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## LANGUAGE PERSONALITY OF A GABONESE STUDENT

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### *Abstract*

The article reveals the peculiarities of the formation of the linguistic personality of a Gabonese student based on the formation of a portrait of an average Gabonese citizen, as well as in accordance with ethnic developmental features, a personality type, the influence of a multilingual population, cultural level and religious beliefs. The term “linguistic personality” should be identified to a native speaker who functions in society and makes it possible to identify types of linguistic personality that have three levels and six sublevels are described. Main difficulties for foreign students are understanding the terminology of teaching, perception of lecture and seminar material, presentation of the results of their own research. In addition, students have difficulties in the administrative sphere, as they are not familiar with the typical clichés used in certain life situations. The main factors of influence on the formation of a linguistic personality are identified, the main mistakes in teaching Gabonese students a language are identified and recommendations for the improvement of learning process are proposed.

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## 1. Introduction

According to the theoretical provisions on the structure of a linguistic personality and its levels, it is necessary to note that almost all researchers share the opinion that the primary linguistic personality of a person is formed on the basis of the reality surrounding him when using familiar and convenient systemic means of a language (phonetic, syntactic, lexical forms etc.) with a certain positioning of a person in a given reality.

If we consider the concept of “language personality” as an object of study, then it is necessary to focus on the individuality of each particular person, as well as on the differences in language.

The disappearing difference between the approaches of linguodidactics and linguopersonology allows taking into account not only the features of familiarization with the human language system, but also taking into account the national-cultural specificity of a language itself (Gogolev, 2006).

## 2. Problem Statement

The analysis of the concept of “linguistic personality” makes it possible to single out the components exactly appropriate to use in this study and which meets the purpose of this study, proposed in his research by Karaulov (1987). He suggests that a native speaker of a certain language can be characterized by the evaluation of the texts which he uses, namely this can be:

- 1) an individual and an author of texts, who is characterized by his own character, interests, social and psychological preferences and attitudes;
- 2) a typical representative of a certain linguistic community or a narrow speech collective, who is a part of it, i.e. represents an average or aggregate characteristic of a native speaker of a particular language;
- 3) a reasonable person who uses sign systems and natural language.

## 3. Research Questions

Consequently, the term “linguistic personality” should be identified to a native speaker who functions in society and makes it possible to identify types of linguistic personality that have three levels and six sublevels. Thus, a high level is characterized by the presence of a large number of skills, but one of its sublevels is the lowest and is characterized by the underdevelopment of skills compared to oral and written language means. The average level is characterized by an insignificant level of the development of reflection, as well as the inability to use various means of expression. The low level is characterized by the underdeveloped ability to speak, which are aimed at the transmission of a certain thought, as well as the general insufficient level of the formation of skills.

That is, based on existing theories, it can be said that a linguistic personality is the quintessence of cognitive, psychological, communicative and axiomatic components of a personality.

## 4. Purpose of the Study

According to theoretical approaches to the structure of a linguistic personality, four main

components are distinguished; they are as follows (Karaulov, 1987):

- 1) Conceptual, which uses the culture and traditions of the motherland of a language,
- 2) Motivational-targeted component that reveals the value of a language itself, its civic position through its cultural orientation and its positioning in the world;
- 3) Procedural, which reflects the methods of training, presentation and cognition in the process of communication;
- 4) Reflective component that enables students to evaluate their own language abilities from the point of view of understanding a language culture.

Thus, we can say that the linguistic personality of Gabonese student is reasoned by his linguistic and cultural characteristics. The linguistic and cultural characteristic of not only Gabonese student, but a citizen as in general is based on cultural sections: myths, rituals, rites, superstitions, stereotypes and speech behavior, and the status of a student gives modern touch to this personality.

## 5. Research Methods

In order to analyze the linguistic personality of a resident of Gabon, it is necessary to turn to the history of the development of this country.

