The most important factor in the development of children’s cultural identities and belonging is language education. A language is an important tool that facilitates the communication of emotions, thoughts, and culture between people. Language education is the most basic education task that nations rely on in the process of nation-building and creating a national identity. The education system and programs can be modified and some courses may even be removed. However, language courses and activities always keep their place in the program. It is quite normal for language courses to have top priority among the educational activities of a nation.

National languages have been standardized and disseminated thanks to the formal education provided by states. Modern states make basic education compulsory for all their citizens to be able to read and write the national language. The language of basic education is common and this is the provider of cultural homogenization. The concept of identity constitutes the most basic and most important origin of the social system. Identity has a multidimensional scope that symbolizes the whole of lifestyle elements such as beliefs, attitudes, value judgments, etc., which are the result of individuals’ cultural and social position and status. Identity formation begins in early childhood and continues gradually throughout a lifetime.

This study will emphasize the importance of language education as nation-building and national identity acquisition tool. The research data were obtained by literature review. Journals, books, and other sources on language education are reviewed. The success of language education depends on the compatibility of the program with the needs of children, the selection of textbooks and auxiliary materials, stories, novels, etc., and teachers.

Key words: Mother tongue, language, education, identity, national identity, national culture.
Важность языкового образования в развитии национальной идентичности

Наиболее важным фактором в развитии культурной идентичности и принадлежности детей является языковое образование. Язык – это важный инструмент, который облегчает общение эмоций, мыслей и культуры между людьми. Языковое образование – это самая основная задача образования, на которую опираются нации в процессе национального строительства и создания национальной идентичности. Система образования и программы могут быть изменены, а некоторые курсы могут даже быть удалены. Однако языковые курсы и мероприятия всегда занимают свое место в программе. Вполне нормально, что языковые курсы имеют первостепенное значение в образовательной деятельности нации.

Национальные языки были стандартизированы и распространены благодаря формальному образованию, предоставляемому государствами. Современные государства делают базовое образование обязательным для всех своих граждан, чтобы они могли читать и писать на национальном языке. Язык базового образования является общим, и это обеспечивает культурную гомогенизацию. Концепция идентичности составляет самое основное и самое важное происхождение социальной системы. Идентичность имеет многомерную сферу, которая символизирует все элементы образа жизни, такие как убеждения, установки, ценностные суждения и т.д., которые являются результатом культурного и социального положения и статуса индивидов. Формирование идентичности начинается в раннем детстве и продолжается постепенно на протяжении всей жизни.

В этом исследовании будет подчеркнута важность языкового образования как инструмента национального строительства и приобретения национальной идентичности. Данные исследования были получены путем обзора литературы. Рецензируются журналы, книги и другие источники по языковому образованию. Успех языкового образования зависит от совместимости программы с потребностями детей, подбора учебников и вспомогательных материалов, рассказов, романов и т.д., а также учителей.

Ключевые слова: Родной язык, язык, образование, идентичность, национальная идентичность, национальная культура.

Introduction

The natural need for communication between people has made language necessary for every community, whether simple or advanced. Then language gradually became an integral part of the community’s identity (Turan, 2018-2019). People are not born with an innate language but are born into a society and the language spoken by that society. As kids, they learn the names of objects as categorized by that language. Therefore, our perception of the universe is shaped according to our collective consciousness and the system of collective meanings, therefore “We perceive the universe within the categories offered by our collective consciousness.” The individual obtains his/her values through language and socialization. Thus, individuals take their place in a belief system established through the language. Language exists before individuals, and individuals have to learn a language to gain their place in the world of beings constructed through languages (Durmuş, 2017).

Through distinctions determined by language, individuals reach their self-consciousness and draw boundaries between us and the others (Çelik, 2006). Language plays a key role both in the formation of individual identity and in the formation of social identity as it provides common symbols for individuals, and is the most important common denominator that enables people to unite, integrate and become a group. “The social identity consciousness, which we call social identity, is based on the participation in the common knowledge and memory achieved by speaking a common language or, in more general terms, the use of a common symbolic system” (Ulu, 2017).

