

## LEXICAL FEATURES OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE IN IVORY COAST

### *CARACTERÍSTICAS LÉXICAS DA LÍNGUA FRANCESA NA COSTA DO MARFIM*

### *CARACTERÍSTICAS LÉXICAS DE LA LENGUA FRANCESA EN COSTA DE MARFIL*

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**ABSTRACT:** The article deals with the peculiarities of identifying the lexical features of the French language functioning on the territory of Ivory Coast, one of the West African. The research work focuses on a deep analysis of linguistic processes which are manifested in the study under the influence of a complex factors and its peculiar features hence to the process of language and cultural adaptation to the territorial needs of Ivory Coast. The article deals with the analyses of language situation's peculiarities in Ivory Coast, with the French language domination process in various spheres of life. The authors stress, the Ivorian French variant is the hybrid mixture of a formation based on the French language, supplemented by elements of Ivorian local languages. The practical work part is based on the analysis of the examples of lexical interference and borrowings from indigenous languages, presenting the specific features of Ivorian French. The results of the research work prove, the French language has a wide range of words denoting local realities and reflecting the adaptation of the French language to the Ivorian culture peculiarities. All in all, French words with new lexical meanings and words from indigenous languages are widely used by the population of Ivory Coast.

**KEYWORDS:** Language variation. Ivory Coast. Indigenous languages. French. Loanwords. Borrowing. Diglossia. Interference.

**RESUMO:** *O artigo trata das peculiaridades de identificar os traços lexicais da língua francesa em funcionamento no território da Costa do Marfim, um dos da África Ocidental. O trabalho de investigação centra-se numa análise aprofundada dos processos linguísticos que se manifestam no estudo sob a influência de um factor complexo e das suas características peculiares ao processo de adaptação linguística e cultural às necessidades territoriais da Costa do Marfim. O artigo trata da análise das peculiaridades da situação da linguagem na Costa do Marfim, com o processo de dominação da língua francesa em várias esferas da vida. Os autores enfatizam que a variante do francês da Costa do Marfim é a mistura híbrida*

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*de uma formação baseada na língua francesa, complementada por elementos das línguas locais da Costa do Marfim. A parte prática do trabalho baseia-se na análise dos exemplos de interferência lexical e empréstimos de línguas indígenas, apresentando as especificidades do francês marfinense. Os resultados do trabalho de pesquisa comprovam que a língua francesa possui um amplo leque de palavras que denotam realidades locais e refletem a adaptação da língua francesa às peculiaridades da cultura costa-marfinense. Em suma, palavras francesas com novos significados lexicais e palavras de línguas indígenas são amplamente utilizadas pela população da Costa do Marfim.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Variação linguística. Costa do Marfim. Línguas indígenas. Francês. Empréstimos. Empréstimo. Diglossia. Interferência.*

**RESUMEN:** *El artículo trata sobre las peculiaridades de identificar los rasgos léxicos de la lengua francesa en funcionamiento en el territorio de Costa de Marfil, uno de los africanos occidentales. El trabajo de investigación se centra en un análisis profundo de los procesos lingüísticos que se manifiestan en el estudio bajo la influencia de factores complejos y sus peculiaridades de ahí el proceso de adaptación lingüística y cultural a las necesidades territoriales de Costa de Marfil. El artículo trata de los análisis de las peculiaridades de la situación lingüística en Costa de Marfil, con el proceso de dominación del francés en diversas esferas de la vida. Los autores subrayan que la variante francesa de Costa de Marfil es la mezcla híbrida de una formación basada en el idioma francés, complementada con elementos de las lenguas locales de Costa de Marfil. La parte de trabajo práctico se basa en el análisis de ejemplos de interferencia léxica y préstamos de lenguas indígenas, presentando las características específicas del francés marfileño. Los resultados del trabajo de investigación demuestran que el idioma francés tiene una amplia gama de palabras que denotan realidades locales y reflejan la adaptación del idioma francés a las peculiaridades de la cultura marfileña. Con todo, las palabras francesas con nuevos significados léxicos y palabras de lenguas indígenas son ampliamente utilizadas por la población de Costa de Marfil.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Variación lingüística. Costa de Marfil. Lenguas indígenas. Francés. Préstamos. Endeudamiento. Diglosia. Interferencia.*

## **Introduction**

The linguistic situation before colonization was characterized by the many autochthonous languages spoken in what is now Ivory Coast. After colonization, French is firmly established as the official language of the country. The country's sociolinguistic situation is complicated by the coexistence of 70 ethnic languages, none of which is dominant (LAFAGE, 2003; MANESSY, 1994; SIMONS, 2017). A large proportion of the population of Ivory Coast does not have sufficient opportunities to learn French, and French is not the mother tongue. Thus, the French variant spoken in Ivory Coast is the result of a long process influenced by various linguistic and extra-linguistic factors.

