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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY: A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE ON ENGLISH AND UZBEK

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Abstract. Language is more than a means of exchanging information. It is also a means by which people can display their values, create relationships, communicate their sense of belonging and communicate to others. Despite the extensive work done on the link between language and identity in the field of sociolinguistics and applied linguistics, the study of identity negotiation from the perspective of the individual's communicative choices in their everyday language and culture in various settings is required. The article examines the relationship between language and the individual's identity in the comparative analysis of English and Uzbek. It investigates the use of forms of address, politeness, self-expression and adaptation to different audiences, using sociocultural approaches to identity and language use and interaction. The article does not regard English and Uzbek speakers as representatives of stable cultural identities, but takes into account the impact of context, personal experience, social relation and communicative purpose. The key conceptual feature is an understanding of identity across communicative situations; this links language to the intended self-presentation of the speaker, the interrelationship of interlocutors, and interpretations of the audience. From the discussion, it's suggested that identity is not necessarily language-based and that language is not independent of identity. Instead, language serves as an agent of resources through which identity can be expressed, negotiated and even altered.

Keywords: linguistic personality, worldview, language and thought, cognitive linguistics, cultural knowledge, English, Uzbek.

Introduction

There are some who describe language as a system used for communicating thoughts, feelings, and information. But in everyday speech, a more complex role is revealed. People do not just say something to others, they leave an impression on others. The way they use words, the tone of their voice, address and level of agreement/disagreement can shape the perception of their personality, social status and relationship to the speaker.

Let's take a simple case. Two people disagree with friend. One comments, “I don't think that's right,” and the other remarks, “I see your point, but maybe we need to see it another way.” They both disagree, but in different ways. The first is very straightforward and the second is an acknowledgment of the other person's point of view followed by an alternative. The decisions made in these situations do not necessarily reflect respect for one speaker or lack of respect for the other speaker or less consideration for one speaker or more consideration for the other speaker. Rather, they exhibit ways that language is used for the control of meaning and interpersonal communication.

Researchers in the fields of sociolinguistics and cultural studies have talked about this relation between language and identity. Hall (1996) for instance, sees identity as a dynamic and multifaceted rather than static personal attribute. Similarly, Bucholtz and Hall (2005) claim that identity is also "made" visible through the practices of language and other social practices. So from this point of view, do not see identity as something which speakers have prior to the start of communication. It also is something they express and negotiate in interaction.

The connection between the two becomes particularly interesting in the case of two languages. There are different linguistic resources used in both languages for addressing people, expressing respect, communicating own opinions and describing relationships. In English, you is used for both singular and plural and in Uzbek the pronouns sen and siz are used for singular and plural respectively, with siz sometimes being used for address in a respectful or formal way. The differences serve as a valuable starting point when looking at interplay between grammatical choices and social expectations.

However, linguistic differences are not to be taken as evidence of direct personality differences. So using siz does not mean that a person is more respectful, and the frequent use of direct statements in English does not mean that the speaker is more individualistic. The interpretation of the linguistic decision(s) is related to the situation, the relationship between the linguistic participants, their intentions, and the expectations of the linguistic participants.

This contextual lens is used in the present article to discuss the challenge of language and identity. It takes into account the fact that language is a reflection of the person's background, as well as the different ways in which the same person can communicate his or her own self in different situations.

Methods

2.1. Research design

The study takes a qualitative, conceptual and comparative approach. It is based on some theoretical literature on identity, sociolinguistic interaction, and language learning that has been selected, such as that of Hall (1996), Bucholtz and Hall (2005), Norton (2013), and Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004).

The aim is to not make statistical differences between English and Uzbekistan speakers. However, the article introduces analytical tools to interpret the language's possibility in the expression and negotiation of identity. A conceptual approach is suitable since the main goal is to relate to existing views about identity a series of comparison questions that will inform future research.

2.2. Analytical focus

The focus of the comparison is on four areas of everyday communication:

1. Forms of address: how speakers linguistically position themselves in relation to other people.
2. Politeness and interpersonal distance: how speakers deal with respect, familiarity and social distance.
3. Self-expression: expressing opinions, feelings, likes/dislikes, and personal perspectives.
4. Contextual adaptation: Language adaption by the individual to their audience and communicative purpose.

The areas were chosen because they relate observable language to social interaction. They also enable the comparison of English and Uzbek without the assumption that all users have the same cultural expectations.

