

**THE NATIVE LANGUAGE AS A FACTOR IN THE FORMATION OF NATIONAL  
SELF-AWARENESS**

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**Abstract**

The article examines the role of the native language as a key factor in the formation of an individual's national self-awareness. Particular attention is given to the function of the native language as a carrier of cultural memory, a means of shaping the national worldview, and the foundation of linguistic identity. It is demonstrated that the native language performs not only a communicative function but also cognitive, educational, and integrative functions, ensuring the continuity of cultural values and the stability of national identity. The study analyzes the significance of the native language within the education system, where it serves as the foundation for knowledge acquisition, the development of thinking, and the socialization of the individual. It is emphasized that under conditions of globalization and the dominance of mass culture, the preservation and development of the native language become particularly relevant, as the loss of active proficiency may lead to a weakening of national self-awareness and a disruption of cultural ties. The article concludes that purposeful language policy and high-quality language education are essential conditions for preserving cultural heritage and for fostering national self-awareness in future generations.

**Keywords**

native language; national self-awareness; cultural memory; national identity; linguistic worldview; education system; linguistic competence; cultural identity; intercultural interaction; language policy.

**Introduction**

In the context of globalization and intensive intercultural contacts, the problem of preserving and developing national self-awareness has become particularly relevant. One of the key factors determining the stability of national identity is the native language. It functions not only as a means of communication, but also as the most important carrier of historical memory, cultural values, and the mental attitudes of a people. Studying the role of the native language in the formation of national self-awareness makes it possible to gain a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of personality formation within the cultural and linguistic space and to determine priorities in language policy and educational practice.

National self-awareness is the individual's awareness of belonging to a particular people, as well as the acceptance of its history, culture, traditions, and system of values. This complex spiritual and psychological formation develops under the influence of numerous factors: historical, social, cultural, and educational. However, language occupies a special place among these factors, since it is precisely through language that the primary perception and comprehension of the world are formed. The native language shapes the basic cognitive structures of the individual. Through it, a child acquires not only an understanding of objective reality, but also a system of evaluations, images, and symbols characteristic of a particular culture. Thus, language becomes a kind of "code" of national thinking, in which ways of

perceiving reality, types of emotional responses, and patterns of behavior are embedded. One of the most important functions of the native language is the preservation and transmission of a people's cultural memory. Its vocabulary, phraseology, fixed expressions, proverbs, and sayings record the historical experience of the nation, its worldview, and its system of values. Language accumulates notions of good and evil, justice, social organization, and the place of the individual in society and nature, thereby ensuring the continuity of cultural meanings. Cultural memory is закрепляется in language not only at the level of vocabulary but also within the very structure of the linguistic system. Grammatical categories and ways of expressing time, modality, and evaluation reflect historically established forms of interpreting reality. Through these linguistic mechanisms, stable patterns of thinking and behavior are transmitted—patterns that have developed over many generations and have become part of the national tradition. A special role in preserving cultural memory is played by nationally marked linguistic units that have no direct equivalents in other languages. Such words and expressions concentrate unique cultural experience associated with everyday life, traditions, beliefs, and the way of life of a people. Their use maintains a connection with the cultural past and contributes to the preservation of the ethno-cultural specificity of the language. An important component of cultural memory is also represented by traditional speech genres: forms of address, expressions of good wishes, etiquette formulas, as well as ritual and ceremonial texts. They reflect the social norms and value orientations of society, reinforcing notions of acceptable and desirable models of behavior. The acquisition of such speech forms contributes to the socialization of the individual and their integration into the national cultural space. Language also performs the function of preserving historical experience. The names of events, past realities, social institutions, and cultural phenomena are retained in linguistic consciousness as distinctive signs of history. Their interpretation establishes a connection between the past and the present, ensuring a holistic perception of a people's historical path. In this sense, language functions not only as a means of recording historical facts but also as a space for their cultural interpretation. Thus, the native language operates as a multilayered repository of cultural memory, bringing together historical experience, value orientations, and nationally conditioned ways of perceiving the world. Its preservation and active use are a necessary condition for the continuity of cultural tradition and a crucial factor in the formation of national self-awareness. The native language shapes the national worldview—a specific way of conceptualizing reality characteristic of a given people. This is manifested in systems of concepts, grammatical categories, and the semantic nuances of words. For example, the presence or absence of certain lexical units, as well as features of word formation and syntax, reflect the priorities and values of a culture. Through the native language, individuals acquire culturally conditioned ways of thinking. This process is especially significant in early childhood, when the foundations of personality are formed. For this reason, instruction in the native language at the primary school level plays a crucial role in the development of national self-awareness: the child does not merely study the language as an academic subject but, through it, enters the cultural space of their people. The native language occupies a special place in the education system, since it is through it that the initial acquisition of knowledge, the formation of thinking, and the development of personality take place. It functions not only as an academic subject but also as a universal means of cognition through which learners comprehend the surrounding world and their own experience. In this sense, the native language constitutes the foundation of the entire educational system. At the early stages of learning, the native language performs a key cognitive function. Through it, a child acquires basic concepts and learns to analyze, compare, and generalize. For example, understanding mathematical problems, texts related to the natural and social environment, or instructions in practical subjects directly