In the research work, there will be the attempt to identify the reasons for the existence of lexical features distinguishing Ivorian French from French in France. The subject of study is the French language variant, which functions in Ivory Coast in conjunction with the peculiarities of indigenous languages.

### **Methods.**

This article is based on the systematic approach of cross-cultural analysis (SCOLLON, 1995; WIERZBICKA, 2001). Due to the cognitive cross-disciplinary basis of work we take into consideration the anthropocentric factor, intercultural analyses, linguistic and non-linguistic information.

### **Results and Discussion.**

The complex of different historical social and geographical conditions results in the need for communication between different collectives speaking of different languages. Every year, issues related to language contacts become more and more important. Undoubtedly, language contacts are the result of cultural, technical, political, migration and other processes.

In terms of the sociolinguistic approach, the term "language contact" refers to the processes and results of socially conditioned interaction between languages. An important result of language contact is changes in the contacting languages under the influence of external factors. External factors include the functions of the contacting languages as well as the intensity and duration of contact between language collectives. Today it is impossible to predict the result of social conditions influence on contacting languages fate.

Today, Ivory Coast has more than 60 different ethnic groups speaking more than 70 languages. Today, French coexists with seventy-four African languages in Ivory Coast (Simons, 2017: 33), through which intra-ethnic communication is carried out on the territory of the country. As a rule, one of the African languages, being a mother tongue, determines one's belonging to this or that ethnic group. This language is a means of communication in the village, family and even in the city between members of the same ethnic group.

When examining the complex sociolinguistic situation in Ivory Coast, the importance of bilingualism as a condition for linguistic contact must be stressed. We stress the idea, that bilingualism is the reason for the country's unique linguistic system. Most Ivorians do not speak the contact languages to the same extent and selectively use them in different speech situations.

Thus, Z.U. Blaygoz (BLYAGOZ, 2003: 7) interprets bilingualism as "the ability, skill, which allows a person or people as a whole or its part to alternately use (orally or in writing) two different languages depending on the situation and to achieve mutual understanding in the process of communication".

The notion of diglossia, introduced by Ch. Fergusson in the late 1950s, has an important place in Ivory Coast's linguistic situation. When defining diglossia, such characteristics as genetic proximity of the languages, the functional distribution of the languages in the different spheres of speech, the evaluation on a "high-low" scale, the prestige of each language, etc. are important (FERGUSON, 2012).

According to J. Fishman, the essence of diglossia is the coexistence of several languages or their variants within a country or a region. It is taken for granted, there are three types of relationship between bilingualism and diglossia in the situation of language contact: 1) bilingualism prevails 2) diglossia 3) combination of bilingualism and diglossia (FISHMAN, 2000: 92).

Diglossia is characterized by a functional distribution of languages. In this case, one of the languages is used in non-communal ("high") spheres and situations of communication (e.g. science, administration, education) and is not accepted in everyday communication. More often, this language is more prestigious in the mind of a bilingual. The distinctive feature is also the artificial nature of language acquisition - through learning at school and other educational institutions. The other language is only used in everyday communication. Bilinguals acquire this language through family and everyday communication in childhood (MECHKOVSKAYA, 2000: 108).

According to V.A. Vinogradov, diglossia is not obligatory in bilingualism, as bilingual languages are not always distributed according to the communicative situation (VINOGRADOV, 2007: 728).

In Ivory Coast we can face a combination of bilingualism and diglossia, as several languages are spoken throughout the country (French and indigenous languages) and the greatest part of the population speaks them. The languages are functionally different. French is the official language of the country and Ivorians use it in official situations. Ivorians consider mastering French to be a prestigious language and the best way to enrich a proficient level is by being educated properly. In addition to French, Ivory Coast has more than 70 indigenous African languages without official status. The most common first language for Ivorians is Baule. Dioula is often used as a second language by the Manding (Malinke) and Senoufo ethnic groups. Dioula is particularly widespread in trade and religious activities. For

the most part, communication within the family takes place in indigenous African languages, depending on ethnic origin, or in Ivorian French, which is quite different from standard French. Only a small number of Ivorians learn French as a child through communication at home. One should remember that this situation is only possible in families of highly educated Ivorians.