Many authors argue that the distinction language makes between us and the others contribute to the construction of national identity. Societies are divided into nations, and language is the most visible and external differentiator among nations (Çelik, 2006). The formation of nations is very old. People who speak the same language, have a common past, belief system, and creation myth, and calls a certain territory their homeland, came together and formed nations (Ulu, 2017).

One of the most important elements for a community to transform into a nation is to have a com-
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Common language that ensures communication between its members. Since a nation is a cultural unity, the existence of a national language is critical for the formation of the nation. As a means of communication, language paves the way for interaction and helps to achieve cultural partnership. For this reason, it can be said that the national language is more important than the other elements of national identity. Aware of the importance of language in the formation of national identity, nationalist ideologues have made great efforts to create a national language, to preserve and keep it alive (Arslan, 2019).

Ömer Seyfettin complained about the lack of a national language and the disconnection between the nation and the language. Especially after the Tanzimat, the French language gained popularity, and after a while, speaking French became the criterion of a modern and Western image. This identity illusion has brought out wannabe characters who speak incomplete French, try to look like a Westerner, have lost their values, and are alienated from the community. Yet national literature could only be created with a national language (cited in Ulu, 2017).

Many thinkers explain the restructuring processes in the political, economic, social, and cultural fields as parts of modernization and talk about a “nation-building” process. “Nation-building” is a term used deliberately and refers to the set of methods that nationalism as a political program uses to achieve national unity. For example, they created various symbols such as marches, flags, and museums. These symbols are taught to individuals through education to create a sense of national belonging. Therefore, a common language can be of great importance. For these reasons, a common language has been deemed necessary for every country, regardless of the basis of nation-building (Aygül, 2008).

Nation-states intervened with mother tongues and renewed them to create new national languages. These new languages were taken as the basis of the national cultures that would constitute the citizen of the desired national state. Nations prioritized formal language education and language preservation to protect their languages from the influences of foreign or colonial languages and cultures (Çelik, 2006). The national unity and solidarity achieved through language education is an important indicator that emphasizes the importance of language for nationalism and nation-states. Because language is a tool that defines national identity and transfers culture to future generations. The unifying power of language cannot be denied. Therefore, language acts as a cement in the nation-building process by ensuring national unity (Aygül, 2008). According to Fichte, language reflects the national spirit. Therefore, cleansing the language from foreign words means protecting the national spirit. According to von Humboldt, “the phenomenon that distinguishes nations is language”. Nations express their characters with their language, thus giving that language its “national form” (cited in Aygül, 2008).

Regardless of its basis, in a process of national integration, national identity aims to create an “us” and “the other”. Emphasizing the differences between “us” and “the others” is an easy way to create a group identity, but the real aim is group solidarity. One of the most prominent elements of group identity and national belonging is undoubtedly the language. National languages are not just administrative convenience or communication tools. Language goes beyond just being a literary and intellectual expression medium, it is what makes a nation a nation (Aygül, 2008). Thus language education is the most effective tool for building national identities.

One of the reasons why language is one of the most important elements of national identity is the necessity of a common language for the functioning of the modern administrative structure of the nation-state. As a requirement of national sovereignty, what keeps the modern state alive is the participation of citizens in its political decision-making mechanisms (Arslan, 2019).

Language planning and engineering aim to create a common language. These are tools for creating a national unity within a cultural framework based on a common language. These activities, expressed as “one language, one history, one culture” in Germany and carried out as cultural nationalism, used various language policies to create this unity. Cultural nationalism, which was taken as a model in later times, had reflections on the language policies and many countries interfered in the language under the name of various conceptualizations such as language planning, social language engineering, language regulation (Aygül, 2008).