2.3. Procedure of analysis

The analysis is divided into three steps. First, relevant theoretical perspectives are drawn upon to create an understanding of identity as socially expressed and socially malleable. Second, communicative linguistic examples have been analysed and selected from English and Uzbek to see how communicative choices can affect the self-presentation and interpersonal relationship. Third, the observations are brought together in a proposed framework linking linguistic choices, communicative situations, personal intentions, and audience interpretation.

The examples in this article of English and Uzbek are illustrations, developed to facilitate the analysis. They are not quoted from conversations that have been recorded or from a study

conducted with participants. Therefore, the discussion is not intended to suggest that a pattern has been shown in either language community but rather that it is an interpretation and/or path for future research.

2.4. Scope and limitations

The article is devoted to some aspects of English and Uzbek communication. It does not seek to explain all regional, generational or social variations of either language. It doesn't say that language is the sole determinant of identity either. Several factors contribute to the formation of identity: family experience, education, social networks, individual decisions, and communication context.

These are significant constraints because generalisations about the national character can mask the distinctions between people. Rather than as a direct marker of personality, the analysis considers the linguistic forms to be tools of identity expression.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Language as a means of communicating individual identity

The first of the large observations is that the linguistic choices can make the aspects of identity visible when communicating. The modes of organization used by the speaker, such as the confident, the uncertain, the friendly, the formal, the humorous, and the reserve and emotionless speaker, will give them the appearance of being these things. These impressions are drawn from the interplay between the linguistic form and the communicative context.

An example of this is that during class discussion, a student might say, "I don't think this explanation is complete. The same individual might say, “I don't know if that's all there is,” to a close friend. The two statements express doubt, but in different ways. The first can be used in a formal conversation while the second might be more comfortable in an informal relationship.

This is no sign that it is two different personalities. Instead, the student uses various linguistic tools to meet various expectations. Someone's identity can still be linked to his or her values and experiences, despite changing communication patterns.

In this regard, Bucholtz and Hall (2005) provide a helpful lens by focusing on the social construction and construction of identity. Their focus avoids the concept of speech as an expression of a given identity. Rather, linguistic practices can be related to being placed by other people and to the placement a person makes for themselves.

It is an important difference. The person who speaks can mean to sound confident, the listener can hear aggressive. The other speaker's intent may be to be polite but the tone is too formal and distant. Identity, however, in communication is not as it were entirely the individual's affair. It is built on relation between intention, expression and interpretation.

The implications for English–Uzbek research are that analysts should consider not just the forms that speakers use, but the meaning the forms have for the speakers. No linguistic expression can be completely understood without taking into account the situation in which it is used.

3.2. The forms of address and expressions of relationships.

The relationship between language selections and social relations is well illustrated in the forms of address. The pronoun you is used in familiar and formal situations in English, but titles, names, modal verbs, tone, etc. may indicate a formal setting. In Uzbek, the position of the relationship may be clearer, as there is a distinction between “sen” and “siz”.

The following are examples, not meant to be exhaustive but illustrative:

English: “Will you help me?”

Uzbek: Is it possible for me to help you?

In an familiar environment: Uzbek, "Menga yordam bera olasanmi?

English sentence can be used in various relationships. The formality will vary depending on the context, and on aspects that may not be explicitly represented in the sentence. In the Uzbek

language, olasizmi vs. olasanmi can give a more explicit grammatical cue to the relationship or familiarity of the object.

The distinction shouldn't be simplified, though. Even when using siz, not all uzbek speakers are speaking formally, and likewise for sen and close relationship. This may be based on age, family practices, region, expectations of institutions, and personal preference. Although you does not mark the same distinction, English speakers engage in different arguments in order to express respect or closeness.

The general rule is that there are not only different grammatical forms of address. They can be used by speakers to initiate and/or maintain a relationship. They are used by participants for the purpose of expressing respect, familiarity, distance, solidarity, or a change in the relationship between the participants.

The study of cases where speakers modify their form of address could be helpful in future research. For instance, when does a speaker change from siz to sen? Does the change relate to increased familiarity, to differing expectations as age increases, to a specific purpose of the conversation, or to something the other person has asked him/her to do? In English, the researcher could analyse the shift from title and surname to first names and the meaning of this shift.

These questions are concerned with the process of identity. Forms of address are not looked at as "points of cultural identity" but as means for speakers to create, negotiate, or redefine social relationships.