The process of forming a speech utterance in a non-native language is complicated by the overlapping of the two systems and this leads to interference.

Interference is defined by W. Weinreich in his monograph "Language contacts". The linguist interprets interference as "cases of deviations from the norms, which occur in the speech of bilinguals as a result of them knowing more languages than one, i.e. due to language contact" (WEINREICH, 2000: 26).

W. Mackey defined interference as the use of features of one language in written or spoken speech in another language (MACKEY, 1976: 397).

Thus, Ivorians speak French, but fragments of one or more indigenous languages are widespread in their speech. Interference, unlike borrowing, is most often an unconscious and automatic process. Ivorians subconsciously add to their speech vocabulary, syntactic constructions from African languages or distort the sounds of standard French.

The basis of interference is a set of "different signs of the expression of a given meaning in the two comparative systems that form a third, in which the laws of the native and non-native languages apply. It is caused by the difficulty of introducing and fixing in memory a set of different signs of the third system and the unconscious transition of each of the two systems when constructing and understanding a text" (BAGHANA, KHAPILINA, 2010: 43).

Interference can appear at different linguistic levels: phonetic, grammatical, lexical and semantic.

Lexical interference of words of one language in another may appear both in terms of expression and in terms of content. For simple lexical units, a direct transfer of a sequence of phonemes from one language to another is common. Less frequently, the borrowing takes a form that, by its composition of phonemes, is similar to a word that already exists in the recipient language. The most common type of lexical interference is the extension of the use of a native word in accordance with the model of another word affecting it (Khabirov, 2008: 21).

An example is the word **abidjanaise**, which in French is used to denote a resident of Abidjan. In Ivorian French the meaning of the word expands to "the national anthem of Ivory Coast" («The Song of Abidjan»).

*Car combien étaient-ils ceux qui éprouvaient un plaisir patriotique à chanter, la main sur le cœur, l'Abidjanaise?* (LAFAGE, 2003: 2). – For how many were there who took patriotic pleasure in singing **the national anthem of Ivory Coast**, hand on heart?

Let us take a closer look at the noun **besoin**, meaning 'need, necessity, want' in French. Among the poorly educated and uneducated Ivorians, the word **besoin** is used as a verb, instead of the phrase **avoir besoin de qqun ou qqe chose**.

Let's compare: *Marie, taxi tu **besoin** quelle heure?* – *Marie, à quelle heure **as-tu besoin du** taxi?* – Marie, what time do you need a taxi?

The expression **avoir besoin de qqun** (French 'to need someone') is also often used, but the meaning of the phrase in Ivorian French shifts and means 'to summon someone, to call, to call someone'.

*Où est-il? La mère **a besoin de** lui.* – Where is he? His mother **is calling** him.

In Ivory Coast the expression **avoir besoin de quelqu'un en mariage** is used to mean "To want to marry someone, to ask someone to get married". In French in France this expression does not exist and is only used as part of the expression **avoir besoin de quelqu'un** means "to need someone".

*Paul **a besoin de** toi en mariage.* – Paul **wants to marry** you.

Linguists' opinions concerning the relationship between lexical interference and borrowing are divided: some linguists contrast interference with direct borrowing of linguistic elements (J. Heath), others (W. Weinreich, J.A. Zhluktenko) consider borrowing a type of interference.

We are of the opinion that the classic manifestation of lexical interference is borrowing: the interference effect appears first in lexical borrowings and only then structural changes occur.

S.G. Thomason and T. Kaufman define borrowing as "the incorporation of foreign language elements into the native language of the speakers" (Thomason, Kaufman 1992: 37). The most general formulation of the concept of "borrowing" is proposed by the "Linguistic Encyclopaedic Dictionary", where we find the following definition: "element of a foreign language (words, morpheme, etc.) transferred from one language to another as a result of language contacts, as well as the process of transition of elements of one language to another" (Linguistic Encyclopedic Dictionary 2002: 158).

Borrowing can also mean "a word or a phrase that has entered the language as a result of a process of elements' transfer from one language to another and has become a full-fledged element of the lexical-semantic system of the recipient language" (KRYSSIN 2006: 145).

Analyzing the sociolinguistic situation in Ivory Coast we must mention, borrowings from indigenous Ivorian languages take profound ground of the lexicon. Borrowings from the English language are also quite common. The presence of these borrowings in the speech of the Ivorians illustrate the willingness to adapt to the complex of sociolinguistic situation. Quite often speakers are not aware of the changes they are making in their speech, but they consciously seek to be better understood and follow the main linguistic trends to achieve this goal.

