

National stereotypes on education presented in folklore small texts (by the material of Russian, English and German proverbs and sayings)

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Abstract— It is commonly acknowledged, that folklore texts (tales, proverbs, sayings, songs, etc.) fix people's wisdom throughout many generations, preserving cultural entity and peculiarity. This paper is dedicated to the investigation of the national stereotypic presentations on education. By means of cognitive and discourse analyses of small folklore texts, depicting the process of learning or schooling, the authors reveal the national stereotypes on the social event of education in different communities. The analytical corpus consisted of the proverbs and sayings taken from the authentic sources of three languages: Russian, English and German. The authors studied the lexical, communicative and stylistic means of rendering the conceptual sphere Education for each language. The results of the undertaken investigation disclose similar and differential features of national worldviews of Russian, English and German people.

Keywords— *cognitive analysis, discourse analysis, stereotype, folklore texts, education*

I. INTRODUCTION

There is a large body of existing scientific descriptions of typical characteristics displayed by different national groups. Psychologists state, that people are apt to form or repeat some fixed beliefs about a particular ethnic group, that devoid of scientific or at least objective bases. We proceed from the idea, that a language has the ability to fix and preserve personal or socially determined experience and environment representations of the current reality. The anthropocentric approach in linguistics gave the opportunity to take an insight into the human mental representations through the observation of language elements and phenomena.

Folklore is one of the main means of not only describing and presenting surroundings but also of coding personal and national attitude and experience, forming a specific worldview. According to V. P. Anikin the essence of folklore depicting the reality is based on "the psychological imaginary association linking representations and concepts of outermost, discrete objects and phenomena." [1] Professor S. G. Ter-Minasova, inquiring into the questions of cross-cultural communication, determines cultural

stereotypes as "long-standing schematic representations of typical people's or any ethnic community characteristic features. [2] Various folklore sources may bring forward a most objective world of stereotypic images of a particular community, as they arose from a long-term collective experience, resulted as the product of overthought social events and critical evaluation of plenty of generations. A stereotype is commonly understood as a generalizing image of individuals (or individuals taken in groups), who are not evaluated according to their individual characteristics but rather by group membership. Stereotyping, in other words, indicates thinking in terms of categories. [3] The specific nature of association in stereotypic description determines its significance in worldview of different nations. The importance of verbal realization of reverberation of national cultural peculiarities exposes not only its linguistic, but also cognitive entity in folklore. This idea was widely discussed in many scientific works by (A. V. Sergeeva, [4] Y. E. Prohorov [5]).

Thus, Y. E. Prohorov speaks of sociocultural stereotypes in human linguistic behavior, defining them as "socially and culturally marked units of mentally determined lingual complex intrinsic to a member of a particular ethnic community, which can be realized in an intercourse in the form of eligible local association in a standard communicative situation." [5] There is a strong determination that various idiomatic phrases, phraseological units, sayings, proverbs and other folk art lingual forms widely expose social and cultural stereotypes. The conceptual and semantic analysis of a sufficient corpus of folklore texts, produced in the course of comprehension and description of the surrounding reality we may reveal national and cultural difference inherent in the character or world image of a particular community, people, nation. This view receives wide support among scholars and we are sure that studying and comparing the principles of linguistic presentation of events, human features, life situations, etc. in proverbs and sayings, afford the opportunity to bring to light common and specific features of worldview, attached or alien to a certain folk community; to monitor the forms and ways of conceptualization and categorization procedures in human mentality of an individual.

Numerous scientific observations undertaken in the linguacultural approach confirm the ability of metaphors and stereotypes accumulate and expose knowledge and experience gained in the intercourse of cognition, cultural awareness and language competence.

On the other hand, the investigation of verbal representations coding innate mental images contributes the understanding of national stereotypes existing in peoples' worldview, which benefits the development of interrelation and tolerance in our globalized world.

