text, which is the finite object, a piece of work substitutes not only a part of life that is depicted, but the life in its entirety. (Lotman, 1998: 133). As expressed by Stendhal in his novel “Le Rouge et le Noir”, “a novel is a mirror which goes out on a highway. Sometimes it reflects the azure of the heavens, sometimes the mire of the pools of mud on the way” (Stendhal, 1916).

Since identity is the “key element of subjective reality” (Berger, Luckmann, 1995: 81) this category has attracted researchers from various scientific fields already for a long time. Following the fundamental and already in a way “classical” works by Antony Smith (1992), Thomas Luckmann and Peter Berger (1966), Erik Erikson (1968), modern research is going on to study and analyze

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identity and its different facets from the point of view of psychology (A-M. D. Nguyen and V. Benet-Martínez, 2010); philosophy (M.V. Yehupov, 2015); political (F. Deng, 1995) and cultural studies (V. Tancher, 2019). Studies dealing with national identity are of great interest to the researchers as well (M. Guibernau 2004, 2006, 2017; G. Ariely, 2012 and many others). Literature studies are represented by the works of D. Drozdovskyi (2017, 2019), S. P. Tolkachev (2018), and philological studies are focused primarily on the research of Englishness (O.P. Matuzkova, 2013). In the focus of our research is modern multicultural identity and its reflection in modern polycultural fiction. The research is concentrated on the analysis of language means and methods with the help of which the opposition “*we-they*” – the key concept for the notion of identity – is actualized in literary texts.

As material of the research we used selected works by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, primarily the collection of short stories “*The thing around your neck*” and her novel “*Americanah*”. These works were highly praised by critics and received awards (“*Americanah*” was named among the ten best books of 2013 and the same year got the US National Book Critics Circle Award; the collection of short stories was awarded the Dayton Literary Peace Prize runner-up prize). The author herself was included in the Time Magazine list of 100 most influential people in the world in 2015. Her inspirational speech on TED Talks “The danger of a simple story” became one of the most widely viewed in all times. The author was born in Nigeria, when she was 19 she went to the USA to study. Since that time she has shared her time between two counties and her works reflect today’s pressing issues and arouse great interest for the researchers of identity.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS.** According to Yu.M. Lotman (1998), literature has its own language, which is built over natural language as a secondary system; and because of it literature itself is considered the second modelling system. This leads to understanding, writes the author, that literature possesses its own, unique systems of signs and certain rules, according to which these signs are combined and which serve to transfer special messages that cannot be transferred by any other means (Lotman, 1998: 13).

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Information, represented in a literary text, is conceptually significant and value-oriented (Borev, 2002). A literary work can be seen as a «microworld, in which we can find macroworld, as a model of personality and the reality that surrounds it», because any literary work results from «the reality perceived through the prism of culture» (Borev, 2002: 126). When a text equals the cultural macrocosm, “it becomes more significant than itself and acquires features of the culture model, and at the same time it has a tendency of behavioral autonomy, becoming similar to an autonomous personality” (Lotman, 1992:132) Therefore one of the main properties of a literary text is being actualized, i.e. its ability to double similarity (in Yu. M. Lotman’s terminology), when the text equals a certain period or a segment of life which this text reflects, i.e. (equals) a part of the world universe, but at the same time equals the whole universe (Lotman, 1998: 157).

The extensive use of the terms “identity” and “identity crisis” in modern scientific literature brings to memory the words of the famous psychologist and psychoanalyst whose name these terms are closely associated with – Erik Erikson. He says that although the terms “identity” and “identity crisis” describe something so self-obvious both in everyday and scientific usage that they do not need an exact definition, sometimes they are used in “the context that is so limited that the general meaning of the term is lost and instead of it another term might be used with the same result” (Erikson, 1996: 24).

