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Information about the journal



"K L A D" IS A STUDENT JOURNAL FIRST PUBLISHED AT M. NARIKBAYEV KAZGUU UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS. THIS JOURNAL IS AIMED AT ENHANCING STUDENTS' INVOLVEMENT INTO SCIENCE AND RESEARCH.

"K L A D" JOURNAL ADMITS FOR PUBLICATION VARIOUS TYPES OF ARTICLES: ORIGINAL RESEARCH, REVIEW ARTICLES, SHORT REPORTS OR ESSAYS, REFLECTIONS, CASE STUDIES, METHODOLOGIES AND CASES IN ENGLISH; CONTAINING THE RESULTS OF FUNDAMENTAL AND APPLIED RESEARCH IN THE FIELD OF PHILOSOPHY AND IDENTITY, HISTORY OF KAZAKHSTAN, PEDAGOGY, LINGUISTICS AND METHODS OF TEACHING LANGUAGES, TRANSLATION, AND TOURISM.

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Research Articles

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WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF LANGUAGE ON PEOPLE'S IDENTITIES?*Russalina Akhmerova***Introduction****Background information**

Language is connected with many aspects of our lives such as gender, culture, religion, communication, identity, etc. This relationship is built upon language affecting or being affected by these factors. One of these factors is a person's identity which is strongly connected with language in a way that "'Language' in the sense of what a particular person says or writes, considered from the point of view of both form and content, is central to individual identity" (Joseph, 2004, p. 225). This study will examine the relationship between language and identity and find out how the former can influence the latter.

Problem Statement

A person's identity is a complex concept that is being studied up to this day. Its relationship with the language can be described in many ways, however, it may be difficult to examine all of them. Therefore, the problem of this study is that it is impossible to encompass all the ways in which identity and language correlate.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to look at the relationship between language and identity, and identify how language can influence people's identities. It also aims to research how language's impact on one's personality is shown in everyday life and how it influences the aspects of a person's worldview, behaviour, and interests.

Research question

"What is the impact of language on people's identities?"

Significance

This study will identify the language's impact on human's identity and will contribute to the knowledge base and further studies on this topic.

Methodology

As mentioned in the introduction of this research, there is a connection between language and identity. There are also certain ways in which the former impacts the latter. This study aims to explore the ways language influences humans' identities. Therefore, this section of the research will present the methodology used to investigate the following research question:

What is the impact of language on people's identities?

Research design

The qualitative interview-based research design is used in this study, which helps to collect sufficient data and address the problem of the research (Cohen et al., 2017).

Research Site, Participants, and Sampling

One of Kazakhstan's top universities was chosen as the site for the research. Three participants were chosen using purposeful sampling which is used to select the individuals who will provide the more in-depth answers to the questions and will facilitate the process of understanding the topic for the researcher (Creswell, 2008). Participants were chosen considering the following factors: the number of languages they can speak, their fluency in those languages, and the time period of learning them. The chosen participants knew from 3 to 6 languages, were fluent in about 2 or 3 of them, and have been learning those languages for a different amount of time. All participants were sophomores majoring in Applied Linguistics.

Data collection instruments

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data from the participants. Participants were informed about the anonymity of the interview process and provided their consents. All interviews were scheduled for a time that was convenient for the interviewees. The interviews were conducted in two days via the Zoom platform and consisted of overall ten main questions and several additional that were asked to obtain more detailed answers. The questions were of different types. At first, the ice-breaking questions were asked, to make the participants feel comfortable and less nervous, for instance, “How many languages do you know?” or “What is the best part of learning the language?”. Then the ones that demanded the more deep and sophisticated answers were asked, for example, interviewees were asked to describe their behaviour when they speak a particular language.

Procedures

The process of conducting this study started by choosing the relevant topic that would suit my field of study and interests as a researcher. The next step included searching literature that provides information on the topic of “Language and Identity”. Several sources were found, reviewed, and used for further analysis. Next, the process of creating the interview questions started. The questions needed to be specific, but easy to understand, so that the participants would provide the full, clear answers that could be used for the data analysis. After creating the interview questions, the first interview trial was piloted and succeeded. Although, some criticism was received and several changes were made. After piloting the first trial, the actual interviews were arranged with the participants.

Data Analysis

Data analysis started by precisely transcribing the recorded interviews and assigning each participant a pseudonym to ensure anonymity. Then during the coding which is “the process of identifying themes or concepts that are in the data” axial, semantic, and, thematic codes were identified (Ezzy, 2002, p. 86). Several themes emerged and were further analysed. These themes will be presented and discussed in the Findings section of this research paper where the thematic analysis will be presented.

Findings

The previous part of the research covered the methodology that was used in this study to collect the data in order to answer the research question “What is the impact of language on people’s identities?”. This section of the research will present the findings that have been discovered after conducting, transcribing and analysing the interviews. As mentioned in the previous section, three participants were purposefully selected for the semi-structured interviews via the Zoom platform.

