Forensic Identification of Persons by Traits

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ABSTRACT: The paper presents methods for identifying people by forensic facial identification, which can be defined as external features and which allow them to be identified in order to detain criminals. Over time, the spoken portrait method has been one of the most important methods of forensic identification, developed on the basis of judicial practice and investigation. In the procedures for identifying persons according to external traits, we can mention: the sketched portrait which consists in drawing a portrait, following the description of the victim or witnesses; the photo robot - a method of identification with the help of a photographic collage of facial elements, the photographic synthesizer, the computer robot portrait, etc.

KEYWORDS: the spoken portrait method, static features, dynamic features, photo robot, minicomposer

Introduction

The external features of persons allow their identification in order to discover criminals, prosecute and detain perpetrators, as well as convicts who evade the execution of the sentence, recognition of repeat offenders, search for missing persons or identification of unknown bodies (Ionescu 2007, 145).

The methods of identifying people by external straits, by voice, as well as by other forensic procedures come to add to the possibilities of identifying the person based on the traces left by him in the criminal field (Stancu 2015, 187).

The person's features can be defined as external, general and particular features of a person, on the basis of which he can be recognized and identified. In Forensics, a special method of identifying the person by traits was developed, developed on the basis of judicial and investigative practice, called "the method of the spoken portrait" (Buzatu 2013, 91-92).

The description of the features takes into account the characteristics of the whole body, emphasizing the anatomical features of the face, the description refers to the volume, shape, position and color of the observed parts, each element being appreciated in relation to other anatomical elements that make up the set described (Stancu 2015, 189).

The spoken portrait method

The spoken portrait is a method frequently applied and perfected over time, which serves to identify people based on the description of their external features by another person (Stancu 2015, 190). In describing a person's features, precise and uniform terminology must be used in a logical sequence. In applying this method, two categories of features are used, namely anatomical or static and functional or dynamic. Particular role is also played by particular signs, clothing and portable objects whose characteristics make it easier to identify (Buzatu 2013, 92).

Traits mean the external, general and particular features of a person, on the basis of which he can be identified (Panghe and Dumitrescu 1974, 3).

The identification of persons by traits is based on the great variability of the individual characteristics that distinguish one person from another (Suciu 1963, 423).

Static features refer to stable features, whether the body is moving or at rest. They concern the waist, the physical constitution, the shape of the face and its components (Ionescu 2007, 145).

The waist can be short, medium and tall.

The physical constitution is considered to be robust or solid, medium, weak, depending on the size of the bone system and the muscle mass of the individual.

The general appearance or attire of a person can be evaluated as sporty, elegant, athletic, cumbersome or associated with certain professions, such as officer, clerk, intellectual, sailor, student ballerina, etc. (Stancu 2015, 190).

The shape of the head can be elongated, oval, rectangular, triangular, square, angular. From the profile, the head can have a normal or regular contour.

The face is divided into three areas: frontal, nasal and buccal. The frontal area comprises the region between the base of the nose and its base; the mouth area includes the region between the base of the nose and the tip of the chin.

Hair is described by color, frontal insertion, shape (straight, wavy, curly), length, hairstyle.

The forehead is described by height, width, contour, inclination, manner of wrinkling

The eyes are described by shape, position, color, inerocular space, the peculiarities of the eyelids and eyelashes.

The nose is characterized by the root, the dorsal line or the edge, the height, the width, the base, the conformation of the nostrils.

The mouth and lips are described by size, contour, position, color, thickness, prominence.

The chin is described according to its profile, width, height, its peculiarities (flat, sharp, buried, double chin) (Stancu 2015, 190-191).

Regarding the *ear*, one can describe the size (small, medium, large), shape (oval, round, triangular, rectangular), position (glued, removed).

The skin can vary depending on the color (white, pink, red, yellow), with certain features: eczema, warts, moles, tattoos, scars.

There are also wrinkles on the face, especially on the forehead and between the eyebrows (Buzatu and Ionescu 2010).

Dynamic or functional features are those that are highlighted when performing movements or when adopting different positions (Ionescu 2007, 148).

In everyday life we recognize people not only by the colour of their eyes, but by their look, not only by the contour of their face, but by their facial expressions, not only by the height and shape of their limbs, but also by their movement. Thus, the description of the anatomical features is completed with that of the functional features, which appear and can be observed on the occasion of performing different movements: body posture, head position, gait, gestures, facial expressions, voice and speech, habits in various activities.

The position of the head can be appreciated in the general attire of the body, but also as an element independently, when their own characteristics are presented, specific to a certain person. Thus, the *head* can be bent forward, bent backwards, held straight, bent to the left or to the right insofar as these positions are not accidental, but constant in the dynamism of body movements, they are retained as characteristic elements (Xdocs 2021).

A person's *gait* can be normal, relaxed, supple, sporty, cumbersome, hesitant, with big or small steps, jumping.

The mode of manifestation, by which we mean gestures or speech, depends on the personality and temperament of the individual. Thus, a person can be calm, nervous, slow, agitated, impulsive, fickle, taciturn.

Speech should be included in the outline of the "spoken portrait" through features such as normal speech, hurried, stuttering, organized, as well as timbre, accent, etc. (Stancu 2015, 192).

It should be noted that some *skills* can be disguised to a greater or lesser extent: the voice, the simulation of limping.

Referring to the spoken portrait method, we specify that among the external features of a person are more easily those related to sex, age, waist, head size, nose shape, hair and skin color, gait, facial expressions, voice and malformations (Ionescu 2007, 148).