Analyzing E. Erikson’s idea behind “identity crisis” the French philosopher Vincent Descombes thinks that it means not “who I am now” but “who I will be and who I will have to (or want to) be”. In other words, “identity crisis means losing opportunity to choose, because there’s no choice as it is” (Descombes, 2020). In his book “*Les Embarras de l’identité*” V. Descombes, pondering over modern understanding of the term “identity” and applying his own original research methodology, suggests that we should distinguish two usages of this term. The first one, that he calls elementary, is brought to the forefront when the word *identity* “cannot be defined through other words”. The other one – moral – when *identity* “is connected with pride, self-love and self-esteem” (Shevchuk, 2016). Another famous French philosopher P. Ricoeur also

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distinguishes two key meanings of the term “identity”: the first one goes from Latin “idem”, which means “identical”, “the same”, its antonyms are such words as “different”, “the one that varies”. The other meaning of the word “identity” goes from Latin “ipse” or “selfness” and in this case the opposite meaning will be the word “other” (Ricoeur, 1995):

*«Idem identity is the identity of something that is always the same which never changes, ipse identity is sameness across and through change. Self-identity involves both dimensions: I am and am not the person I was ten years ago. It is the existence of ipse identity that indicates that a self is better thought of in terms of the question “who?” than in terms of the question “what” is a self» (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2002).*

The collection of short stories “*The thing around your neck*” and the novel “*Americanah*” were written during different periods of time, but are combined by a number of themes and problems – awareness of one’s own self and one’s place in modern world that seems to have no exact boundaries, and in which a person with a “split” identity is prone to hesitation and doubts, being in a state of constant “in-betweenness”, because the person’s sense of belonging is being questioned. When talking about sense of belonging, the famous hierarchy of needs by A. Maslow comes into mind: in it the need for belongingness comes third, right in the middle between esteem needs and safety needs. In case this need is not fulfilled, appears the feeling of “losing roots”, of being cast away, of loneliness and uselessness (Grechko, 2009). Identity can satisfy this need – the need for belongingness and affection. According to A. Maslow “if both the psychological and the safety needs are fairly gratified, there will emerge the love and affection and belongingness needs <...>. Now the person will hunger for affectionate relations with people in general, namely, for a place in his group or a family <...>. Now he will feel sharply the pangs of loneliness, of ostracism, of rejection, of friendlessness, of rootlessness.” (Maslow, 1954:43).

“Split” or “double” consciousness of characters can be seen from the first lines of the narration – both the short stories and the novel are written in two languages at the same time – the characters speak English interweaving it with

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the words and expressions in Igbo – the native language of the people from the South-East of Nigeria, as in example (1):

(1) *“Darling, kedu?” he says. “Sorry, I couldn’t call earlier” (Adichie, 2009a: 22).*

Such Igbo inclusions are intuitively clear in the context and do not really need any additional explanation (e.g. in the form of translation in the footnotes, *kedu* means “how are you”). In the following example (2) the meaning of the word “*kwanu*” is actualized in the context, as the wife’s answer to her husband’s question makes it completely clear – “*is everything ok with Adanna and Okey*” or “*what about Adanna and Okey*”:

(2) *“Adanna and Okey kwanu?” he asks.  
“They are fine. Asleep” (Adichie, 2009a: 22).*

M. L. Ross in his study dealing with diglossia in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s fiction says that the so called “extroverted novels” in the apposite definition of E. Julien promote involvement of “transnational readership” and create “perhaps the most powerful literary form today” (Ross, 2019: 113).

