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# CAHIERS DU GReMS

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en Morphosyntaxe et Sémantique



N°05 Décembre 2020

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La structure d'un article scientifique en lettres et sciences humaines se présente comme suit :

Pour un article qui est une contribution théorique et fondamentale : Titre, Prénom et Nom de l'auteur, Institution d'attache, adresse électronique, Résumé en Français, Mots clés, Abstract, Key words, Introduction (justification du thème, problématique, hypothèses/objectifs scientifiques, approche), Développement articulé, Conclusion, Bibliographie.

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Les articulations d'un article, à l'exception de l'introduction, de la conclusion, de la bibliographie, doivent être titrées, et numérotées par des chiffres (exemples : 1. ; 1.1. ; 1.2 ; 2. ; 2.2. ; 2.2.1 ; 2.2.2. ; 3. ; etc.).

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- Initiale (s) du Prénom ou des Prénoms de l'auteur. Nom de l'Auteur (année de publication, pages citées).

Exemples :

- En effet, le but poursuivi par M. Ascher (1998, p. 223), est « d'élargir l'histoire des mathématiques de telle sorte qu'elle acquière une perspective multiculturelle et globale (...), d'accroître le domaine des mathématiques : alors qu'elle s'est pour l'essentiel occupé du groupe professionnel occidental que l'on appelle les mathématiciens (...) ».

- Pour dire plus amplement ce qu'est cette capacité de la société civile, qui dans

son déploiement effectif, atteste qu'elle peut porter le développement et l'histoire, S. B. Diagne (1991, p. 2) écrit :

Qu'on ne s'y trompe pas : de toute manière, les populations ont toujours su opposer à la philosophie de l'encadrement et à son volontarisme leurs propres stratégies de contournements. Celles-là, par exemple, sont lisibles dans le dynamisme, ou à tout le moins, dans la créativité dont fait preuve ce que l'on désigne sous le nom de secteur informel et à qui il faudra donner l'appellation positive d'économie populaire.

- Le philosophe ivoirien a raison, dans une certaine mesure, de lire, dans ce choc déstabilisateur, le processus du sous-développement. Ainsi qu'il le dit :

le processus du sous-développement résultant de ce choc est vécu concrètement par les populations concernées comme une crise globale : crise socio-économique (exploitation brutale, chômage permanent, exode accéléré et douloureux), mais aussi crise socio-culturelle et de civilisation traduisant une impréparation socio-historique et une inadaptation des cultures et des comportements humains aux formes de vie imposées par les technologies étrangères. (S. Diakité, 1985, p. 105).

3.6. Les sources historiques, les références d'informations orales et les notes explicatives sont numérotées en série continue et présentées en bas de page.

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Dans la zone titre, le titre d'un article est présenté en romain et entre guillemets, celui d'un ouvrage, d'un mémoire ou d'une thèse, d'un rapport, d'une revue ou d'un journal est présenté en italique. Dans la zone Éditeur, on indique la Maison d'édition (pour un ouvrage), le Nom et le numéro/volume de la revue (pour un article). Au cas où un ouvrage est une traduction et/ou une réédition, il faut préciser après le titre le nom du traducteur et/ou l'édition (ex : 2<sup>de</sup> éd.).

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## A SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF MULTILINGUALISM AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

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**Abstract:** *As the cradle of mankind, Africa can be looked on as the continent of pluralities. In fact, in Africa, we find different races, different religions, different cultures, and obviously different languages. Amongst these pluralities, the plurality of languages constitutes the focus of the present analysis. Studied under the sociolinguistic concept of bi/multilingualism, the plurality of languages is regarded as one of the main problems which hinders the development of the African continent. And yet in Europe, multilingualism is presently seen as the new dominant is fast becoming the new dominant ideology which can help build the future European citizen<sup>5</sup>. Therefore, this article intends to show that beyond the negative judgments, multilingualism constitutes key asset for the development of Africa.*

**Key words:** *Africa- plurality- problem-multilingualism- dominant ideology- development.*

**Résumé :** *En tant que berceau de l'humanité, l'Afrique peut être considérée comme le continent des pluralités. En effet, en Afrique, on trouve différentes races, différentes religions, différentes cultures et évidemment des différentes langues. Parmi ces pluralités, celle relative aux langues constitue l'objet de la présente analyse. Étudiée sous le concept sociolinguistique du bi / multilinguisme, la pluralité des langues est considérée comme l'un des principaux problèmes qui freine le développement du continent africain. Pourtant, en Europe, le multilinguisme est en passe de devenir la nouvelle idéologie dominante qui peut aider à construire le futur citoyen européen. Aussi, le présent article se donne-il pour objectif de montrer qu'au-delà des jugements négatifs, le multilinguisme constitue un atout essentiel pour le développement de l'Afrique.*

**Mots clés :** *Afrique - pluralité - problème - multilinguisme - idéologie dominante - développement.*

### Introduction

The objective of the current analysis is to show that contrary to the negative perception of multilingualism, the multilingual profile of Africa is rather an asset to its social development. In fact, characterization of the world's continents is often based on what they offer as positive to the rest of the world.

