



PERSONAL NAMES AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

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Abstract

This article analyzes the role of personal names (anthroponyms) in expressing national identity. As a significant layer of language, personal names reflect the historical, cultural, religious, and social values of a people. The article explores the naming conventions specific to the Uzbek anthroponymic system, their semantic and spiritual aspects, and their intrinsic connection with national consciousness and traditional customs. It also scientifically substantiates how the changes in personal names over different historical periods reflect the socio-political shifts in the nation's mentality. The onomastic richness of the Uzbek people is presented as an essential tool in preserving and strengthening national identity.

Keywords: Personal names, anthroponymy, national identity, onomastics, semantics, naming traditions, cultural heritage, folk mentality.

Introduction

Globalization and multiculturalism have led to the growing development of research on issues of identity and uniqueness in modern societies. Before discussing national identity, it is important to first address the concept of identity itself. Identity refers to the notion of existence and belonging. The issue of personal distinctiveness is multifactorial in nature. Individual identity is not innate but shaped by the environment, social interactions, and continuous adaptation throughout one's life.

The phenomenon of personal identity has long attracted the attention of the humanities. In philosophy, the concept of personal identity is closely tied to theories of identification and self-awareness. French philosopher Paul Ricœur and sociologist George Herbert Mead sought to provide a scientific foundation for the understanding of identity through selfhood. According to them, personal identity is a degree of self-awareness defined as the linguistic identity of the speaking subject,



a subject capable of responsible actions, and adherence to ethical norms. Moreover, the relationships and responses received from others also contribute to one's identity.

From this perspective, in linguistics, national identity is reflected in the unique features of a nation's language and represents the historical-cultural experience, mentality, and social values of a particular people embedded within linguistic units and grammar.

In linguistics, national identity manifests in several areas:

Phonetics and Phonology: through unique phonemes and articulation patterns specific to a national language. For instance, the Uzbek phonemes "o'" and "g'" lack equivalents in many languages.

Lexicon and Onomastics: through culturally marked vocabulary and unique naming conventions. Examples include culturally specific words like sumalak, mahalla, osh, and distinctive toponyms and ethnonyms.

Phraseology: national identity is reflected in idiomatic expressions and figurative language rooted in cultural metaphors. For example: etagini bosdi (literally "stepped on one's skirt") has a unique national figurative meaning.

Pragmatics and Semantics: the expression of respect and social values in speech etiquette, such as addressing elders using the polite form siz in Uzbek, is another reflection of national identity.

National identity in linguistic studies is explored across several fields. For example, from a linguocultural perspective, the cultural significance of sumalak as a national dish prepared during the Navruz holiday symbolizes spring and is closely tied to Uzbek linguistic and cultural traditions.

In Uzbek, the national identity in personal names is revealed in various ways. In speech etiquette, respectful address includes honorific forms such as aka (brother) and affectionate suffixes like -jon, e.g., Akmal aka, Nodira-jon.

The national characteristics of personal names in the Uzbek language reflect the people's historical memory, worldview, and cultural values, as well as the social status embedded in names. For instance, the name Sarvinoz combines sarv (cypress), symbolizing purity, and noz (grace), reflecting an aesthetic cultural value.



Similarly, the name Botirbek contains Botir (brave) and bek (noble), representing heroism and aristocracy. Gulbahor reflects a reverence for nature and seasonal beauty, revealing national symbolism.

In English, national distinctiveness in personal names is also evident, particularly due to the prevalence of Anglo-Saxon and Germanic origins. For example, the name Edward means “guardian of wealth,” which illustrates how English anthroponyms trace back to cultural and historical roots that carry national significance.

During the 9th to 11th centuries, the Norman conquest introduced numerous French names into English, such as William, Robert, and Henry. These additions reflect distinct national characteristics embedded within the naming system. The spread of religion further expanded the repertoire of personal names by incorporating Hebrew, Greek, Arabic, and Latin origins. This diversification led to a broadening of the historical and cultural characteristics of personal names, exemplified by names like John, Matthew, Mary, and Sarah.

In the modern era, the national features of personal names have been influenced by globalization, pop culture, and the increasing use of shortened and informal forms. These modern forms are now intertwined with traditional elements and are also perceived as part of national identity. For example, names such as Aaliyah, Liam, Elvis, Be (short for Benjamin), and Liz (short for Elizabeth) illustrate this blend of global and local naming practices.

The national characteristics of personal names can also be traced through the historical development of surnames. Many English surnames originate from professions (Smith – blacksmith, Taylor – tailor, Baker – baker), geographic locations (Hill, London, York), or patronymic structures. This demonstrates the deep connection between personal names and national identity in the English language. Moreover, English personal names tend to be stable and are often passed down through generations. The English naming system is particularly marked by its historical and religious foundations, setting it apart as a distinct linguistic tradition.

By contrast, personal names in Uzbek are closely tied to the people's way of life, religious beliefs, hopes, admiration of nature, and symbolic values. Uzbek names are often semantically rich, morphologically complex, and formed through active



use of affixes. Many names carry specific meanings, such as Baxtiyor (happy), Shodiyona (festivity), Ziyodulla (gift of Allah), and others.

Phonetically and phonologically, English names exhibit a high degree of consistency and standardization. In contrast, Uzbek names demonstrate a greater diversity in word-formation models and semantic depth. Furthermore, in Uzbek, personal names serve as stronger markers of national and religious identity, whereas in English, historical and socio-functional aspects are more dominant.

Studying personal names as linguistic units allows for a deeper understanding of the relationship between language and culture, and sheds light on the role of onomastic elements in shaping national consciousness. In the context of globalization, the preservation, adaptation, and function of personal names as national identifiers carry both scientific and practical significance.

Therefore, comparative linguistic research on English and Uzbek personal names, as well as the deepening of onomastic studies, is an important and timely direction in modern linguistics. Analyzing the factors that reflect national and cultural values through personal names offers valuable insight into the historical, social, and linguistic development of a nation.

In conclusion, personal names are not only tools of communication but also key elements that preserve a nation's historical memory and express its cultural identity. Formed through language, they reflect and transmit cultural, religious, and social traditions from one generation to another. As this article demonstrates, the structural and semantic richness of personal names in the Uzbek onomastic system deeply penetrates the nation's spiritual and moral worldview. Preserving national uniqueness through anthroponyms and instilling ancestral heritage and values in younger generations remains a pressing issue in the field of national identity and cultural continuity.

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