Architectonics of the analyzed works is created by powerful end-to-end metaphors that characterize the existence of “in-between” identity. First of all, it’s the metaphor of roots. Archetypical meaning of roots is that of origin, the place where you come from, connection with the family, with the past and your ancestors and finally of belongingness which comes from one meaning of this symbol – stability. Language means that verbalize this metaphor, cover a whole range of words and expressions, which form the semantic field with the lexeme *roots* as its “umbrella” word. In example (3) the metaphor of roots, besides the obvious word combination “*sink her roots*”, evolves further contextual actualization of the direct meaning of the “umbrella” word – we shake off pieces of soil from the roots after extracting them from the ground:

(3) *“Nigeria became where she was supposed to be, the only place she could sink her roots in without the constant urge to tug them out and shake off the soil” (Adichie, 2017: 6).*

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In the next example (4) the idea of stability that comes together with the metaphoric meaning of the word *roots* is verbalized with the help of the phrasal verb “*grow on sb*” and word combination “*snake roots*”, which serve to sum up the chores and habits (Pilates twice a week, cookies for children) and certain routine things (drive-ins for banks’ clients) that constitute the essential part of the main character’s life. The choice of the language means is by no means random as it implies between the lines that such a life has not been established at once (*if sth grows on you it means you like it more and more than you did at first* (Cambridge Dictionary Online, 2021) and not without certain obstacles (*to snake = to move along a route that includes a lot of twists or bends* (Cambridge Dictionary Online, 2021):

(4) “*She goes to a Pilates class twice a week in Philadelphia with her neighbor; she bakes cookies for her children’s classes and hers are always the favorites; she expects banks to have drive-ins. America has grown on her, snaked its roots under her skin*” (Adichie, 2009a: 27).

Hostility and inclination towards conflicts that accompany the process of finding new self in the new world are shown through the comparison with war-like situation in which the main characters find themselves; they feel physical pain and hostile attitude of people around them:

(5) “*... because she was at war with the world, and woke up each day feeling bruised, imagining a horde of faceless people who were all against her*” (Adichie, 2017: 152).

Such antagonistic attitude also finds its way within the urban narration (example 6), when the city landscape which surrounds the main characters and / or its single elements acquires anthropomorphic features and manifests unfriendliness and repugnance. The range of the language means involved in actualizing such an atmosphere varies from the nouns with explicit negative semantics denoting “danger”, “peril”, “hazard” to metaphorical depiction of Victorian houses which, as if they were people, have sad, cheerless air around them:

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(6) *“In London, night came too soon, it hung in the morning air like a threat, and then in the afternoon a blue-gray dusk descended, and the Victorian buildings all wore a mournful air. In those first weeks, the cold startled Obinze with its weightless menace...” (Adichie, 2017: 227).*

Another prominent vocal metaphor is that of the new world as a mirror, where “new” people do not find their reflection, thus becoming “invisible” with their existence being easy to erase: *“...he lived in London indeed but invisibly, his existence like an erased pencil sketch...” (Adichie, 2017: 257)*; they feel estranged, abandoned and lonely, their invisibility causes their sufferings, and each encounter with the reality that does not accept them, results in physical pain, as in example (7):

(7) *“Sometimes you felt invisible and tried to walk through your room wall into the hallway, and when you bumped into the wall, it left bruises on your arms” (Adichie, 2009a: 74).*

Sometimes random items of the material world (e.g. a credit card with the name of the owner engraved on it) make the outlines of their personality more visible and in this case they themselves are becoming more and more tangible:

(8) *“That credit card preapproval, with her name correctly spelled and elegantly italicized, had roused her spirits, made her a little less invisible, a little more present. Somebody knew her” (Adichie, 2017:132).*

The prominent German philosopher G. Hegel wrote that identity is not something that we have since the day we were born, like, for example, a set of genes, but it is gained throughout one’s life and can be contested many times (Skirbekk, Gilje, 2000). More than a century later E. Erikson wrote something similar, stating that identity is not created as a result of a victory, it’s not armour or weapon, not something static and unchangeable. (Erikson, 1996: 33). We think that the above-mentioned thesis contains the idea of certain changes as the essential constituent of the process of blending in to the new

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community, which, on the one hand, seems quite reasonable. On the other hand, though, it seems that these changes take away something very genuine that makes us what we are as it's shown in the following example:

(9) “*Aunty Uju had deliberately left behind something of herself, something essential, in a distant and forgotten place*” (Adichie, 2017: 119).