The present report touches upon the conceptual sphere of education as presented in the mental images of people belonging to different national communities. On the one hand, the topic is rather essential in the perspective of new ongoing changes in the Russian system of education, its association with those of European countries and the ambiguity in the attitude to the results of the introduced innovations. On the other hand, the place and the role of education systems as a state institution change in the globalized world environment, causing new ways of interrelation. Nowadays the process of further development of educational systems is currently important because of the tendency of Common Education Space formation and a number of new reforms introduced in the Russian national educational system. New turns in Russia education appeared to be highly disputable as to the impact and integration of European educational standards. Within this context, it seems highly instructive and urgent to compare stereotypes about existing ways of getting education and representations of a "wise person", "educated person" in a different world and linguistic images by means of folklore texts analysis.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS (MODEL)

In this study, we conducted a comprehensive survey of national worldview concerning the processes of getting knowledge in Russian, English and German national mentality, and stereotypes about being wise or educated individual and the attitudes to the phenomenon and its offspring. The cross-cultural character of undertaken investigation induced the number of research methods where the main ones are: cognitive discourse method, lexical-semantic analysis, componential analysis, focusing on linguacultural characteristics of the investigated material. Speaking of critical discourse analysis, Fairclough states that 'language used for creating discourse can be seen as a mirror image, a reflection of ideology which created it. This is the reason why discourses can be recognized, analyzed and positioned within a certain social context or social group [6].

The survey was brought within reach by a combination of cognitive-semantic analysis of verbal units in the structure of small folklore texts and the comparative analysis of the innate concepts and didactic ideas of proverbial wisdom, reflected lingually in different languages, namely Russian, English and German ones.

The linguistic corpus of the present investigation comprises small folklore texts – proverbs and sayings – containing a reference to the social sphere of education or the process of acquiring knowledge and wisdom.

Through the agency of continuous sampling method, we extracted at about 100 small texts from the authentic dictionaries of idiomatic expressions concerning the investigated concept. Further on we grouped them according to the ideas and concepts reflected in the texts, discriminating differential features in lingual representations for each language respectively. We admitted that there might appear equivalent elements, resulted from the long-time interrelation of the countries (and their languages) in the course of historic social events. Some proverbs or sayings might have been borrowed by means of translation or intermediary borrowing to European languages from other cultures or from some single ancient source like Bible. Those showed full coincidence in their word structure and surely could expose no discrepancy of national peculiarity.

Language as being inherently complex should be analyzed at several levels of analysis. We tried to rely on authentic interpretation of texts and the imaginary they create, as described by the native speaker. Keeping in mind that any proposemic meaning is built up by lexemic units, which could render connotation or evaluative aspect to the whole understanding of a small text, we also studied word semantics and distribution of lexemes within the proverbial structures. Sometimes a word can render the idea even without naming the real aim or object of communication, that is, creating some imaginary situation provoking reader's imagination or background knowledge or experience. Herein, we ran into several cases of an implied idea of education or acquiring knowledge through the description of daily life situations. In this aspect, there was a need to focus on lexemic units and some stylistic elements involved in a phraseological arrangement. The aforementioned procedures will now be illustrated and described, consecutively with regard to each language named.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The discussion will follow stages of analysis identified in the previous part aiming at languages mentioned.

Our first aim was to analyze Russian proverbs and sayings describing or hinting on the people's attitude to the process of educating: teaching, learning, training, becoming smart or wise, failures of schooling and their reasoning. The conceptual analysis of Russian small folklore texts made it possible to elicit several dominating stereotypic representations.

First of all, the prevailing stereotype existing in the Russian conscience is the importance and value of getting education for a person. It is exposed in many proverbs and sayings:

1. *За ученого трех неученых дают.*
2. *Знайка дорожкой бежит, незнайка на печке лежит.*
3. *Испокон века книга растит человека.*
4. *Кто грамоте горазд, тот маху не даст* [7].

The concept of a knowing person is presented by lexical units *ученый*, *знайка*, *грамоте горазд*. The value is shown through the antithesis *бежит* (active movement) – *лежит* (passive state). Dynamic verbs – run, grow – give us the

idea of the advantage of an educated man in moving forward. Idiomatic expression *маху не даст* (Sample no.4) renders the concept of a successful result of any action fulfilled by an educated individual.