As a social phenomenon, language is directly related to culture. Language develops along with the feelings and thoughts of a nation, its history, and social consciousness. For this reason, the common flow of feelings and thoughts between individuals can be established through language. Therefore, national unity and solidarity can be achieved with the language that rivets the members of the society to each other (Turan, 2018-2019; Aygül, 2008). National life requires political and cultural continuity. What will ensure this continuity is the cultural memory built through the national language. Cultural memory is a cultural geography. Language constitutes the cultur-
al memory of the society and thus ensures the continuity of the nation (Ulu, 2017). Language is also the carrier of culture. Language is alive since the prehistoric age of myths and symbols, and carried tradition to the present. Material and spiritual values such as science, technique, history, morality, which are the cultural treasures of a nation, are passed on to future generations through language (Çelik, 2006; Aygül, 2008; Turan, 2018-2019).

Compulsory education has historically been one of the most effective means of nationalization. Because the basic elements of a common culture, especially the standard national language, could only be adopted through informal education. In addition to the dissemination of a common language, compulsory basic education, which includes national history and national geography lessons, is characterized as the basic means of raising national awareness in children (Aygül, 2008)

National languages have been standardized and disseminated thanks to the formal education provided by states. Modern states make basic education compulsory for all their citizens to be able to read and write the national language. The language of basic education is common and this is the provider of cultural homogenization. This is a requirement of the industrial society, and the absence of a non-state organization to cover the cost of such a widespread activity reveals the importance of schools for the creation of nations (Arslan, 2019).

The concept of identity constitutes the most basic and most important origin of the social system. Identity has a multidimensional scope that symbolizes the whole of lifestyle elements such as beliefs, attitudes, value judgments, etc., which are the result of individuals’ cultural and social position and status. Identity formation begins in early childhood and continues gradually throughout a lifetime. Identity, which is shaped primarily by family interactions, can develop positively or negatively with feelings of self-confidence and self-esteem (Karaduman, 2010).

Nations want to transfer and adopt cultural elements to new generations to protect their national unity and solidarity. The continuity of a nation depends on its members knowing their culture sufficiently and having a national consciousness. Language and therefore national language education is the basis of cultural identity (Güftâ & Kan, 2011).

Justification of the choice of articles and goals and objectives

Language is the first indicator of individuals and societies in identity illusion because, in Allport’s words, “the acquisition of language is of great importance in the process of gaining self-consciousness, and it is undoubtedly the most important development in human life”. Individuals and societies that fall outside of their language (national language) become open to identity illusions and diaspora. Because language is the domain of identity, consciousness, and self, and every language has a latent power (cited in Durmuş, 2017)

Language education is the most important tool for the development of children’s cultural identity and sense of belonging. Individuals who have not been able to locate themselves in their national language reside in a cultural vacuum. The German poet and philosopher Herder makes a similar definition as follows: “To be human means to have a language and to live in a community” (cited in Durmuş, 2017). National language education has an important place in the education policy of every country. National language education, which is important for the development of the individual, the formation of national identity, the development of citizenship rights and responsibilities, and a sense of belonging, always maintains its currency.

While Kaplan emphasizes the importance of language, it keeps the national language in a separate and important place. Language determines the national identity of the speaker and keeps the language awareness intact. Subsequent languages cannot replace the native language. Kaplan particularly emphasizes the importance of the mother tongue: “Mothers not only give their children their milk and love but also their mother tongue, which is just as beautiful and nourishing as they are. Since it is learned from mothers, a person’s first language is called mother tongue. The individual can learn other languages later on, but they can never substitute for their mother tongue. Mother tongue connects us to our family, relatives, nation, and history.” The first language we learn is our national language, our national identity. Learning the mother tongue correctly depends on the parents and the community. Inaccuracies and deficiencies acquired while learning the mother tongue will prevent the person from having a solid mother tongue structure and will negatively affect their learning process (cited in Erenoğlu, 2008).