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<sup>5</sup> Bruno Maurer (2014, p.1)

For continents such as Europe, America and Asia, they are often positively depicted, basing on their industrial revolution, their economic and military power, the quality of their labour force, and their high living standard. Contrary to these continents, the African continent is looked on as the continent whereby all the world problems are met. For the rest of the world, Africa, is undermined by various difficulties such as famine, starvation, war. It is seen as a continent inhabited by a population of consumption in a perpetual expectation of help on behalf of the rest of the world.

At the cultural level, Africa is not well appreciated. African culture(s) are often debased along with terms which show their incapacity to provide change and progress. But as Bauman (2000, p.ix) well puts it, culture is a social reality which needs be adequately understood, described and represented. This point is the basis of what is of interest for the current analysis which takes roots from a sociolinguistic perspective. Should I recall that sociolinguistics is the linguistic field which studies the correlation between language and society? The focus of the present analysis will be specifically on multilingualism which is often presented as one of the key characterizations of the African continent, and more specifically, it constitutes one of the main problems of the African continent.

The African continent is often presented as the most linguistically heterogeneous. The linguistic diversity in Africa varies with researchers. While some researchers think that there are 1000 languages in Africa, some others assess them to be of roughly 2000 languages. Those estimations of the linguistic profile often go along with the view that because of that high linguistic heterogeneity, African nations cannot be economically valid, and that, it would be difficult to reach some development in Africa. But, instead of helping Africa to purchase an actual development with the improvement of local languages, some other languages thought to be more linguistically sane would be imposed upon Africa during colonization. As such, the linguistic profile of Africa which seems already alarming will be reinforced with the imposition of some foreign languages such as French, English, Portuguese, to name only these. This exaggerated multilingual linguistic profile will be seen as one of the major sources of problem for the African continent and, less regards will be made for a possible positive impact of this profile. Therefore, in the view of raising awareness on this rich source of development the title of the current analysis reads as 'Sociolinguistic Analysis of Multilingualism and Social Development in Africa'. However, what should we understand by social development? Is it not the prevalence of economic development which leads to consider multilingualism as unable to bring about development? Should Africa rather not be proud of its high multilingual specificity?

### 1- Understanding the Scope of Development

The concept of development is very often used to mark the growing economic gap which separates the developed world from the developing world. The concept of development itself is often criticized in its original conception. For some authors like François Partant (1982)<sup>6</sup>,

the actual concept of development is false or historically distorted, for, all societies are developed, even those that seem the most primitive to us. All are indeed the product of an evolution of the species. This evolution, more or less slow, did not necessarily follow the same axis and did not have the same socioeconomic, technical, cultural and political results. But is non the less a development. P.27-28.

This same idea is echoed by Alexandre Adande (1990, p.2) when he writes that there are no people without technology, including Africa. He illustrates this point on the basis that Africa was among other continents, the first to develop the iron industry and which was used for millennia. He states that these techniques allowed Africans to subsist, organize and defend themselves and even lead a decent existence. The author underlines that this system was coherent and logically and remarkably well adapted to particularly difficult natural conditions. And that, Africa was able to achieve a remarkable balance between his natural setting and the way of living.

But, the notion of development becomes controversial depending on whether we prioritize the economic growth or the well-being of mankind. In fact, the term 'development' is subject to controversies divided between several trends, the most important of which are quantitative and qualitative trends. If the quantitative trend is expressed in terms of economic growth, the qualitative trend places man at the centre of the development enterprise and renounces any form of his alienation, especially in his finality.

Unfortunately, the quantitative trend tends to merge with the scope of the very board notion of development. In this case, to develop is to increase one's productions in the material sense. And yet, according to Diabaté (2001, p.4), the economic growth does not automatically result in improving the living conditions of individuals nationally and internationally. According to the same author, the quest for profit and profitability continues to dehumanize development by emptying it of its positive and social content.

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<sup>6</sup> In JC Djéréké (2007, p.26)

As we can see, the humanist trend of development takes into account cultures and civilizations which give man himself an eminent place in his community, society and universe, contrary to the quantitative trend, and therefore the economic aspect which dehumanizes him. It is what is observed in the way Africans and their cultures are depicted.

The knowledge and the true linguistic and cultural discovery of Africa have remained stuck in the margins of the first texts on Africa as a whole. Don't we say that 'he who can bit you will play your dram with a sickle'?<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the image of Africa, at least the one produced by most of the texts on Africa give us to see a sum of stereotypes meticulously assembled to subdue any mind, even an African mind, on the inability of African cultures to lead their peoples towards a better future, that is, to development. What can we expect from the culture of a people made up of 'beasts who have no houses, people without head having their mouth and their eyes in their breast' (John Locke 1561)? Seen in this light, one could hardly convince himself of the capacity of Africa to be associated to anything positive aspect. Consequently, whatsoever is associated to Africa is necessarily considered as negative, be its inhabitants, its cultures and traditions and its multilingual linguistic profile; the focus of the current analysis. However, how to better understand multilingualism?