There is a number of folklore texts focusing on intellectual development, rather than pure knowledge obtaining. There is a strong belief in Russian folk conscience, that learning and training are complex processes, which can become inconceivable for a trainee when done improperly. This idea is mostly exposed by the lexeme 'ум' (intellect, mind), whereas the notion of being educated, learned (*образованность*) presupposes intellect as the utmost stipulation of quality learning. The following are the examples:

1. *Наука учит только умного.*
2. *Не всякий, кто читает, в чтении силу знает.*
3. *Нет рожденного (ума) – не дашь и ученого.*
4. *Ученый дурак хуже природжденного [7].*

Sample no.1 presents the concept of education through the lexeme *наука*, which can be realized only in terms of existing intellect – *ума*. Sample no.3 supports the idea describing the concept of education by *ученый*, and stating that a scientist may result only in case of inborn intellect – *рожденного (ума)*. In the second example, the concept of learning is implied by naming the action that takes a leading position in the educational process – namely, reading – which has no sense without thinking. The priority of intellect is expressed implicitly through the metaphoric representation of “power of reading”, that is worthless without a thought. The idea of inborn intellect is also raised in Sample no.4, but folk wisdom stresses the dangers of education without thinking. An educated fool may cause much harm. An individual lacking intellect is lexically named by a negatively connoted colloquial lexeme *дурак*.

The next widespread stereotype is the importance of education, training in practical application of gained knowledge and skills. Let us observe the following group of statements:

1. *На колокол глядя, звонить не научишься.*
2. *Чтобы научиться плавать, надо лезть в воду.*
3. *На ошибках учатся.*
4. *Ученье без умения не польза, а беда [7].*

In the first example, we can see an implied idea of practical training in the description of a real-life situation. Reading the text on the surface level we can extract the information, though the essence of it may be a bit obscure, because of a lack of understanding some extralinguistic factors. The church bell mentioned in the proverb is far up from a man in the street, who cannot even imagine its size and weight, and, as a result, has no slightest idea of the efforts taken to move bell strikers and skills needed to get harmonic sounds out of bells. So to say, you may see, learn how it works, but without real practice, knowledge would come to nothing. The verb *глядя* means a passive acquiring of knowledge without practice, which leads to a failure in education – *не научишься*. Example no.2 also presents the concept metaphorically, but via life context close to every

individual – learning to swim (*научиться плавать*). The collocation *лезть в воду* has a wide range of application in proverbial texts, courtesy of numerous associations with water (such as, depth, continuity, immensity, danger, etc.). Statement no.3 points out the possibility of mistaking as a means of practical learning. Contextually, the word *ошибка* obtains positive connotation, determined by the extralinguistic factor. The latest proverb of the cluster lime-lights the stereotype of knowledge being useless or even having harmful outcome (*беда*) in case of practical skills absence.

Several proverbial samples extend the stereotype of the necessity of education by adding a shade of esthetic aspect of individual characteristics. We can again observe the metaphoric interpretation of a man decorated with knowledge:

1. *Красна птица перьем, а человек ученьем.*
2. *Не украшай платье, украшай ум [7].*

Further on, our analyses revealed a stereotype of admitting difficulties attending any educational process in the Russian mentality. Nevertheless, the communicative aim of the folklore texts is to put the accent on the necessity of overcoming the chore of studying, suggesting future benefits:

1. *Намучишься, так и научишься.*
2. *Без муки нет и науки.*
3. *Всю хитрость не изучишь, а себя измучишь.*
4. *Аз, буки и веди страшат, что медведи. [7].*

The first three examples are united by the conceptual metaphoric model LEARNING is SUFFERING. Lexically it is expressed by lexemes *мука*, *намучиться*, *измучиться*. Herein, the more important thing is the communicative structure of the statements, where the concept of suffering makes up the thematic element while education is presented as the rheme, meaning the consequence or beneficial result. Example no.4 figuratively denotes the process of educating by the enumeration of the first three letters of the old Russian alphabet – *аз, буки, веди*. In Russian mentality, these names are associated with the basics of education. The verbalization of the stereotype is done through the comparison of learning with meeting a bear and the scaring effect of it.

The corpus of folklore texts under consideration offers us a stereotypic idea of educational failure. All the proverbs and sayings are negatively connoted and are used as a kind of reproach:

1. *Книга, а в ней кукиши да фига.*
2. *Не хочу учиться, хочу жениться.*
3. *Нижегт строка в строку, а что проку?*
4. *Учился читать да писать, а выучился петь да плясать [7].*

The rude colloquial idiomatic expression ‘*кукиши да фига*’, positioned as a result of learning shows pejorative attitude to education or to a person who failed it. The

concept of education is coded metonymically by the element 'книга', as the main tool of getting knowledge.