If a person sees a language other than his mother tongue as a reflection of his identity, he is in an identity conflict. This conflict causes the individual to be thrown away, being neither “there” nor “here.” Although his/her roots are “here”, the individual wants to see himself/herself “there” and tries to adopt the language of “there”. This causes a sociological and psychological rupture. After rupture, the individual
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either gains consciousness and chooses to return to his/her roots, or loses consciousness completely and is dragged to oblivion (Ulu, 2017).

The awareness and love of the mother tongue provide a common thinking system among people living in the same nation, and the ability to understand and comprehend the universe together. This strengthens the bond between people within the same nation. Due to the word “mother” in the concept of “mother tongue”, some linguists argued that this concept is all about the language learned from the mother. However, the Danish linguist Otto Jespersen and many linguists stated that the concept meant by “mother tongue” is not only about “mother”, but rather the language learned from the environment and used as a common language within the same nation. Since the word “mother” is used both as a noun and an adjective in many languages, there is an ambiguity about the concept that “mother tongue” corresponds to (Sinan, 2006: 2).

Mother tongue education starts with birth in the family and continues in education institutions. As the individual develops his/her mother tongue, his/her command of the nation’s culture increases. For this reason, language education is also defined as cultural education. There is a cultural dimension to the relationship between any structure and meaning in language. This point should not be ignored in mother tongue education (Melanlıoğlu, 2008).

The family undoubtedly plays an important role in the acquisition of the mother tongue. The language spoken by the family at home, spoken throughout the country as a nation and dominating the whole education system becomes the child’s mother tongue. If the language education in the school continues in the mother tongue, it makes a significant contribution to both language acquisition and correct spoken language. The mother tongue is often described by linguists as the first language a person learns in the family or community in which he or she was born and raised. It can be said that the mother tongue is not learned but acquired because it is the first language that an individual has met in childhood. The impact of mother tongue on national loyalty draws attention to language education (Sinan, 2006: 2).

Scientific research methodology

Societies that do not give the necessary importance to their language lose their culture, and those who cannot protect their culture lose the chance to keep their language dynamic. Language, in Gökalp’s words, is like the container of feelings and thoughts. The feelings and thoughts of individuals are embodied and brought out through language. To the extent that they are accepted by other individuals, they become the common value of society. Because the feelings and thoughts of the individuals that make up the society are a reflection of their culture (Göçer, 2002).

It is the language and culture that make the nation a nation. Nations can only preserve their existence thanks to their languages and cultures. It is an indisputable fact that nations that cannot preserve their language and culture will not be able to continue their lives in the international arena for a long time. Because owning the language is, in a way, having a cultural consciousness. Being familiar with one’s own culture and keeping the characteristic manifestations of life alive is to preserve what is unique to the culture. Nations that have this quality are nations that have the chance to continue their existence without being caught in the wind of assimilation. In short, the existence of a nation depends on keeping its language and culture alive. Social unity and integrity can only be kept alive by dynamism of language and culture (Göçer, 2002).

People are born with an innate ability to speak. The ability to speak is innate, but the ability to speak properly and correctly depends on school education (Uçgun, 2007).

Schools also play an important role in spreading national awareness. The centrally determined curriculum ensures that all people living within the borders of the state become members of the nation. Thus, for people who have gone through similar educational processes from an early age, the national language becomes the main tool for the acquisition of common values (Arslan, 2019).

To preserve its existence, the state also has to raise individuals who love their mother tongue, enjoy it and try to use it in the best way possible. As long as such an aim is not actively pursued in the education policy of the state, the vicious circle will continue. The main aim of primary and secondary education, which is important and above all other purposes, is to teach the official language to the citizens in the best way and to give them the ability to use the language correctly. This is the sine qua non of education (Çavuşoğlu, 2006). Indeed, contemporary countries have paid great attention to mother tongue education due to its great role in the formation of national awareness and sensitivity. We see a similar sensitivity after the establishment of the Republic of Turkey (Sinan, 2006: 3-4).

