

1-TOM, 10-SON

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Bilingual experience in constructing language identity

Annotation: The bilingual experience can be explored through various lenses, such as sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and cultural studies. Researchers can examine how bilinguals negotiate their identity through language use, how they switch between languages in different contexts, and how their language identity evolves over time. The study concludes that since language contains a common worldview and cultural meanings for native speakers, linguistic identity is also usually built through the language that is most often used in a person's daily life and the degree of proficiency, in turn, is related to the use of the language. Consequently, the degree of language proficiency improves the more the language is used.

Key words: bilingual experience, national identity, language identity, individual's identity, bilingual individuals.

Language identity

The bilingual experience is a unique and complex phenomenon that involves the use of two or more languages in daily life. Bilinguals often face challenges in constructing their language identity, which refers to the way individuals perceive and express themselves through language.

One approach to studying bilingual identity is to conduct interviews or surveys with bilingual participants. This method allows researchers to gather first-hand accounts of how individuals construct their language identity and how they navigate the complexities of being bilingual.

Another approach is to analyze language use in different contexts, such as at home, at work, or in social settings. This method can reveal how bilinguals adapt their language use to different situations and how they express different aspects of their identity through language.

Adolescents who are going through language development changes become more conscious of how others view them because peer acceptance becomes so important. This awareness frequently influences how people use language,





1-TOM, 10-SON

particularly how they alter their speech patterns to achieve a certain social standing among their peers (Durkin & Conti-Ramsden, 2007). In fact, teenagers frequently make linguistic innovations and changes, some of which eventually find their way into the language's basic structure. This is particularly true at the lexical level because young people tend to be imaginative wordsmiths who enjoy borrowing new words from other languages and even from other jargons, which are particular dialects used by a particular group.¹

One of the primary notions that come to brain when discussing language is communication. Language is necessary for all aspects of socializing with the outside world, but it is also a crucial component of one's identity. One's identity is what they present to the outside world and how they want to be viewed by them. Identity formation also necessitates a certain level of awareness because it involves conscious choices that alter an individual's identity. Family, peer relationships, and place are three factors that demonstrate a connection between language and identity over the course of a person's life.

National identity is defined as one of the constituent characteristics of a person's identity. It manifests itself in a sense of belonging to a certain nation, country, cultural space. Language, perhaps, plays the most important role in the formation of national identity. It forms a personality, its mentality, worldview, religion, behavior, lifestyle, value system and national character.

From early childhood, a person falls under the influence and power of language, assimilating the culture stored in it. The language imposes a coded in it shows a picture of the world, a model of perception of culture and behavioral norms. How does language shape our way of thinking, culture and identity? And, on the other hand, how does our language transform under the influence of constant changes in the world around us?

The problem of the relationship between language and thought has occupied the minds of philosophers and linguists for three thousand years.

Regardless of the scientific position, they agree that our language is inextricably linked with the culture and national identity of a person.

¹ Abdulfattah, O., & Mansour, A. (2017). Geographic location and linguistic diversity. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 7(4), 220–229.



1-TOM, 10-SON

The "language situations" of children developing in a limited Russian-speaking environment are characterized by a bizarre flow and intertwining as a proper both linguistic and extra linguistic factors, they are so diverse that they practically do not lend themselves to any classification. Due to individual characteristics, different linguistic composition and educational attitudes of the family, by the beginning of the period of socialization, such children can speak only in Russian or only in the language of the host country, not to mention all intermediate options the relationship of two languages (the dominance of one or the other language).

How bilingualism affects language identity

Currently, bilingualism is a very common phenomenon. Due to increased mobility, intercultural and language contacts, more children grow up in bilingual families. Researchers have ambiguously treated – and still treat – the concept of bilingualism. The most common definition of bilingualism, according to which a bilingual is a person who can use two languages at the same level (CDO 2013).

Definitions by source can be further divided according to two criteria: a) languages learned in early childhood in the family when communicating with native speakers and b) languages used in parallel from early childhood to communicate in the environment. (Markosian 2004, 28; Skutnabb-Kangas 1981, 91.)

The first opportunity is realized in the family when the parents have different native languages, and everyone communicates with the child in their own language.

The second option, in turn, indicates, for example, the bilingualism of the environment, i.e. the child learns one language at home and another in the environment. Bilingualism is also defined by identification or attitude. At the same time, there are two approaches: a person identifies himself as a bilingual or others identify him as a native speaker of two native languages. The first is related to self-identification. This, however, may vary; in different circumstances, a person speaks a language to a different degree and identifies with different languages. It may depend on internal (indifference, motivation) and external (when he speaks a second language, the topic of conversation, who he is talking to, etc.) factors. (Skutnabb-Kangas 1981, 88-89.)

It should be noted that the definition of identification is ambiguous, since at different stages of life a person is sometimes defined as bilingual, sometimes as



1-TOM, 10-SON

monolingual. Some more (bilingual) people do not consider themselves bilingual, but identify themselves with only one nationality or language group

In most cases, a bilingual person does not speak two languages to the same extent, and one of the languages is dominant. Speaking two languages at the same level is called balanced bilingualism.

According to J. A. Fishman (Fishman 1971, 303), people rarely speak many languages at the same level in every situation, but use one language, for example, at work, and another in the home environment.

According to F. Grosjean, "Bilinguals usually learn and use their languages for different purposes, in different areas of life and with different people." So, there are several criteria for determining the native language, and, of course, that bilinguals can combine all these functions with two languages. Therefore, the native language can be called the language learned first, the language that is the most important, the most frequently used, which is known best, and with which it is easiest to identify yourself.

According to the well-known Sepir-Whorf hypothesis, each language represent reality differently and, consequently, the language a person speaks affects his worldview (Edwards 2009, 60). Thus, we note that language is one of the most important signs of identity.

In particular, ethnicity, nationality, culture and a person's belonging to a particular language group are expressed through language. Consequently, identity is built, changed, valued or not valued through language. Also, culture is always reflected in language, and therefore, identity is a language and culture in interaction with each other.

In other words, culture influences language and a person's identity, and vice versa. (Laihiala-Kankainen et al. 2002, 10-11.) It can be noted that language produces identities, and identities are produced by language (Iskanius 2006, 40). In addition to the communicative aspect of language, it is also a means of thinking and designates a particular culture; that is, language identity includes not only the language common to its speakers, words and expressions, as well as the whole a worldview that connects all native speakers of a particular language. (Dufva 2002, 36.)

So it can be noted that the cultural values of a certain society are expressed through language.



1-TOM, 10-SON

Naturally, sometimes a bilingual person who has heard speech in two languages since birth cannot distinguish them; he has two native languages. Still, usually a bilingual belongs more to one language group than to another. (Protasov 2004,14.) Note, however, that the term "native language" is not usually found in children's bilingualism (Chirsheva 2012, 183).

Thus, we note that the question of the native language of a bilingual person is difficult, since this concept is not considered stable. Its definition is influenced by situational, personal, as well as environmental factors. The language(s) with which a person grew up receiving emotional support can also be considered native.

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