This may seem as a sacrifice, as something that activates the famous law of physics – for every action there is an equal opposite reaction – when these changes are invasive and forced (e.g. “*America had subdued her*” (Adichie, 2017), and can cause a whole range of negative emotions as in example (10) when just the thought that she had been somehow changed by living in another country, provokes inner resistance and irritation of the main character:

(10) “... *and the suggestion, that she was somehow irrevocably altered by America, had grown thorns on her skin*” (Adichie, 2017: 17).

The concept of identity is closely related to that of boundaries. Which, in its turn, is closely connected with the concept of space in the literary text about which spoke eloquently Yu.M. Lotman: the boundary is the key topological feature of space (Lotman, 1998: 145). If we take any literary text, wrote the scientist, “it won't be difficult to prove that as a rule there is a principle of binary semantic opposition at the core of the inner structure of its elements: the world will be divided into the rich and the poor, us and them, (...) enemies and friends”. (Lotman, 1998: 149).

The idea of the “other” in the opposition *we-they* lies in the very essence of a human being, since “we can't possess the identity we want without its recognition from the other side” (Skirbekk, Gilje, 2000). The nature of relationship within this opposition (how we treat the “other”) can be different. For example, from G. Hegel's perspective it's always a struggle, a fight for recognition, for the idea that each one in this pair of *we-they* should be considered by other in the same way as this other sees itself, this is a fight for

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“mutual recognition” (Skirbekk, Gilje, 2000). In M.V. Yehupov’s opinion, “together with the affection the hostile attitude to other people is one of the key, fundamental forms of relationship among people. It happens due to the fact that fighting instinct is genetically present in human beings” (Yehupov, 2015: 145). Also in G. Simmel’s chapter “A person as an enemy” there is a thesis that hostility among people along with affection is a certain “form or foundation, basis of people’s relationship” (Simmel, 1996: 500). Expressing this idea about people’s urge to opposition the scientist says that such wish, similar to animals’ protective behaviour, might be called a safety instinct. And in this case, we would be talking about “primal, fundamental character of the opposition” which in its turn would suggest that “a personality, without even experiencing an attack, but reacting only to self-expression of other people, is not capable of defining itself in any other way but through opposition <...>, through denying the other” (Simmel, 1996: 501).

On the other hand, the German philosopher and sociologist J. Habermas suggests the idea of a dialogue, in which the understanding of the “other” in the age of cultural diversity of the modern society manifests itself as an essential part and says about certain norms which can regulate relationships between different cultures and values. (Skirbekk, Gilje, 2000). Without doubts one cannot but emphasize the importance of M.M. Bakhtin’s approach to the question of the “other”; he offered to distinguish “I-for-myself”, “I-for-the “other” and “the other-for-me” (according to M.M. Bakhtin’s theory “I need the Other, the Other confirms my existence, without the existence of the Other I don’t yet exist in the full meaning of the word”). We can find a similar triad in J.P. Sartre’s works: “existence in oneself”, “existence for oneself”, “existence for the other”. Despite the fact that according to J.P. Sartre the first reaction of a person to the appearance of the “other” is rejection and denial which is followed by a fight (a fight of opinions), J.P. Sartre states the necessity of the existence of the “other”, he proves that the “other” is essential both for our existence and our self-cognition, because “in order to find the truth about myself, I have to go through the “other” (Komshukova, 2019).

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Thus, the conceptual basis that characterizes the pair *we-they* in the selected works by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is the concept of “Otherness” which is represented at its fullest by the lexeme “different”. In many contexts it seems to act as a self-sufficing axioma that serves to explain a lot of things; it has the power of a verdict when used in short, abrupt remarks: “*This is America. It’s different*” (Adichie, 2017: 109) – says Auntie Uju replying to Ifemelu’s surprise that they grew up speaking two languages and it didn’t arouse any questions. “*It’s just different here*”, Ginika said, a little wistfully, as though she, too, were new to America” (Adichie, 2017: 124) – repeats Ifemelu’s friend Ginika, reacting again to her surprise about certain things.