Language education aims to improve understanding and expression skills and habits, to create listening and reading pleasure, to enrich personal vo-
vocabulary, to teach basic grammar rules, and to create language awareness and love (Kavcar & Oğuzkan, 1995). These goals are directly related to the limits of the mental and affective possibilities of the child, as well as the content that constitutes the material and material that will be subject to understanding. While developing programs for mother tongue education, it should be well established about what, when, how, and from whom the child will learn. The programs should be expanded to include teacher training (Demir & Yapıcı, 2007: 182).

Language learning does not mean loading a lot of dry information into the brain. Language is the basis of interpersonal and social communication. Raising citizens who can use their mother tongue correctly both in writing and verbally is an obligation imposed by the state on the education system. Good native language education is the way for the individual to communicate with those around his/her, to express himself/herself in society as a social being, to complete her personal development, and to be successful at every stage of life. Raising generations with a strong cultural infrastructure from different professions who have received a common mother tongue education makes a society stronger. Mother tongue lessons constitute a process in which national, democratic values are embraced (cited in Sinan, 2006: 5).

Results and discussion

Mother tongue education is one of the most fundamental education activities that no nation will ever give up. You can remove or change all lessons and activities from an education system, but lessons and activities related to the mother tongue must always be there. Then, it is quite normal and necessary for mother-tongue education to be at the top of the educational activities that every nation has meticulously dealt with (Yapıcı, 2004: 35).

If the language level of the nation cannot be observed in contemporary texts and is not applied to young minds, then neither mother tongue consciousness nor national feeling can be mentioned in such a country. According to Humboldt, language is humanity itself. Language is the history of humanity and the character of nations. Humboldt, who tackled language from all sides, did not say a word about how and why grammar should be taught. This should be considered quite meaningful (cited in Yapıcı, 2004: 35, 36).

We should instill the pleasure and habit of reading in our preschool and school-age (especially primary education) children. For this, it may be more beneficial to gamify mother tongue lessons, avoid abstractions as much as possible, and develop teaching programs with this perspective. It is thought that it may be more beneficial to use effective motivational methods and techniques such as drama, cooperative learning, demonstration, and to avoid classical methods (Yapıcı, 2004: 40). The activities to be selected during this period (such as play, fairy tale, story, and drama) must be in the mother tongue and must include national heroes. Thus, it contributes to both the acquisition of the mother tongue and the formation of cultural identity. In other words, materials to be used in pre-school education should be selected from national culture.

The most basic skill that should be taught to children in primary schools is to speak, read, write and listen effectively in their mother tongue. To fundamentally solve the problem in mother tongue education, it can be argued that it is a necessity to reconstruct all educational institutions related to language and language learning per the cognitive and affective level of students (Yapıcı, 2004: 35, 40).

Primary school textbooks, especially the books for mother tongue education, should be prepared according to the cognitive and affective development characteristics of the child in a way that will serve to develop the child’s comprehension, speaking, and listening skills. Especially classroom teachers have a great responsibility in mother tongue education. There is a need for the retraining of existing teachers and the training of new teachers so that not only native language courses but also other courses are held in the mother tongue.

The Kazakh Turkish lesson as a mother tongue lesson, the curriculum of the lesson and the tools and equipment to be used in the lessons are also of great importance. In addition, to protect cultural integrity and identity, the vocabulary of a language such as Turkish, which has been an imperial language, should be used in textbooks. By establishing joint commissions, written and oral-literary works that reflect the Kazakh language and culture should be immediately included in the textbooks. This wealth should be reflected in textbooks and other resources.

