

International Conference on Education & Educational Psychology 2013 (ICEEPSY 2013)

Proper name as a clue symbol of Identity

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Abstract

Proper name is very important for identification of an object or person. If a name is mispronounced or written incorrectly, it can be considered as the distortion of an identity in the sense of personality of a man. The aim of this article is to reveal the reasons of name distortions (negligence, lack of language, bilingualism, intercultural communication, mutual influence of Kazakh and Russian nationalities) which lead to various kinds of serious consequences such as complication of identification of a name bearer. Restoration and recovery process of historical names, fixing of unified rules for transferring of Kazakh proper names into other languages in Kazakhstan, proves the growth of ethnic self-consciousness of Kazakh people, the formation of value system and understanding of their national identity. While naming children, modern Kazakh families now give preference to attraction of national elements -uly/-kyzy or using non-affix instead of Russian suffixes -ev,-ov,-in, -eva, -ova,-ina in the formation of Kazakh patronymics. Proper names, as it is known, have a complex semantic structure, unique particularities in the form and etymology, ability to modify and formation of word in their target language. Ignoring these features while transferring them into another language can bring to some kinds of misunderstanding and dissatisfaction. That is why we need the lexicographic resources containing all Kazakh proper names (though in the sense of quantity, proper names are huge corpus of lexis) which Public Service Centre workers will take into account.

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Selection and peer-review under responsibility of Cognitive-counselling, research and conference services (c-crcs).

Keywords: Kazakh proper names; identification; mispronunciation.

1. Introduction

The concept of “Identity” (Identification) is actively developed in recent studies by representatives of various branches of science – Psychologists, Sociologists, Culture Experts, Ethnologists, Philosophers and many others which gave a reason to mark out the corresponding kinds of identity, namely: linguistic, cultural, social, religious, ethnic, age-related etc. For example, in Sociology the concept of “Identity” is defined as “awareness of a man that

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he belongs to some kind of group, which allows him to determine his place in the social and cultural space and orient easily in the world around” (Grushevitskaya T.G., Popkov V.D., Sadokhin A.P., 2002, pp. 53-54).

American scientists J. Martin and T.K. Nakayama stand out three approaches in defining the notion “Identity”, there are sociopsychological, communicative and critical: “Identity is the concept of who we are. Characteristics of identity may be understood differently depending on the perspectives that people take. ... The social psychological perspective emphasizes that identity is created in part by the self and in part in relation to group membership. ... The communication perspective emphasizes that identities are not created by the self alone but are co-created through communication with others. ... The critical perspective is the attempt to understand identity formation within the contexts of history, economics, politics and discourse” (Thomas K. Nakayama, Judith N. Martin 2000, pp. 111-116). Accordingly, the identity of an individual is created by language, culture and society.

It is necessary to note that the issue of identity became a subject of research in Linguistics relatively short time ago. In Kazakhstani Linguistics Suleimenova E.D., Shaimerdenova N.J., Smagulova J.S. were the first scientists to highlight the issue of Linguistic Identity. Named scholars have submitted the project “New language identity in a transforming society: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan” in the framework of INTAS (International Association for the promotion of co-operation with scientists from the NEW Independent States of the former Soviet Union) which was devoted to the development of a methodology in identifying the linguistic, ethnic and state identity.

According to E.D. Suleimenova (2006) “linguistic identity ... is not an attributed and inborn, but an interiorized feature of a man that can be chosen by expressing in language and socio-cultural behavior, or that can be changed depending on the social, political and ideological context” (p. 16). In witness of the case that identity can change, E.D. Suleimenova takes an example of an ugly duckling which was born as a duck, changed its belonging to others passing through the painful process of reidentification to its own group in the new flock. This example is applicable to the linguistic situation that took place in the territory of Kazakhstan. After the Kazakh language was given the status of the state language, language identification became more complicated for citizens of Kazakhstan who faced the problem of choice between one of co-functional languages, more acceptable in accordance with the specific socio-cultural and political circumstances. This fact has led to an emerged crisis of identity, which is comparable to the effect of the ugly duckling mentioned by E.D. Suleimenova.

2. Proper name and Identity

The Identification can be performed with the help of proper names as well. Thus, in modern countries it is compulsory to register the birth of a child and to get a birth certificate with the given name, surname and father's name which allows the child to become a part of a community as an individual and to enjoy all social welfare provided in this society. That is why to the concept of identity, following by T.A. Komova (2003), we include “the name that is given to us from our birth” (p. 4), as the absence of a name means the absence of an identity. This idea can be supported with an extract from the book “Understanding identity” by K. Woodward (2002), where it is written that 46-year-old Christina Wipp finds out that she was born in the a result of artificial insemination: “I was 40 when I found out that my father was a glass with a blob of sperm in it . My father doesn't have a face or a name and he wasn't even a one night stand. ... My parents never even met. I still feel like a freak? A fake. I don't feel I know who I am any more” (p. 24).

This passage is interesting for a number of reasons: the heroine is concerned with the definition of her identity as her attitude to herself is broken because she has no name, and, accordingly:

- no language she uses;
- no culture she belongs to;
- no society she lives in.

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