The concept of “Otherness” is also verbalized through the adjective “foreign”, which in the context actualizes the idea of something unwanted, something that should be avoided, as in the example with food (11) or indicates something unhealthy and abnormal, as in the example with the party clothes (12):

(11) “*I don’t want us to be known as the people who fill the building with smells of foreign food,*” he said. (Adichie, 2009a: 110)

(12) “*Won’t you get dressed?*” she asked her roommates before they left, all of them wearing slouchy jeans, and Jackie said, “*We are dressed. What are you talking about?*” with a laugh that suggested yet another foreign pathology had emerged (Adichie, 2017: 128).

On the other hand this “Otherness” serves as a link, as a marker, a symbol that unites: (13) “*Duerdinhito*”, Obinze repeated. “*Yes!*” A delighted smile. A small bond of foreignness” (Adichie, 2017: 251). – A foreign name, that has to be shortened so that it will be easier for an American employer to pronounce it, is a piece of cake for a foreigner – immigrant who is in the same boat as she is and it makes him be a part of *we* group, it unites them both at some deep invisible level.

As the narration continues this concept is getting filled with other elements mainly by means of comparison that takes place both explicitly and implicitly. Direct, open collision is verbalized with the help of possessive pronouns with

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the corresponding nouns such as “*in their world*”, “*their way*” as in the example below (14):

(14) “... *I would not need to worry about our grandson ... who, the last time he visited, did not understand why he was expected to say “Good afternoon” to strangers, because in his world one has to justify simple courtesies*” (Adichie, 2009a: 44).

Something “different” equals something abnormal, wrong, with something “ours” being the only right thing:

(15) “*He said oyibo people were like that. If you did something in a different way, they would think you were abnormal, as though their way was the only possible way*” (Adichie, 2009a:19).

Finally, as time goes by these poles switch places and something that was “different” for newly arrived immigrants becomes natural for them, and now it’s them who look “different” for those who remain “*there*”, in the *other* world – for their relatives, friends:

(16) “*But how can I live in Nigeria again? she said. When you’ve been here so long, you’re not the same, you’re not like the people there. How can my children blend in?*” (Adichie, 2009a: 21,22).

When the opposition “*we-they*” is actualized implicitly it happens indirectly, through the range of evaluative words, that highlight weirdness, strangeness and even eccentricity of some things in America; these can be some peculiar habits or behavioral patterns among relatives which arouse jocose surprise as in example (17), or something more than just funny daily routines of family life, something that provokes antagonism, rejection and even resentment as in example (18):

(17) “*When Okey ran to him with a boo-boo, he kissed it, then laughed at the quaint American custom of kissing wounds*” (Adichie, 2009a: 27).

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(18) *“There was something humiliatingly public, something lacking in dignity, about this place, this open space of too many tables and too much food” (Adichie, 2009a: 108).*

A completely natural process of comparison lies at the bottom of the opposition *we-they*; this process is one of the main intellectual operations with the help of which a person gets to know the reality around him and himself. “Everything in this world we perceive through comparison”, wrote K.D. Ushynskiy (Borozdina, 2011:141). Each aspect of life can be compared, including something as mundane as the food. In example (19) the apple of discord is “yam” – a potato-like root, that constitutes the basic diet in Nigeria (there is even a saying about it: “yam is food and food is yam”). This means that the “real” yam exists only in Africa and it’s not this bad, useless thing that is sold as yam in American supermarkets. The comparison takes place by means of implicit evaluative statements:

(19) *“Back home, she would have used yams for the ji akwukwo pottage, but here there are hardly any yams at the African store – real African yams, not the fibrous potatoes the American supermarkets sell as yams” (Adichie, 2009a: 24).*