3.3. The service of politeness, self presentation and individual choice

Language and identity intermingle in other ways as well, such as with politeness. People use expressions to express a request, refusal, or disagreement as they work on the relationship with the listener. Such phrases can affect the impression of the speaker.

Now, look at the examples below:

"Please send it to me today.

“Could you send me the document today, please?”

“Would it be possible to send me the document today?

All three sentences present a request, but have different interpersonal levels of framing and different forms. In certain situations, the first might be interpreted as efficient, authoritative or abrupt. The second makes it sound more polite, the third might be more flexible with the request. These interpretations do not guarantee in all cases.

This is the same when comparing English and Uzbek. Uzbek speakers may use the elements of respect, indirect requests, address terms and expressions of consideration. English speakers can use the modals, questions, hedging words or other strategies. There is, however, no one single formula that captures politeness in both languages.

It is strongly recommended to differentiate linguistic forms of politeness from the character of the person speaking. A direct speaker doesn't necessarily lack consideration, and a speaker whose speech is filled with courteous words does not necessarily demonstrate more respectful behavior. A direct style may be used due to urgency or lack of time, or an indirect language may be used when the request is sensitive.

From this snapshot one might deduce that it is not right to infer identity from one linguistic feature alone. The style of a speaker can be interpreted based on the overall context of the conversation and the dynamics between speakers.

When conducting English–Uzbek comparative research, this is the fact that for comparative analysis, one must look at equivalent communicative functions, not at words individually. A request from a close friend, a university teacher, a co-worker or an unknown person can call for different approaches. The question for the researchers would be how do the speakers perceive these differences and how do they justify their own selections.

The benefit of this is that it gives consideration to individual agency. Speakers do not just play by the cultural rules; they may embrace, adapt, fuse or defy the rules in accordance with their experiences and tastes.

3.4. Focusing on language, cultural belonging and personal identity.

Language can also link people to communities, past, and experiences. The language can be linked to discussions of home, childhood, school, friendships, work aspirations, or a larger social sphere. In this respect, language can serve to convey cultural identity as well as to create the possibility of transcultural identities.In this regard, language can be used to assert cultural identity and also to build up the possibility of transcultural identity.

Hall (1996) discusses identity in a more complex manner as related to culture, history and representation. Noron, in her study on identity and language learning (2013), also highlights the multiple nature and the dynamic of learners' identities over time and social context. These views apply to people who speak more than one language.

For an Uzbek speaker learning English, the English language can be linked to exams, school and university or jobs. It can be linked to friendships, autonomy, school engagement, or being part of a global community over time. All these are not to say that the learner loses his/her identity as an Uzbek or turns to another one altogether. Rather, one might find that learning another language will give another opportunity to express values that they already have and to explore additional roles.

Try to imagine a hypothetical student who speaks Uzbek with her family, English in an academic presentation, and a combination of languages when talking with her multilingual friends. The student's language selections might vary in each of these contexts depending on the participants, expectations, and goals of the context. The student might still have developed some awareness of the practices as being a part of one's identity.

Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) discuss the negotiation of identities in multilingual settings and highlight the importance of language ideologies and social contexts. Their point of view is useful because multilingual communication does not take place in an "ecological void. Certain languages/languages varieties may hold more weight in specific institutions, workplaces or communities. Therefore, speakers might use their language in ways that are personal, but also related to opportunity, social pressure, or wanting to be accepted.

This is particularly significant if English is linked to international education or employment. A learner might think that he/she should use more prestigious pronunciation or communication style for a particular reason. The learner can also wish to maintain linguistic practices that link to family and community, concurrently.

Language-identity relations can thus not be expressed as a binary oppositeness between preserving an identity and acquiring another. People can have a deep sense of attachment to their first language and go on to develop interests, roles and ambitions in an other language. Their identities can be both continuous and changing.

3.5. An English–Uzbek comparison with no stereotypes.

Comparative research is helpful in seeing the differences between languages in terms of what they offer for the same communicative tasks. That is, however, less of a comparison when differences between languages are being used as evidence of national character.

It may be tempting, for instance, to say that Uzbek is more respectful, because it distinguishes between familiar and formal uses of sen and siz, whereas English is more individualistic, using you in both cases. Such a conclusion would be more than warranted by the grammatical contrast.