The saying in Sample no.2, often cited, appeared in the time of Peter I having a fixed pejorative attitude to the young people considering marriage, as social status, being higher than education. The two next samples demonstrate mistrust to education or to its results.

To sum it up, the cognitive and discourse analysis of Russian folklore small texts permitted us to prove the existence of the following stereotypes: education is important, education is a complex process, education is nothing without practice, intellect is prior than education, and education may cause positive or harmful effects.

Now comes the second stage of the research with the aim of analyzing stereotypes distinguished in English small folklore texts. It is worth mentioning that there is no lexeme 'education' in English proverbs and sayings. The concept is presented by various lexemic units, semantically referring to the conceptual sphere, like *learn, experience, school, teaches, practice, wise, teacher, learned, mind, learning, taught, wit, know, book, master*. The stereotypes observed in English linguistic corpus we shall describe in accordance with their quantitative aspect.

To our mind, the concept of education in the English cultural worldview is most closely connected with the practical application of the knowledge obtained. The practice is presented here as the main aim of learning and the source of human experience. The greater number of proverbs support this conceptual connection:

Experience keeps no school; she teaches her pupils singly [8].

Practice is the best master.

An ounce of practice is worth a pound of preaching;

Example is better than precept;

Practice makes perfect;

Experience is the best teacher;

Experience is the father of wisdom;

Experience keeps a dear school;

By doing nothing we learn to do ill

A fool and his money are soon parted [9].

The bulk of the statements is marked by the lexemic reference to the practical use of gained knowledge. All the texts claim the necessity and value of experience and practical knowledge. The syntactic structure of sayings is straightforward and plain, which makes them sound didactic or instructive. In Samples 1-8 we can trace the identification of the conceptual sphere through verbs and nouns semantically connected with it: *to teach, master, teacher, school, wisdom*. Each of the phrases contains lexemes *experience* and *practice* as a thematic element. The lexeme *example* (Sample no.4) serves a verbal marker of the conceptual presentation of experience or practical application of knowledge as contrasted to the element *precept* referring to pure learning. The two latter samples relate to the concept in view indirectly, focusing on the

irrelevancy of learning without being active (Sample no.9) and the harmful outcome of lack of wisdom (Sample no.10).

The stereotype of the necessity of education and learning is realized in the following proverbial elements:

No man born wise or learned.

The best colt needs breeding.

A man of learning heralds place abreast with him of noblest race [10].

Knowledge is power.

When house and land are gone and spent, then learning is most excellent.

It is never too late to learn [9].

Here, the verbal markers referring us to the conceptual sphere are *wise, learned, learn, breeding*. All the statements stress the idea of the significance of gaining knowledge and wisdom and the attitude towards learned individuals (*noble, excellent*). Although the formulation of the stereotype in Russian and in English worldview coincides, we face up some background differences of the extralinguistic aspect. Sample no.2 provides us with the metaphoric representation training through the implied comparison with a young horse (*colt*), which is peculiar to English culture, where appraising of a good horse, horse breeding is a widespread reality. Another extralinguistic context is the excellence of the educational process without material values. The act of possessing or belonging to some house or land would be tied in Russian mentality with family and home, the loss of which causes dependency.

Sample no.3 presents education (*learning*) as the condition of eminence (*noblest race*).

The undertaken analysis set out a negative stereotype in the conceptual sphere *Education*. The first cluster observed is semantically opposite to the previous one and is rendered by the following:

1. *Better an ounce of wisdom bought than pounds of that which we were taught.*

2. *Better untaught than ill-taught*

3. *He who can, does; he who cannot, teaches* [9].

Sample no.1 opposes wisdom to education (*things taught*). The effect is strengthened by the metaphoric image of money got. The verbal element 'better' places wisdom higher than things *taught*, which implies education and knowledge. In this case, the stereotype of the uselessness of education is built up by shifting wisdom and educational process opposing them.

Sample no.2 hints that learning process may have the wrong direction and cause negative consequences, providing doubt in the necessity of getting knowledge, whereas Sample no.3 advances straightforwardly the idea of doubt in a teacher's competence (*who cannot*), opposing knowledge obtained to practical skills (*he who does*).