Sometimes the tactics of creating opposition *we-they* might not be that obvious, as the evaluative statements that express the characters are not negative by their nature, but in certain contexts they lose their positive connotation and acquire a negative one. For example, talking about his daughter and her wish to bring him to America (example 20), the character in the short story “Ghost” uses the words that manifest the idea of prosperity, well-being, good chances, such as “opportunities”, “cushioned life”, “conveniences” but combined with the other words and phrases in this context such as “will be forced”, “so much”, “sterile life”, “life littered with”, “not for me” they have occasional negative meaning:

(20) *“She will finally have reason to come here and bundle me back with her to America and I will be forced to live a life cushioned by so*

*much convenience that it is sterile. A life littered with what we call “opportunities.” A life that is not for me” (Adichie, 2009a: 44).*

Language in the fiction analyzed serves as a powerful tool of conveying certain ideas, and the choice of language the main characters speak has a specific aim. In the following example talking about his child’s death the character switches from English into Igbo, because in English these words sound differently, as if possessing some disconcerting fatality:

*(21) “The war took Zik,” I said in Igbo. Speaking of death in English has always had, for me, a disquieting finality (Adichie, 2009a: 42).*

Within the opposition *we-they* language becomes the marker of stereotypes and prejudice. In this sense the most illustrative example we find in the episode from “Americanah” when Ifemelu talks to Cristina Tomas who deals with international students at the university. She starts talking to her very slowly, in a particular deliberate way pronouncing each word separately thus making certain assumptions about Ifemelu’s English: “*I. Need. You. To. Fill. Out. A. Couple. Of. Forms. Do. You. Understand. How. To. Fill. These. Out?*” (Adichie, 2017: 133).

Stereotypes of perception influence greatly the effectiveness of communication. But “the problem with stereotypes is not that they are false/untruthful, but they are not complete. They make a single story the only story possible” (Adichie, 2009b), - says the author of the novel herself. Besides, stereotypes contribute to the appearance of the so-called “identity gap”, in this particular case – the “personal-relational identity gap” – the discrepancy between how a person sees himself/herself, his/her self-identification and how other people perceive her/him (Drummond, Orbe, 2009: 82) as in the dialogue between Ifemelu and Cristina Tomas described above. The realization of this “identity gap” by a person is described by a somatic reaction of the body, which emphasizes how painful this realization is (example 22). The main character lowers her head and feels as if she were reduced in size physically comparing herself with a dried leaf:

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(22) *“Ifemelu shrank. <...> She shrank like a dried leaf. <...> she should not have covered and shrunk, but she did. And in the following weeks <...> she began to practice an American accent” (Adichie, 2017: 133, 134).*

Example (23) also demonstrates “personal-relational identity gap” in action, though in this case it’s hidden behind the compliment, but it has been read off by one of the communicators and it leads to the breach of the normal way of communication – this remark provokes the main character to give the information she wasn’t going to reveal (in fact, she was advised to keep it secret in order to get the job).

(23) *“You speak such good English,” he said, and it annoyed her, his surprise, his assumption that English was somehow his personal property (Adichie, 2009: 49).*

The boundaries between “our” language and “their” language are created with the help of lexical units with mostly negative connotation: American accent is characterized by a number of adjectives that are situated on the emotional-expressive scale starting from neutral “false” to unequivocally negative “troubling”, “ungainly” as in the following examples: *“She stared at him as he spoke, his Igbo interspersed with English that had an ungainly American accent: “Amah go” for “I will go” (Adichie, 2009a: 54) / “Is it a good life, Daddy?” Nkiru has taken to asking lately on the phone with that faint, vaguely troubling American accent” (Adichie, 2009a: 46). / “Tobechi, this person who seemed so eager, so theatrical, and who, most worrying of all, had begun to talk in that false accent that made her want to slap his face” (Adichie, 2009a: 54).*