The first couple of questions asked participants to tell what is their first language, what languages are they fluent in, and what languages are they still learning. (See Table 1.)

Table 1. The languages that participants know.

Participants	1 st language	Fluent in	Still learning
Participant 1	Russian	English, Kazakh	Kazakh, Japanese
Participant 2	Russian	English	Kazakh, Chinese, Korean Spanish
Participant 3	Russian	English, Kazakh	Chinese, French

Overall, three themes were discovered after the analysis of the interviews. Thus, the impact of language on people’s identities can be explained in terms of “expanding the person’s worldview”, “changing the person’s behaviour” and “helping to obtain new hobbies/interests” (Scudellari, 2016).

Expanding the person's worldview.

In the interviews all participants discussed the way languages expand people's worldviews. Language is connected with its culture, therefore when people learn the former, they also learn about the latter. This way their personality starts to be affected by different factors and parts of the new language/culture. All participants agreed that language can change people's perceptions of the world. Participant 2 shared:

"I think that learning different languages really expands your worldview. You take something from each language and culture and this influences your personality. You kind of start seeing the world differently."

Participant 3 stated the following:

"From personal experience, languages completely have changed me and my worldview. I started seeing the world differently. For instance, I have a strong social position, my lifestyle, the way I dress, act and think have also changed."

Changing the person's behaviour.

The most in-depth answers were provided to the questions concerning the behaviour changes when speaking a particular language. Participants mentioned how their behaviour, attitude, body language, facial expressions, and voices change depending on the language they speak. Participant 1 said:

"Sometimes I think in Russian I am more straightforward than in Kazakh. When I speak Japanese, I sound softer and also more respectful to people because the Japanese language is very polite."

Participant 2 stated:

"When I speak Chinese or Korean, my face becomes more alive, in Spanish, I'm very loud, it's impossible to be quiet when you talk in Spanish. Concerning Russian and English, I'm more calm, relaxed."

Participant 3 shares:

"I love watching TV shows in the original language so that I can hear the way actors speak. Over time I start talking and acting the way they do. For example, in Chinese when someone compliments you, I don't just say "thank you", but get shy and say "nali, nali". My behaviour definitely changes, it's very interesting."

Helping to obtain new hobbies/interests

Participants were also asked about the new hobbies that were influenced by the languages they know. They shared that each language and culture develop a new interest in them, and these new hobbies sometimes facilitate the learning process. Participant 1 shared:

"I became really interested in Japanese culture and started reading mangas. I also like American movies and TV shows, and I listen to English music a lot."

Participant 2 stated:

"I started watching Korean and Chinese TV shows. I also started listening to a lot of Spanish songs, Spanish music is so good, and it helps me to learn the language. I also want to visit Spain"

Participant 3 said:

"Basically, my hobbies are based on the languages I know. English and French have really influenced my music taste. I also became more into fashion because of American and French cultures."

Participants were also asked to explain their opinion on the relationship between language and a person's identity. They shared that from their experience, they were influenced by languages, therefore, in their opinion, language can have a strong impact on people's identities. Participant 1 shared:

"In my opinion, it is tremendous because for example when I started learning Japanese, I became more respectful and sometimes I can understand the aspects of their traditions. I can say that languages I speak have changed my identity a little bit"

Participant 3 stated:

"I know people who can speak several languages, and their behaviour, voices, facial expressions completely change when they speak different languages. So, I think that languages really affect people's personalities."

The data analysis provided the answer to the research question “What is the impact of language on people’s identities?”. The findings showed that there is a relationship between language and people's identities, in a way that language may strongly influence a person's personality, his/her perception of the world, behaviour and even interests. Indeed, the impact of language on people’s identities may be considered strong. According to the analysed data, people may have different behaviours and attitudes depending on the language they use, develop new interests and hobbies due to the languages they learn, and languages may also shape people’s worldviews.

Conclusion

Limitations

Several challenges occurred during the research conduction. First, a limited amount of time was given to accomplish all the steps of the data collecting process. Second, it was difficult to select the participants that would suit all the requirements for the interviews. Lastly, considering the fact that all the interviews were conducted via the Zoom platform, it was difficult to notice the participants’ nonverbal communication.

Overall, the main objective of this study was to identify, examine, and analyse the ways language can influence people's identities. The research included several steps. First literature on the topic of this study was reviewed, then, using purposeful sampling, several participants were chosen, next step involved conducting, coding and analysing the interviews. Lastly, based on collected data it was found that language affects a person's identity in the ways that it may change one's worldview and perception of the world, it also may make the person adapt his/her behaviour and attitude depending on the language they use, and lastly, it also may help to develop people new hobbies and interests. These results answered the main question of the study “What is the impact of language on people’s identities?” and may be used as a guide for further researches.

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