At the present stage, about two million people live in Gabon. The population of Gabon is the smallest in tropical Africa. Accurate data is not available even to UN experts. There is information from various sources that the population ranges from 800.000–1400.000 people. The uncertainty in the population is due to two reasons: the presence of a large number of foreigners, which make up about one fifth of the total population. These are officially employed teachers, medical personnel, highly skilled workers and illegal immigrants.

The second reason is the territorial features of the area – the wild forests of Gabon, which account for 3/4 of the territory where the pygmies and other tribes are located, who do not perceive strangers and can not be counted (Ilyina, 1998).

In comparison with neighboring states – the Republic of the Congo, Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, gained independence in 1960, and was positioned on the world stage as a Europeanized promising country before the events of the military coup on January 7, 2019. Thriving Gabon was called “Eldorado”, “the emirate of Central Africa”, “harbor of the world”.

Historically, Gabon at the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 was declared to be a French colony. The first Europeans to land on the coast of Gabon in 1470 were the Portuguese. Thus the very name “Gabon” comes from the Portuguese word “cape with a hood”, which resembles the mouth of the Como River. In the XVII century in the territory of Gabon, the French, Dutch and English already began to settle (Gack, 2002).

For the European continent, Gabon is one of the countries of black slavery, from where slaves were mainly exported, and after the abolition of slavery, the slave trade continued illegally.

At the present stage, many economists believe that the country is in a state of socio-economic crisis. This socioeconomic crisis was caused by Gabon's excess profits from the sale of oil in 1956, the production of which is effective and low cost, because it is carried out on the surface, as evidenced by the

fountain of the first field on the shelf near Port-Gentil (Atlas of the countries ...). Modern Gabon is an annual source of 18 million tons. However, all the existing deposits have already been practically devastated, and new ones have not yet been found.

The current socio-economic crisis of Gabon is the consequences of the rapid development and devastation of the country's resource reserves with huge foreign investment, which simply caused explosive changes in the structure and functioning of the state. Today, Elf and Shell enterprises are the main companies forming the country's economy. However, they do not invest in its development, but only use its natural and labor resources. Moreover, the rapid saturation of the state budget due to the export of oil, namely oil, and not oil products, which could be produced in Gabon, did not require the development of an alternative course of development of the state.

Thus, a significant economic shift has occurred in the country's economy, focused only on the extraction of raw materials and their export. At the same time, agriculture has practically died out (today it is only 1 % of the entire territory of the country), because most of the population began to move to cities where there was a highly paid and not very intensive job. Thus, Gabon lost his plantations of coffee, cocoa, peanuts. Urban residents make up about 80 % of the country's population (Atlas of the countries ...).

Moreover, UN analytical studies showed that Gabon is a third world country not in terms of per capita income, which is about \$ 400, but in the human development index, which is estimated by indicators: health, education, average life expectancy, child mortality, etc.

Emil Dumba, the Minister of Economy and Finance of Gabon, self-critically admitted: "Today we are suffering from the state of our economy. Roads have completely fallen into disrepair. The educational system needs to be transformed. In many places there are no medical services. It is necessary to change the mentality, to be less wasteful and more entrepreneurial" (Atlas of the countries ...).

Together with socio-economic crisis, a moral crisis aggravated. The purely external introduction of civilization, which the Europeans brought with them, did not allow Africans realizing the true meaning of their spiritual values. Now there is a massive return to traditional beliefs that are closer and more understandable. Such, in particular, is the idea of the unity of the living and spirit world. Often, the Gabonese people sanctify their ancestors to the rank of demigods.

## **6. Findings**

The official language of Gabon is French. Although about 80 percent of the population speaks French, approximately 30 percent of the inhabitants speak Fang as their mother tongue.

At the same time, the main population of Gabon can be divided into two ethnic groups: fang and southern ethnic groups, which are characterized by significant differences in mentality. There is a definite problem of fang people, as they are spread not only in Gabon, but also in Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea. Once, there was even the idea of uniting all fan ethnic groups into one state, because ethnic groups themselves were divided among themselves in the process of colonization. At the present stage, this problem still remains relevant (Weiss, 2005).