According to three basic principles of modern language education, language learning should be carried out in a learning environment, with the help of activities and the content of all kinds of materials used in language teaching should be meaningful (Yıldız, 2003: 9-10; cited in Sinan, 2006). Mother tongue education should be nurtured by distinguished works of Turkish and world literature. It is
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a necessity to make literary works a tool of mother tongue education. It is inconceivable that the texts that are fictionalized with dry information and do not have aesthetic concerns will contribute to students. Because literary works appeal not only to the head but also to the hearts. They interpret the feelings, dreams, pains, and joys of people (Sinan, 2006: 6).

Versatile teaching approaches should be used in mother tongue teaching-learning processes. Activities involving as much variety as possible should be used in all activities from determining the aims of mother-tongue teaching, determining the educational content, from organizing the educational environment to measurement and evaluation. To support mother tongue education, other courses should also support this approach with suitable activities.

The material and content subject to mother tongue education must have concrete fiction. For this, Kazakh Turkish textbooks should be designed per the aims of mother tongue education, starting from the first grade of primary school to the 5th grade. This obligation requires interdisciplinary cooperation. Mother tongue education is neither a mere linguistic problem nor a mere educational science problem. It is necessary to work with field experts for each level to develop the understanding and expression skills in the mother tongue at the desired level. It is appropriate to start Kazakh Turkish lessons with illustrated textbooks. The ratio of pictures and writing in textbooks can be determined by experts (Demir and Yapıcı, 2007: 183-184).

This basic setup is valid for all educational areas. However, Kazakh Turkish education has a feature that differs from other educational fields. Because it is something beyond a lesson, it is the identity, the soul of a nation. Without underestimating the other lessons and education setup, it is possible to say the following: A child may fail in all other classes. Failure in these courses can be deemed normal; because it is possible to overcome the failure with lecture and/or grade repetition. But a child’s failure to use his/her mother tongue will lead to lifelong failure in bilateral and social relations. This can be considered as the failure of a nation. Children whose comprehension and expression skills are not developed cannot be expected to be successful in other lessons (Demir and Yapıcı, 2007: 185).

Conclusion

The first thing to be done to achieve success in the education of Kazakh Turkish as a mother tongue is to produce realistic and functional programs and then to train staff who will take part in the implementation of these programs. In this context, we can summarize what needs to be done in the short term as follows:

1. A mother tongue education program cannot be prepared without taking local conditions into account. A program that is suitable for the conditions of the country should match the problems and be capable of providing solutions to these problems in the medium and long term. To set conscious and clear goals, the problem should be revealed by determining the level of use of language in each region through serious, planned, and comprehensive studies.

2. During the preparation of the program, both personal, institutional, and social knowledge should be consulted. Turkey’s experiences should be utilized by developing joint projects. There are many well-tested programs in Turkey with hundreds of years of experience in mother tongue education. Thus, Kazakh course programs can be developed more effectively and their practical success can be improved.

3. The mother tongue curriculum should be developed in the light of contemporary findings and methods of science, taking into account the interests, success, and needs of the students and the needs and expectations of the society.

4. Teacher’s guidebooks should also be published for the applications of textbooks for mother-tongue education.

5. Kazakh language education should include language and literature courses based on reading-writing and hearing-comprehension skills. The role of mother tongue education is important in the socialization of the child and building national identity. How Kazakh should be taught as a mother tongue and which literary texts should be used in this process? Which literary texts and verbal expressions should be used?

6. The most important thing for people is that they can express their identity freely and language is the most important tool in this. Each language should be spoken in its phonology. Non-Kazakh letters should not be included in the alphabet. Therefore, mother tongue education is very important to protect the identity of our children (Çobanoğlu, 2013; 36).

7. Language teaching tools are visual and auditory tools designed and evaluated by considering the needs of target students to facilitate the learning of the language to be taught. Today, there is a serious
need for tools and equipment that meet the needs of students. Teaching tools and materials should be prepared accordingly after determining the most appropriate methods for teaching Kazakh as a mother tongue.

8. TV shows for kids should be in Kazakh. Especially during the epidemic period when education is carried out remotely, these programs are very important in terms of the development of Kazakh identity in children.

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