One aspect of interpersonal positioning may be linguistically apparent in the presence of the distinction between personal pronouns.In Uzbek, the distinction between personal pronouns can make one aspect of interpersonal positioning linguistically apparent. It does not mean that all

the Uzbek speakers are more respectful, more "community-oriented", less individualistic than all the English speakers. Similarly, the English pronoun you does not preclude speakers from using other linguistic means to express respect, closeness or social distance.

More meaningful comparisons would be those of how speakers use linguistic features to achieve specific goals. They could investigate the ways respect is demonstrated in a consultation at the University, the way in which disagreement is handled during a group discussion, or the way in which a request is made in a professional email. In each case the linguistic form, the relationship between the participants, the purpose of the interaction, and the interpretations given by the participants would be taken into account.

3.6. Identity across communicative situations: a proposed framework

This article suggests a model for identity across communicative situations, which is based on the above discussion. The framework is not a complete validated theory, but is rather an analytical tool for future research.

It is composed of four dimensions that are interrelated.

First, linguistic resources. They cover vocabulary, manner of address, grammatical patterns, polite forms, language selection and stylistic features. They are the tools that speakers use to create their messages.

Second, communicative context. This encompasses the context, participants' interactions, the reason for the interaction, and what is expected in a given context. This same sentence can have varying meanings between family conversation and formal academic discussion.

Third, personal positioning. Speakers construct themselves and their entities in specific ways. They can try to come across as knowing, friendly, independent, respectful, funny, and or confused. Such intentions may be conscious, or it may be that a speaker has a certain habit of communicating which he or she does not plan on every choice.

Fourth, audience interpretation. The listener fills in the speaker's meaning with his own expectations and experiences. The speaker may not want to convey a self-presentation identical to what the listener receives.

These dimensions are interrelated. A speaker chooses language to express themselves in a given setting, places themselves linguistically and gets feedback from their listener. Those answers can shape the way subsequent communication and the speaker's perception of the relationship will go.

For instance, the first time a student speaks to a lecturer, they might speak in a very formal manner but as the lecturer invites a more relaxed manner the student's style will become less formal. The change may be related to a growing relationship and not a significant transformation in the student's personality. In other contexts, the student may be required to write formally because of the requirements of the institution.

The process can be shown as a process:

Linguistic resources → Communicative context → Personal positioning → Audience interpretation → Subsequent linguistic choices

The arrows are not meant as a definite sequence. These are dimensions that occur in real communication at all times. Audiences can react in ways that alter the context, the speaker's intentions can change in the middle of a conversation, and speakers can modify their use of language to accommodate unexpected reactions.

The framework has three possible benefits for English–Uzbek studies. First, it is able to relate observable linguistic features to social situations. Secondly, it enables researchers to compare and contrast without making blanket statements about what all members of a language community do or do not do. Thirdly, it offers a foundation for empirical research in which participants give accounts of their understanding of specific language decisions.

The framework may be used in the future for recording conversations, interviews, classroom discussions or professional communication. They could explore if the topic leaders intended to present themselves in a certain way and if listeners perceived them differently and if there were any distinctions between the different languages, relationships or settings.

Conclusion

This is because language is not only a means of information transmission, but it is also used for the expression of the individual's identity. People use language to represent parts of themselves, to regulate social interactions and to follow the expectations of others. These decisions can help or hinder how speakers are understood, but they do not give a full or definitive picture of the speaker.

The comparative analysis of English and Uzbek shows the importance of studying language in context. Variations in terms of forms of address, politeness strategies, and modes of expressing one's opinion are helpful objects of analysis. But this should not be interpreted as proof of the fixed national personalities. The meanings of linguistic resources are acquired in relation to the other linguistic resources within the context.

The main contribution of the article is the suggested framework of communicative identities. Combining linguistic resources, communicative context, personal positioning and the interpretation of the audience, the framework provides opportunities to explore how identity is expressed and negotiated in natural communicative processes. It is also a potential basis for further empirical studies of the comparison of English and Uzbek communication.

The framework should be tested with recorded interactions, semi-structured interviews or participant reflections, in further research. Special focus might be placed on the ways speakers make decisions about the form of their addresses, the ways they accommodate to their social contexts, and the ways that they interpret their own meanings vs. others. Having participants from various age brackets, geographical areas, educational levels, and language learning experiences would help prevent the assumption of homogeneity of either language community.

Finally, language is not just a reflection of an already established identity. It has tools available to them for expressing themselves, relating to others, and expressing who they could be in new social situations. The linguistic forms that people use and the human experiences that give them meaning must both be taken into account in understanding this relationship.

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