The second cluster is tougher asserting that education causes harm:

1. *To much knowledge makes the head bald.*

2. A great book is a great evil

3. To know everything is to know nothing. [9].

This group is presented via the conceptual metaphor model KNOWLEDGE is HARM. The irrelevance of education is postulated by negatively connoted lexemes: *ill-taught, evil, nothing*. Sample no.1 stresses the possibility of the unwilling physiological phenomenon – losing hair, providing a negative attitude to learning. There is a metonymy in Sample no.2, where a book, implicating education, is presented as evil, with emphases provided by the anaphoric repetition. Sample no.3 suggests antitheses: ‘*know everything*’, – ‘*know nothing*’ exposing irrelevance of education.

The fulfilled analysis brought forward the stereotypic representations in English folk mentality, which nominally coincides with those of Russian ones on some points. The difference lies in placing the accents in the phases of training and social context. Practice and experience in British conscience dominate and provide a tough basis for social prosperity. Education is viewed as a benefit to social position, but also as a harmful factor.

The continuous sampling method and the following cognitive analyses showed that there is a great number of folklore small texts concerning the educational sphere in the paremiological fund of the German language. So, we enter the third stage of the analytical procedure.

Just as we observed the stereotypic prevalence of practice and experience in the English language, the idea of practical approach and pragmatic outcome dominates in the folk conscience of German people. Here we may state the similarity of the stereotypic idea, though viewed from some diverting aspect. That is, the first stereotype marked in the investigated sphere is the practical use of education. See the following examples:

1. *Nicht für die Schule, sondern für das Leben lernen wir.*
2. *Der gnädigste von allen Richtern ist der Kenner.*
3. *Es gibt drei Arten von Menschen, mit denen es gut ist, zu verkehren: die innerlich Starken, die Aufrichtigen und die, die viel gelernt haben.*
4. *Jung gewohnt, alt getan.*
5. *Mit jeder neu gelernten Sprache erwirbst du eine neue seele.*
6. *Wer zwei Sprachen kennt, ist zwei Männer wert.* [11].

Sample no. 1 originated from the Latin expression *Non scholae, sed vitae discimus*. The cultural worldview embraces the thought and adopted it in the native language. The concept of education is presented here through the practical use of knowledge obtained at school. Knowledge ought to bring future benefits (*für das Leben*). Samples no. 2-3 demonstrate not only the priority of a learned individual you should deal with and respect but also underlines the authority of his position in the society. The lexeme ‘*gnädigste*’ metaphorically presents the idea of the priority of intellect in learning. Samples no. 4-6 make especial stress on the necessity of professional orientation in getting knowledge and education.: *neu gelernten Sprache - eine*

neue seele, zwei Sprachen - zwei Männer. Sergey Sumlennyi remarks, that German education usually lasted long because it embraced professional, individual training and mastering and development of world outlook. [12]

The next stereotype according to the quantitative significance is that the educational process should not be formalized, but subsequent and controlled:

1. *Ausbildung verhindert Einbildung.*
2. *An Rat gebrach es nie dem Mann, der vor-und rückwärts schauen kann.*
3. *Bücher fressen und nicht kauen macht ungesund.*
4. *Ein Buch in der Hand ist besser al seine Fernsehantenne auf dem Dach.*
5. *Ein Buch ist ein Garten, den man in der Tasche trägt.*
6. *Einsicht ist der erste Schritt zur Besserung.* [11].

The antitheses ‘*Ausbildung – Einbildung*’ in Sample no. 1 represents a wrong approach to the educational process as a whole. Any educational process improperly organized does not stimulate the development of a creative, thinking personality, giving a boost to new ideas. Sample no. 2 puts an accent on the order of the process bringing forward the priority of an empiric approach in the acquisition. The starting point is the right independent choice in procedures (*an Rat gebrach es nie dem Mann*), which depends on the right choice of methods within the process of gaining knowledge. Exposed in the second part of the statement (*der vor-und rückwärts schauen kann*), paroemias no. 3-5 verbalize the conceptual sphere of education through the lexeme ‘*Bücher*’.

Another stereotype is timeous of education. The stages of learning and gaining knowledge ought to be gradual and correspond to the individual moving into adulthood:

1. *Altklung nie Frucht trug.*
2. *Was Hänschen nicht lernt, lernt Hans nimmermehr.*
3. *Lehre solange das Kind quer auf der Bank liegt, streckt es sich die Bank entland – schaffst du es nicht mehr.*
4. *Jung gelehrt, alt geehrt.* [11].