depends on the level of proficiency in the native language. Insufficient linguistic competence inevitably leads to difficulties in mastering the content of other academic disciplines.

Within the system of school education, the native language plays an important role in shaping speech culture and communicative skills. Native language lessons are aimed at developing oral and written speech, the ability to express thoughts logically and coherently, to argue one's position, and to comprehend texts of various genres and stylistic registers. These skills are universal in nature and are essential in all areas of academic and professional activity. The educational and formative function of the native language is no less significant. Through linguistic material, students are introduced to the cultural and moral values of their people. Literary texts, works of folklore, proverbs, and sayings shape learners' understanding of national culture, traditions, and worldview. Thus, the analysis of literary texts in native language classes contributes to the development of emotional responsiveness, the capacity for empathy, and the ability to reflect on human actions. In the context of contemporary education, the native language also performs an integrative function by linking various academic subjects into a unified system. Work with texts, the analysis of concepts, the formulation of conclusions, and the written presentation of learning outcomes are impossible without well-developed language skills. For example, the preparation of essays, projects, or oral presentations requires not only subject-specific knowledge but also a high level of proficiency in the native language. The role of the native language in shaping learners' linguistic and cultural identity therefore becomes particularly significant. In a multilingual educational environment, the native language becomes a support that ensures psychological comfort and personal stability. It helps maintain a connection with national culture and at the same time serves as a foundation for the successful acquisition of other languages. Within the education system, the native language performs a multifunctional role: cognitive, communicative, educational, and integrative. Its significance extends far beyond that of a single academic subject, since the overall quality of education depends on the level of proficiency in the native language. For this reason, the development of linguistic competence should be regarded as a priority task of contemporary educational policy. In the modern world, where global languages and mass culture dominate, the native language is often at risk of being displaced from everyday communication. This can lead to a weakening of national self-awareness, especially among younger generations. The loss of active proficiency in the native language is frequently accompanied by the erosion of cultural ties and a decline in interest in national traditions. At the same time, the preservation and development of the native language do not imply isolation from other cultures. On the contrary, a strong linguistic identity enables individuals to engage confidently in intercultural dialogue while maintaining their own cultural foundation. In this context, the native language becomes a pillar that ensures internal coherence and cultural stability.

Thus, the native language is the most important factor in the formation of national self-awareness. It performs not only a communicative function but also serves as a carrier of cultural memory, a means of shaping the national worldview, and the foundation of an individual's linguistic identity. Through the native language, a person becomes acquainted with the spiritual values of their people, becomes aware of their belonging to a national community, and forms a stable system of cultural orientations.

In the context of contemporary sociocultural challenges, purposeful efforts to preserve and develop the native language acquire particular significance, primarily within the education system. It is precisely the quality of linguistic education that determines the formation of national self-awareness in future generations and the preservation of a people's cultural heritage.

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