On the one hand, the language is certainly the most obvious and powerful way of defining one’s own belongingness, of showing that you are one of “us”, as in example (24) from the short story “*Arranged marriages*”, where husband tells his newly arrived wife to speak English in America:

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(24) *“Speak English. There are people behind you,” he whispered, pulling me away, toward a glass counter full of twinkling jewelry (Adichie, 2009a: 108).* This advice seems completely justified and is seen as the necessity, something useful in order to become a part of the new community, to blend in as in example (22) when the main character started to practice American accent and as in the example stated below (25):

(25) *“Dike, put it back,” Aunty Uju said, with the nasal, sliding accent she put on when she spoke to white Americans, in the presence of white Americans, in the hearing of white Americans. ... And with the accent emerged a new persona, apologetic and self-abasing (Adichie, 2017: 108).*

But on the other hand, it seems as something unnatural and not real, false – the choice of the phrasal verb “*put on*” in example (25) shows that it’s pretence, simulation (*put on = to pretend to have a particular way of behaving that is not real or natural to you* (Cambridge Dictionary Online, 2021). Such unnatural behaviour alters the person and this “otherness” looks very unattractive, makes this new personality less significant, not worthy of respect. Here appears again the image of in-betweenness, of two personalities in one person, which is perceived as a burden you have to get rid of in order to find your true voice and with it your true self:

(26) *“... She had taken on, for too long, a pitch of voice and a way of being that was not hers” (Adichie, 2017: 175). / “There was a significance to her meeting this man on the day that she returned her voice to herself” (Adichie, 2017: 180).*

A borderline between two worlds, between “*we*” and “*they*” is very distinct and one should be careful not to cross it (example 27):

(27) *“He spoke to them only in English, careful English, as though he thought that the Igbo he shared with their mother would infect them,*

*perhaps make them lose their precious British accents” (Adichie, 2017: 239).*

Meanwhile the right English with the proper American or British accent is used for “others”, for “us” remains “our” usual language, behind which stands a “real”, “true” personality that most probably feels more confident and relaxed – the voice sounds louder and more emotional with all the peculiarities of the language (example 28):

*(28) “They hugged, looked at each other, said all the things people said who had not seen each other in many years, both lapsing into their Nigerian voices and their Nigerian selves, louder, more heightened, adding “o” to their sentences” (Adichie, 2017: 222).*

The “in-betweenness” of the characters’ existence is also highlighted by other communicative tactics, for example inner dialogues with rhetorical questions signal about increasing tension and a feeling of dissatisfaction (example 29):

*(29) “Only after she hung up did she begin to feel the stain of a burgeoning shame spreading all over her, for thanking him, for crafting his words “You sound American” into a garland that she hung around her own neck. Why was it a compliment, an accomplishment, to sound American?” (Adichie, 2017:175).*

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Another important metaphor that characterizes “split” identity is the metaphor of fog and haziness, which symbolizes unclear, blurred vision, half blindness that makes you feel as if crawling through a web and leads to anxiety and puzzlement:

*(30) “And she had the sudden sensation of fogginess, of a milky web through which she tried to claw. Her autumn of half blindness had begun, the autumn of puzzlements, of experiences she had knowing there were slippery layers of meaning that eluded her” (Adichie, 2017:131).*

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The difficulties also arouse when American and British variants of English are set against each other as right vs wrong (examples 31, 32):

(31) *“It’s an elevator, not a lift. Americans say elevator”* (Adichie, 2009a: 108).

(32) *“Cookies. Americans call them cookies,” he said. I reached out for the biscuits (cookies)”* (Adichie, 2009a: 107).

The choice of English variants in order to sound properly is not the biggest problem though. Hidden nuances of meaning, determined by extralinguistic factors such as cultural patterns, system of values, way of living cause ambivalence of perception of certain words and phrases. For example, *to lose weight* – is a compliment you need to be thankful for in America, while it has completely different meaning in Nigeria (example 33):

(33) *“You know at home when somebody tells you that you lost weight, it means something bad. But here somebody tells you that you lost weight and you say thank you”* (Adichie, 2017: 124).