Technical methods used to identify persons by external features

The sketched portrait or the sketch of the portrait consists in the drawing of a portrait, according to the description of the victim or the witnesses, by a person with very good plastic qualities (Buzatu 2013, 95).

After drawing up, the sketch will be presented to the person who provided the features by description).

The photo robot is a method of identification with the help of a photographic collage of facial elements taken from photographs of the traits of different people (Stancu 2015, 193).

The method was introduced in 1953 by French Commissioner Pierre Chabot and is based on photographs of facial details. The composite photograph is taken with the help of descriptions made by the victim or a witness (Ionescu 2007, 152).

The photo synthesizer is an improved version of the photo robot. Select the facial elements from ordinary photos and make the montage with four devices that project an area of the face on a screen (Buzatu 2013, 95).

The identi-kit and the *photo-identi-kit* are among the technical means frequently used in the practice of criminal investigation bodies. At the disposal of the witness or the victim, an album is placed containing dozens of variants of the facial elements.

The person who makes up this robot portrait chooses from the album a certain variant characteristic of each facial element, after which the corresponding films are removed, which are placed, by overlapping, on a special support, with matte glass, illuminated from below (Stancu 2015, 193-194).

The minicomposer (MIMIC) uses the same principle as the Identi-kit, but the facial elements on the transparent celluloid strips are electromagnetically driven, by a device, behind a transparent screen (Buzatu 2013, 96).

The computer robot portrait consists of composing facial features using electronic computing, by efficiently exploiting data provided by victims and witnesses and by using data stored in computer memory that refers to identified criminals and missing persons (Cârjan 2004, 136).

The inherent difficulties encountered in practice, to identify based on the method of the spoken portrait or through technical procedures such as photo robot, have led to the search for new ways to make the robot portrait. For this, the specialists resorted to the electronic calculation technique which proves to be very useful in practice (https://www.academia.edu/).

By design and execution, the computer and software used have remarkable advantages:
- the database offers a wide range of facial elements;
- allows changes to be made to the morphophysiological elements such as: details, proportions, sizes;
- storage of the robot portrait made due to the possibility of retaining it in the computer memory;
- obtaining immediately a number of copies of the robot portrait by graphic transposition with the help of the printer;
- the time to make the robot portrait is much reduced compared to the other methods (sketch, identi-kit, minicomposer);
- the possibility to quickly and easily broadcast the robot portrait remotely through computer networks of this type;
- easy transportability due to the small size of the hard elements (Ionescu 2007, 153).

Forensic methods for identifying unknown bodies

In judicial practice, there are situations when the victim of the murder may be without a known identity: no documents can be found on his/her, there are no people to give

information about his/her identity, and the place where the body was found does not provide any clues as to his/her identity (i.e., the victim is found in the home).

In order to identify, operations are carried out such as: drawing up the spoken portrait, photographing, fingerprinting, taking biological samples (hairs from all regions of the body).

The identification of the corpses according to the description of the traits is made according to rigorous scientific criteria, resorting to an adequate and precise terminology of appreciation of the various details (Criminalistic.ro 2010).

The over projection method consists in projecting or superimposing the image of the unknown skull over the photographic image of the missing person, to whom the skull is supposed to have belonged. The two images are superimposed on a screen, in order to establish the coincidence or non-coincidence of the anatomical and anthropometric elements, appreciated as landmarks, the result being focused by photography.

Electronic image overlay is an improved version of over projection, based on the electronic combination of images of the unknown skull and those of the missing person (Qdidactic 2021).

The reconstruction of the physiognomy after the skull consists in the plastic and graphic reconstruction of the soft tissues of the head, the whole operation being performed on the skull of the corpse whose identity is being determined.

The results of this method are often spectacular, in most cases the resemblance reaching the degree of perfection, especially if a proper choice is made of hair colour, skin pigment, as well as the expression of the whole figure (Stancu 2015, 196).

Identification of bone remains is the subject of expertise in osteological traces. This method is performed by the anthropologist who is able to determine whether the osteological traces are human or not, if we are in the presence of a whole skeleton or if the bones belong to several people (Stancu 2015, 196),

Interesting results were obtained by reconstructing the face after the skull, based on the correspondence between the bony support of the skull and the soft tissues of the face.

Another way to identify is the *morphological comparison of the skull with the photograph of the missing person* in order to be able to deduce a sufficient number of correspondences of forms. One procedure is to overlap the photograph of the missing person over the cliché of the skull obtained by photographing at the same scale and from the same incidence (Ionescu 2007, 156).

Identification by dental system and dental work. This method of identification is particularly valuable due to the specific elements of individualization that a person's teeth present. To these particularities must be added the medical interventions performed for the maintenance or replacement of the teeth.

The possibility of reconstituting the physiognomy after the teeth must be taken all the more as the traces of the teeth serve for such reconstructions (Stancu 2015, 196-197).

Conclusions

The identification of persons by features is an important element in forensic activity, with the aim of identifying the perpetrators and preventing the commission of criminal acts. This method helps to establish the truth in the judicial process, and the description of a person's features, in order to identify him/her, must be made clear and systematic, so as to eliminate any errors that may occur. The spoken portrait method is one of the most common methods of forensic identification, based on both the description of the perpetrator and that of the witness. Sometimes the recognition can be erroneous, in the sense that the victim's or witness's account of the outward appearance may be inaccurate or confusing. Therefore, the special method of identifying the person by features uses data from sciences such as: anatomy, physiology or anthropology.

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