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INTERPRETER PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

The article reveals the problem of interpreter professional identity construction in higher education. The paper outlines the key elements of professional identity, which is regarded as an aspect of personal and social identity that develops in students-future interpreters as a result of their study and work activities. Such factors as self-concept, professional standards, professional development and professional competence can contribute to this identity. It can be deduced from the results of the study that such constructs of future-interpreters' professional identity as their individual values, motivation for professional activity, the positive image of the professional "self", the learning environment are very important. Our study aims at examining professional identity construction processes among second-year students of the Faculty of Linguistics. This study uses a qualitative approach to professional identity and Twenty Statement Test (TST) by Kuhn and McPartland is one of the qualitative methods which is transformed for the purpose of our research.

1. Introduction

Interpreters have always played a leading role in society. As Alan Runcieman states in his study, increased international business contacts and migration in the second half of the XX century meant that individuals needed interpreting and translation services for many of their daily activities. In such circumstances the need for interpreters in community arises (Runcieman, 2015). To be an interpreter is a profession, which requires more than just being bilingual, it also implies a thorough knowledge of a given subject. A skilled interpreter can overcome cultural differences leading to a successful exchange of information.

Higher education aims at fulfilling its main task - the development and preparation of each student for socially useful career, a student, who is capable in the future to improve the quality of their professional training.

At present day the Russian national education system is being adapted and modernized in different directions, such as new generations of education standards are introduced, curriculum content is developed, new principles and methods of instruction are put in place into higher education, like "e-learning" or "distance education".

However, it may also become an occasion for introducing the importance of studying the laws and the problems of student's professional development at the level of university training. The construction of the identity of the individual can be successfully implemented in the professional sphere of human life. Therefore, in our opinion, the problem of improving the quality of graduates' training can also be solved through the development of their professional identity.

The academic community to date has given little attention to issues related to the examination of the structure of the interpreter's professional identity and the interrelation of its components. As Russian scientist E.E. Trandina clearly states, the impact of professional identity components on the development of the interpreter's professional identity has not been studied (Trandina, 2006).

1.1. Theoretical Background

B. Caza and S. Creary define a professional identity as a construction influenced by the interactions individuals have with others relating to their work. Through interactions with other people, individuals learn about the role expectations of others, and may try to adapt or move away from these expectations (Caza & Creary, 2016).

As B. Caza and S. Creary assume in their research on professional identity construction, professionals themselves can be considered responsible for the formation of their professional identity rather than the social context, which plays a more passive role. As such, individuals engage in cognitive and behaviour identity work in order to establish self-views that are more consistent with their image of what it means to be a member of a particular profession (Ibid).

The concept of identity, which was introduced by E. Erikson (Erikson, 1994), means an individual's self-awareness, a self-accepted image that a person chooses in the entire range of relations with the world, which has integrity and stability regardless of situational influences and internal personal dynamics. On a personal level, identity includes the "self-concept" of a person as a reality, reflected in the past, present and future. The personal level is connected with the awareness of an individual's uniqueness and self-identification. The social level of identity is an internal agreement with group norms, values and beliefs.

Changes in the content of individual components of identity are described in the form of periods of development, the result of which is a special status of the individual.

Professional identity is a multidimensional and integrative phenomenon that develops in the course of professional training and is also conditioned by self-determination, self-organization and personalization, the development of reflection.

In modern psychological and pedagogical literature, professional identity is defined as a construction of professional development, which shows the person's acceptance of himself as a professional, as a professional "image of the self" (Zeer, 2003).

2. Problem Statement

A conducted research allows us to distinguish the following features that determine the construction of professional identity. Here we include such important personal characteristics as self-esteem, individual's values and awareness of academic and professional achievement.

Also, the criteria for the successful process of constructing professional identity are suggested in our work, which, in our opinion, are relevant in the process of training interpreters at university level. They include: positive self-esteem, motivated readiness for the development of an individual's as a professional and involvement in the professional community, satisfaction with the fulfillment of professional tasks, responsibility for the implementation of norms and rules of professional activity, adoption of norms and values typical for the professional community, academic achievement, vocational training.

3. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify the perception of the self of the future interpreters and the criteria for the successful process of constructing professional identity during their training in institutions of higher education in Russia.

4. Research Methods

This study used a qualitative approach to professional identity and TST is one of the qualitative methods. Participants were asked to write answers to the question: "Who am I?" This test is a Twenty Statement Test by Kuhn and McPartland transformed for the purpose of our research (Kuhn & McPartland, 1954).

Second-year students from the faculty of Linguistics studying translation at Chelyabinsk State University, Russia, were invited to take part in the study.

Before the survey the instructions were given to write twenty answers to this question with regard to their future profession. The answers should be written in the order as they come to a student. The answers should be different. We asked the respondents to answer as if they were giving the answers to themselves, not to somebody else. TST is an open-ended test, so in their responses the students were allowed to choose the verb to describe themselves. In questionnaires it was possible to use the verbs like: like / dislike, agree / disagree, do / do not.

The time allocated for the test was 12 minutes. The results of the test were subject to content analysis.

5. Findings

To code TST statements mainly two different procedures have been used. In 1965 McPartland described a method which was called a method of referential schemes and included four categories. It assumes that the suggested categories are self-exclusive

The first category included statements about physical characteristics such as age, home, etc. The second category contained identifications of the self in relation to social groups and norms. The third category covered attitudes, values, and needs of the interviewed. And the fourth category involved some vague and abstract ideas, which were difficult to associate with the previous three (McPartland, 1965).

This test is used to determine the measurement of personal attitudes toward oneself and to study the content characteristics of an individual's identity. Answering the question "Who am I", the students indicate the roles and characters, the definitions with which they correlate themselves, i.e. the social status and the features, which, in their opinion, are associated with it. It is assumed that a more reflective person gives on average more answers than a person with a less developed idea of "self". It is considered that those characteristics of "self", which the students write at the beginning of their list, are most actualized in their mind, are more conscious and meaningful for the individual.

Interpretation of the test results shows that in most cases, students distinguish the most positive qualities of their personality and in describing themselves pay attention to their personal characteristics. Students describe themselves as intelligent, creative and academically active, with a wide range of interests.

In more than half of the answers, we traced the attribution of oneself to the "student", "group" and the designation of their belonging were the words like "student", "responsible", "senior", "purposeful". Also, most of the answers demonstrated the correlation of "self" and the future professional community: "professional", "specialize", "future interpreter", "interpreting", etc. Thus, the professional component in the general structure of the identity of the students' future- interpreters is expressed quite clearly.

Table 01. TST statements produced by students in this research

	Categories	Statements
1	individual values	I am inquisitive, responsible,
2	motivation for professional activity	like languages, like talking to people, travel to different cultures, be self-employed etc.
3	positive image of professional "self"	good interpreter, good communication skills, good listener, able to control myself, be a part of a team etc.
4	learning environment	educated, like reading, well-informed, like learning, good at working with computers etc.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be noted that the professional "self" is the main condition for the successful professional path of a graduate and arises in the process of socialization, as a result of learning. The results of the research show that the need for safety, predictability, reliability of the future profession is the most important aspect for students. Also, based on the test results, it should be noted that many of the respondents are striving for a balance of work and personal life and are eager to integrate various aspects of life.

Thus, it can be said that the most important factors in the construction of professional identity of students future-interpreters at university are: their individual values, motivation for professional activity, the positive image of the professional "self" as well as the learning environment oriented to their professional development, including various types of vocational training. Vocational training seems to be an ideal activity for the construction of professional identity and professional skills of the future interpreter, since its curriculum prepares students for work and aims at not only obtaining knowledge of translation techniques, but also at studying professional roles, understanding of the working environment, socializing into the community of translators. Vocational training is a process in which a professional personality formation is stimulated and initiated. The student goes through different stages: from "I'm a student" to "I'm a professional"; from "I'm at the University" to "I'm at the workplace" from studying theory to applying skills in practice.

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