Abstract

Nikkei - descendents of Japanese emigrants in the second (nisei) and third (sansei) generation who live in Latin America and speak Spanish have been brought to Japan in order to provide workers for Japanese industry during the bubble economy period. The idea of the authorities that they can assimilate easily because of their Japanese origin appeared to be too optimistic. What was supposed to be the return migration is rather a trip to an unknown country. Confronted with the Japanese Nikkei who look mostly like Japanese must constantly negotiate their identity in the conditions described by postmodern anthropologist Arjun Appadurai as the conditions of rupture characterised by massive migrations, deterritorialisation of cultures, mass media and imagination that influence the identity of a migrant. Nikkei who carry the cultural capital of both countries - Japan and the one they have come from become identity shifters (Donskis, 2009), their identity appears to be liquid (Bauman, 2000). On the basis of the interviews and long term observation (2008 – 2013) the author named three main identity strategies: clinging strategy (identity of a Latino with national label as the first label), mimicra strategy (Japanese nad Latino with national labels on the equal basis), white glove strategy (first label as Nikkei; in the society that perceives itself as homogeneous such an identity is difficult to carry and seems to be a constant challenge – the expression “to throw a white glove” was used by knights in order to initiate an armed confrontation). The fourth strategy – the strategy of avoidance of a label has been observed by the author. As far as collective identity of Spanish speaking Nikkei in Japan is concerned they present themselves in a process of identity work not as Nikkei but as Latinos with national label. It denies the Appadurai’s thesis that the national state looses its significance in a postmodern world.