Thus, it can be noted that Gabon is characterized by two completely different directions in the development of ethnic groups that are oriented towards opposite goals: fang is for unification, and southern ethnic groups are oriented to consolidation according to a common historical and state heritage.

According to studies of the formation of the French language, church greatly influenced it. According to the evolution of religion in France – the French, being originally Celtic, and subsequently Gallic pagans, perceived the Word of God in Latin. Thus, the French language that came to Gabon already carried within itself the universal principles of goodness, love, mercy, salvation, and fate. Consequently, the basic elements of behavior, as well as stereotypes of linguistic thinking of the French superethnos, are associated with these values.

Modern Gabon is characterized by syncretism of local beliefs (for example, bwiti) with Christianity. Almost all Gabons are of Bantu origin, the most numerous is Fang ethnic group. There are Nzebi, Shira, Puru, Kande and Pygmies (Weiss, 2005).

The bwiti belief is based on the natural properties of Iboga plant, which has certain narcotic properties. It causes hallucinations, precisely those that allow communicating with the world of spirits. It is interesting that in small doses, the bark and roots of the plant have a stimulating effect, and in large doses it causes visions and insights. Iboga is of interest in medicine, because it has the ability to rid a person of opiate and alcohol dependence without withdrawal symptoms in just one or two doses.

Thus, after analyzing the characteristics of Gabon, it can be noted that the physical view of the world, the technical picture of the world, the artistic perception of its reality, sociological, legal and mathematical thinking, have an influence on the formation of the linguistic personality of the Gabon resident. It is all acquired through a certain human activity, and, therefore, the more the facets of the personality are manifested, the more opportunities to see reality exist.

The portrait of the personality of an average Gabonese person can be described as: a city dweller without a certain level of education, which owns a primitive craft and is used as a labor force, prefers local beliefs in bwiti, can engage in illegal poaching and works from time to time.

Forming a portrait of the linguistic personality of a Gabon student, it is necessary to take into account that he is a native speaker of the intermediary language, and, therefore, the portrait of the linguistic personality must take into consideration the following factors.

As it was mentioned earlier, the Gabonese are multilingual, but the main influence is still provided by the official French language, which is the main one on the verbal-semantic level (Alekseeva, 2001).

The main mistakes that students make when learning a language are manifested exactly at the verbal-semantic level (Leord, 2006). These include phonetic errors associated with the indistinguishability of sounds, the changes in the softness and hardness of sound, the lack of perception of vowels and consonants and mixing of individual sounds that are not characteristic of the intermediary language.

In the grammar, there are violations of cases and time-system. Incorrect construction of a sentence, violation of the order of words in a sentence can be attributed to syntax errors. At the lexical level, there are fewer mistakes, because languages belong to one language group; they have a large volume of borrowing words.

At the level of speech activity there is just an exchange of texts, their formation, presentation and interpretation. Here, students, as a rule, have no particular difficulties. They arise where texts need to be written down. Difficulties with writing arise almost always, because more attention is paid to situational conversations.

This factor confirms the opinion that languages are not variations of each other; the language is different systems that operate according to different rules. Here the hypothesis of linguistic relativity is realized, it assumes that language determines thinking, or, in other words: language affects thinking, and at the same time affects the ways of cognition and personality behavior.

The second factor is the particularity of the African mentality, which is influenced by both climate and the long colonial regime and differences in cultural traditions. Almost all Gabonese students very acutely feel their own "I". In this case, it is necessary to take into account the difference in cultures of different nationalities, which carry different patterns of education, namely, the rudiments of a tribal culture. Further, the development of personality is carried out in primary schools, where students are taught the basics of the culture of France – a European country, which is the metropolis of Gabon. An interesting fact is that, due to the study of European culture by almost all Africans, and Gabonese in particular alienate their native culture. This leads to their further behavior; they become more Europeanized and prefer freedom and independence. This factor affects the formation of the second level of a linguistic personality – cognitive or thesaurus.