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The concept expressed by the combination “*half-caste*” which denotes a person whose parents are from different races (Cambridge Dictionary Online, 2021) – in one world view is considered to be completely beneficial which brings a whole range of positive associations with it – good, attractive appearance with light-skin, trips abroad to visit relatives (example 34); while in the other – it’s completely inappropriate name, very offensive one, so some other expression is to be used, more neutral one (examples 35,36):

(34) *“Half-caste ... and the word had meant an automatic cool, light-skinned good looks, trips abroad to visit white grandparents”* (Adichie, 2009a: 49).

(35) *“... But in America, “half-caste” was a bad word”* (Adichie, 2009a: 49).

(36) “So now I say biracial, and I’m supposed to be offended when somebody says half-caste. I’ve met a lot of people here with white mothers and they are so full of issues, eh. I didn’t know I was even supposed to have issues until I came to America” (Adichie, 2017: 124).

**CONCLUSIONS.** Thus, it may be assumed that the existence of multicultural identity is characterized by a number of distinctive features, such as “split” or “double” consciousness, a feeling of “in-betweenness”; language means that verbalize this state include a wide range of metaphors (the metaphor of roots, of mirror, of war, of haziness). Since the concept of identity is closely related to that of boundaries, language is seen as one the most important and significant tools of setting boundaries and defining oneself. The boundaries that are set by the opposition *we-they* mean striving for recognition. The opposition itself is represented by the concept of “Otherness” that is verbalized by various language means (lexical units with the explicit negative meaning or occasional negative connotation; comparison that takes place both explicitly with the help of possessive pronouns with the corresponding nouns and implicitly through the range of evaluative words, that emphasize weirdness or strangeness of something).

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## ВТРАЧЕНА ІДЕНТИЧНІСТЬ: АНАЛІЗ ПРОБЛЕМИ НА МАТЕРІАЛІ ОБРАНИХ ТВОРІВ ЧИМАМАНДИ НГОЦИ АДІЧЕ

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### АНОТАЦІЯ

В статті розглядається феномен ідентичності у сучасній мультикультурній літературі та аналізуються мовні засоби, за допомогою яких актуалізується підґрунтя поняття ідентичності – опозиція *ми-вони*. Феномен ідентичності, який знаходиться у фокусі уваги різних наукових розвідок через свою надзвичайну складність та багатогранність, представляє особливий інтерес для лінгвістичних досліджень із-за унікальної можливості художніх текстів відображати реальність та здатності мовних засобів передавати певні думки та ідеї. Почуття приналежності, яке є одним із необхідних для людини, опосередковано опозицією *ми-вони*. Аби більш детально вивчити цю пару, яка, здається, керує та регулює особисті та соціальні взаємодії між людьми, було вивчено ряд підходів, запропонованих різними вченими, соціологами, філософами тощо. Здається, що присутність «Іншого» закладена у самій сутності людини та необхідна для її самоідентифікації, адже було б, мабуть, неможливо для людини визначити, ким вона є, без визнання з боку «Іншого». Присутність «Іншого» як необхідної частини нашого існування, те, як ми до нього ставимося, визначає результат взаємодії на будь-якому рівні. Межі, які встановлюються опозицією *ми-вони*, означають прагнення до визнання. Образ «Іншого», який сприймається як ворог, актуалізується завдяки цілому ряду концептуальних метафор (метафора коріння, дзеркала, імливості), які вербалізуються за допомоги різних мовних засобів. Мова розглядається як один з потужних засобів встановлення меж та власного визначення і має свою особливу роль у текстах, що аналізуються.

**Ключові слова:** ідентичність, мультикультурний дискурс, «ми-вони», мовні засоби, комунікативні тактики, література

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