Sample no. 1 is very specific to German mentality, where *the oder* rules in all the spheres. The concept ‘*Ordnung*’, is exemplified through the sequence of acts, which are aimed at the promotion of education and individual development. Everything has its order, everything should come in time – this postulate refers in its full swing to mental maturation as well, otherwise, there could be undesirable failures. This idea is disclosed in Samples no. 2 - 4.

The proverbs and sayings extracted from German folklore texts accentuate the stereotype of superiority of an educated person in the social rivalry:

1. *Wer wenig weiß, nicht wer wenig hat, ist arm.*
2. *Der nichts tut, nichts weiß, nichts kann, muß allzeit bleiben hintenan.*
3. *Weise ist, der von jedem Menschen lerner kann.*

4. *Der Geist ist willing, aber das Fleisch ist schwach.*

5. *Dem Weisen genügt ein Wort.* [11].

Samples no. 1-2 sounds rather instructive and even tough, syntactically structured as a juridical sentence [13]. He who does not want to study is guilty (*wenig weiß - arm*). Samples no. 3-5 verbalize the concept of education via lexemes '*der Geist*', '*dem Weisen*', '*Weise*' representing the understanding of a special role of intellect and wisdom as an outcome of the educational process.

All in all we may sum up that the small folklore texts exemplify the following stereotypes in the conceptual sphere Education: first of all, the education should be of practical value, self-consistent, contributive to your future; then, the process of learning should not be formalized, otherwise you would get no use of it; consequently, the process of educating ought to be timeous, that is subsequent to stages of moving into adulthood; education benefits the social status of a person.

IV. CONCLUSION

Cognitive analysis of the small folklore texts, precisely proverbs and sayings, has shown cultural similarities and differences as very interesting leaving enough space to be perceived through various aspects [14]. The thesis has been confirmed as there are differences between countries, their social and historical background, causing stereotypic representations in cultural folk conscience, which are reflected in folklore texts. We also traced the variety of use of syntactic, rhetoric, semantic, lexical, pragmatic structures, that contribute to stereotyping the national attitude of the social phenomenon.

Russian conscience in depicting stereotypes in the conceptual sphere Education presents them variously in linguistic means. The stereotype of the importance of education prevails. This one is supported by stereotypes of the complexity of education and the necessity of intellect in knowledge application. Russian folklore texts showed a great variety in linguistic means of representation: lexical, communicative, stylistic and even rhythmic, which helps to memorize folk wisdom and transfer it from generation to generation.

The most significant stereotype in the English mentality concerning the conceptual sphere Education is the prevalence of practical experience that makes a consistent part of future wellbeing and prosperity. On the other hand, the stereotype of unnecessary of studies is exemplified in the English folklore exceedingly by a number of proverbs, suggesting even harm as a result of learning.

German paroemia put above the stereotype of the importance of education supporting the idea by the commentary of the necessity of a stated order in the process. The prevalence is given to the pragmatic aspect of gaining knowledge and, that profound knowledge provides future authority and respect. We did not come across the negative interpretation of a learned individual, though the difficulty of the whole process is mentioned in some phrases.

The course of the analysis disclosed lexical variation in the nomination of the conceptual sphere and the ongoing procedures, inherent to all the languages. The sphere is

presented by lexemes intellect, leaning, schooling, training, book, breeding, etc.

The analysis disclosed that in Russian and German language the didactic function of folklore small texts can be provided through the communicative organization of the statement.

Russian mentality presents education and intellect as intertwined and interdependent; nevertheless, intellect does not always imply the necessity of education. «The approved characteristic feature of a Russian clever man is his social-ethical factor: modesty, decency, kindness, honesty and a desire to help others. [4].

In European languages, an educated person is associated with a clever one, where the intellect and learning are equipotential.

It is worth mentioning that there are stereotypes of the negative perception of the educational process, which emerged as a result of comprehension, that an abundance of knowledge without rational application leads to nothing or may cause harm.

It can be concluded, however, that overlapping of stereotypic presentations and their peculiarities characteristic to the sphere Education in different languages are connected with social contexts and impact of historical events, with the establishment of European identity.

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