In our research work we take a closer look at some borrowings from indigenous Ivorian languages that have become the integral part of Ivorian French.

For example, *bana-bana*, *bana bana* borrowed from Mandinka language (or Mandingo) is translated as 'small travelling vendor'. In Ivorian French, the word is used to denote traders (often of foreign origin) working in the streets and offering a wide variety of goods. If used in the plural form, the word does not change its shape. Less frequently, -s is added, according to the rules of standard French:

*Il y a enfin les **bana-bana** ou vendeurs ambulants. Ils ont pour terrain de vente les grands carrefours, les environs du port d'Abidjan, les avenues commerciales et les devantures de certains grands magasins.* - Finally, there are **street vendors**. Their market stalls are located at major intersections, around Abidjan port, shopping avenues and the fronts of some department stores.

Less commonly, the noun can be used to refer to a person who earns a living doing anything, moonlighting on the streets.

*En marchant dans les rues vous finissez par rencontrer des Ivoiriens **bana-bana*** (LAFAGE, 2003: 81). –As you stroll along the streets, you'll eventually come across Ivorians **looking for a part-time job**.

Interestingly, the addition of the French suffix -isme to the word **bana-bana** ("street vendor"), borrowed from the Ivorian language, resulted in the neologism **banabanisme**, meaning "itinerant mercantile activity". This noun, formed by means of suffixation, is often taken in a pejorative sense. The implication is that these activities involve not only casual earnings and vagrancy, but also petty crime.

We take into analysis a Mandinka language loanword - **bangui** (alternative spelling of **bandji**) 'palm wine'. It should be mentioned, only well-off Africans in Ivory Coast can afford to buy European alcohol. This is due to its high cost. Consequently, the Ivorians prefer palm wine which is familiar to African culture. Palm wine is an alcoholic drink obtained by fermenting the sap of certain palm trees.

... *bon **bangui** qui brave la colère rebelle des palmes du raphia* (ADIAFFI, 2000: 191). – A good **palm wine** that conveys the stern temperament of the raffia palms.

The nouns **bangui** or **bandji** are more frequently used by Ivorians in everyday speech than a synonym from the standard French language **vin de palme**.

Two loanwords from Mandinka language form a common compound word **bandjidrome (banguidrome)**. The suffix **-drome** (a modified form of 'drachme' from Mandinka language) means 'coin of 5 francs' and is quite common.

Also like the main word, the noun has two main meanings. The first meaning is "a place in the market where palm wine merchants get gather".

*Rendez-vous à 6 heures au **bandjidrome**.* - Meet me at 6 o'clock at the **place where palm wine is sold**.

The second meaning is 'a meeting place for disadvantaged young people'. Unemployed Ivorians gather at this place. They socialize and wait to be offered a part-time job. We consider, the form of the word bandjidrome is more common than banguidrome.

The borrowing **ndaya** from the Baoulé language retains its original meaning of "twin" in the French language of Ivory Coast.

*Ma chérie et tes enfants **n'daya**, où est leur papa? Mot baoulé devenu ivoirien, **n'daya** signifie jumeau, nom d'une association d'aide aux enfants abandonnés comme ceux de Nathalie qu'elle ne pourra pas voir grandir* (LAFAGE, 2003: 598). – My dear and your children are **twins**, where is their daddy? The word from the Baoulé language, which has become Ivorian, means twin, and it is also the name of an association that helps abandoned children, like Natalie, who she won't see when they grow up.

The noun widens the meaning and means "partial scholarship". This partial scholarship for students is paid by the state and bears the name of the eponymous charity founded by Therese Houphouët-Boigny. This type of scholarship only covers the part of the cost of training.

***N'daya**, c'est jumeau en baoulé et par extension la demi-bourse, jumelle de l'autre moitié, rarement attribuée* (Lafage, 2003: 599). – Translated from the Baule language as 'twin' and extends the meaning to mean a partial scholarship, the twin of its seldom-appointed other half.

## Conclusions



To sum it all, the result of the adaptation of the French language to a multi-ethnic linguistic culture of Ivory Coast was the formation of the Ivorian French language. It is a hybrid substance based on the French language of France, and combines linguistic markers of indigenous languages. Ivorian French language is characterized by interference, diglossia, and borrowing from indigenous languages.

As the result, Ivorian French has peculiarities, which manifested itself primarily in the lexical system. The analyzed examples reflect the cultural realities of the national culture of Ivory Coast since they include French words that develop new lexical meanings and words from the indigenous languages.

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