At the same time, it is necessary to note that behavior is dominated by patterns and norms that were instilled from childhood on a verbal-semantic level. The culture of African countries is characterized by an age hierarchy, and, therefore, the youngest can not initiate conversation or acquaintance. The highest level of respect is attentiveness and a quiet voice in a dialogue. In addition, Africans have a strict gender hierarchy, i.e. the social status of a man is primarily higher than that of a woman.

The third factor in the formation of the linguistic personality of a Gabon student is the psychological characteristic of a student itself. Independently, such students are communicative. This is due to the presence of a large number of communications in the tribal environment (Bergelson, 2001). Such students are characterized by a high level of sociability; they are emotional and very sensitive. Young people grow up quickly, even those who come from wealthy families, so they immediately try to independently provide for their own lives through employment. In a psychological portrait, it is possible to distinguish such traits as touchiness and suspiciousness. At the same time, the negative traits are the lack of punctuality and indiscipline that are characteristic of almost all African students (Pugachev, 2011).

The fourth factor affecting the formation of the linguistic personality of a Gabonese student is the characteristics of the secondary education system. In this case, it is a partially adapted French education system with a 10-point grading system. The secondary education system greatly affects the further development of the personality of a student. Here they single out a higher school for the most capable, vocational guidance schools, where only two areas are divided: natural-technical and humanitarian. In general, the quality of secondary education is low, because the country's education system itself is not developed and the government does not pay much attention to it.

The criteria for the effectiveness of a language personality model can be classified according to several criteria:

- 1) According to the content, it is assumed that linguistic personality gains the ability to reasonably express the essence of discussion topics, applying the ability to search, receive, interpret and use certain information in certain conditions of its (information) receipt.
- 2) In form, it is assumed that linguistic personality gains the ability to competently apply different levels of vocabulary; rhetorical devices; syntax constructs; distinguish between written and oral speech, consciously use non-verbal means of communication.
- 3) According to the ability of a person to learn independently, it is assumed that linguistic personality gains the ability to add and apply universal phrases; capable of improvisation; may resort to artistic criticism, as well as reflection on fans of language and speech; has the skills of independent creativity and the use of original language tools.

Successful use of linguistic personality model will allow in the future:

- Applying a consciously-communicative approach to learning, this involves the use of existing linguistic knowledge in the process of acquiring speech skills, skills that ensure the stability and reliability of these skills.
- Educating a cultured person who speaks the norms of a literary language, has the ability to freely express his thoughts and feelings in oral and written form, and respects the ethical standards of intercultural communication.
- Forming informational, communicative, intellectual and organizational skills.
- Applying advanced teaching and control technologies for the formation of a linguistic personality.
- Focusing all types of activities on the intensive speech development of students through the use of a communicative-active approach to learning. This assumes a systematic and focused training in all types of speech activity as its main task taking into account, at the same time, their relationship.

When graduating from higher education institution, Gabonese students have a need for a large number of practical study hours, an individual approach to various students, taking into account their characteristics, the use of test forms of knowledge control, various types of training and the use of training aids for self-study.

## **7. Conclusion**

The portrait of a Gabon student can also be supplemented by the fact that, for more effective familiarization with a language, even at the stage of pre-university preparation, they actively participate in cultural events and attend exhibitions, competitions, discos. In addition, they try to adapt quickly in national sphere. They have such a feature as a fairly quick study and mastery of slang and obscene language. In the process of socialization, Gabonese students are active, and in critical situations they are able to defend their own interests. However, from the point of view of educational and scientific activities, students are not so active. This is due to difficulties in understanding the terminology of teaching, perception of lecture and seminar material, presentation of the results of their own research. In

addition, students have difficulties in the administrative sphere, as they are not familiar with the typical clichés used in certain life situations.

Speaking about a Gabonese students, it is necessary to say that they present a more progressive part of the population, usually belonging to the “golden youth”, who receive education at the expense of their parents, has the opportunity to get an attractive position in the developing areas of Gabon at the end of training, namely: education, health care, social services, or mining enterprises. Such students are more oriented towards European culture.

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