## 2- Defining Multilingualism

Broadly speaking, multilingualism implies a multiplicity of languages used in a social setting. Multilingualism is a sociolinguistic concept which somehow depicts the current reality of the world's societies. Bruno Maurer (2011, p.157) will even acknowledge that 'multilingualism functions as a new dominant ideology and which presents itself as an unsurpassable horizon'.

In fact, it is becoming difficult to come across societies or even speech communities which are typically monolingual. Monolingualism somehow becomes the characteristic of only a minority of the world's people.

Appel R. and Muyeken P. (2005, p.1) distinguish two types of multilingualism; the individual multilingualism and the societal multilingualism. Societal multilingualism is when there are more than one language spoken in a given society. As for individual multilingualism, it refers to the state of an individual who can use and understand two or more than two languages. Bloomfield (1933) use the term 'possess or have control' to characterize the grasp a multilingual individual has on the languages he interacts in.

Along with these two major types; Kloss (1969) talks about a third type, known as impersonal multilingualism. Impersonal multilingualism refers to the

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<sup>7</sup> This is an African saying often used in traditional social settings.

multilingual usage in the mass media. This gives the idea of special use of many languages, especially foreign languages alongside the national languages of a society. However, the definition of multilingualism is often paralleled with that of bilingualism by many researchers. More recently, researchers who study bilingual and multilingual communities around the world have suggested a broad definition that views bilingualism as a common human condition that makes it possible for an individual to function, at some levels, in more than one language. Kirsten (1991) would even say that what is true for bilingualism is true for multilingualism except where the context dictates otherwise. Along with the view of Kirsten (1991) bilingualism and multilingualism are interchangeable in the current analysis to refer to the same situation. In so doing, does multilingualism negatively or positively impact social development?

### **3- Multilingualism and Social Development**

The relationship between multilingualism and socioeconomic development leads to controversial views among authors. It drives to two different versions. In the first version, linguistic diversity is viewed as hindrance to development whereas in the second version, it is an asset for the development of nations or states.

#### **3.1- Multilingualism as a Hindrance to Social Development**

The great number of languages in African nations, such as Côte d'Ivoire is often looked on as a problem to a true development. In such nations, what is often indexed is the incapacity of heterogeneous linguistic communities to ensure a soft coexistence. In a multilingual setting each linguistic community is always eager to favor its cultural and linguistic systems as the most important which need be respected. As a result, there is always a kind of fight for the best social status. Taking the case of Côte d'Ivoire, it can be noticed that almost all the local languages are vital, and as such, this state of things do not allow an easy language planning policy on the basis of local languages. To solve such a problem French, though a foreign language, was promoted as the official language once the independence was acquired.

In the same vein, multilingualism is often seen as a ferment to linguistic conflicts. It is on his basis that many scholars view multilingualism as a necessary factor that undermines the development of states. Greenberg (1956) was among the firsts scholars who view multilingualism as an obstacle to the development of a country. For him, multilingualism in a country threatens the nation's political integrity. Therefore, it goes without saying that linguistic homogeneity correlates with national stability.

Besides, multilingualism is looked on as creating the lack of intergroup

cooperation. One of the most current consequences of the lack of intergroup cooperation is the political instability. In fact, linguistic diversity holds down political stability and undermines governmental effectiveness in the development of public policies (Kloss (1969). Pool (1972) will even state that it worsens political sectionalism with the emergence of many political parties clustered around ethnic and linguistic sameness.

As we can see, the position of many authors is that multilingualism cannot actually devise a true development in a nation because of the various negative impact it may have on the management of the people.

### **3.2- Multilingualism as an Asset to Social Development**

Contrary to authors who stress the negative side of multilingualism, there are others who raise its positive aspect. In fact, for many sociolinguists, multilingualism constitutes an asset which needs to be exploited.

First of all, Dua (2008) sees multilingualism as a resource for linguistic, and social development as well as for societies and cultures. For him, multilingualism is a reality that must be cultivated to enrich the human minds as well as for the development of societies.

Along with the idea that multilingualism causes interethnic wars, Fishman J. (1967) will have an opposite position. For him rather, the coexistence of two or more languages is rarely in itself a cause of tension and war. He holds economic, political and religious aspects to be the causes of those tensions and wars. He thinks that conflicts are caused by paralinguistic factors and the so-called language and linguistic wars are ultimately provoked by problems of socio-economic and political power inequalities between different linguistic communities, and not by languages themselves. Brass P.R. (1991) will even say that impeding the problem of development on multilingualism is a pure aspect of manipulation by political elites. To be more specific, linguistic diversity is best viewed as a dependent variable with linguistic homogeneity being the most rational outcome of a well-managed state and economy led by leaders committed to the national interest. Therefore, it is not monolingualism that brings about development, but rather, it is good governance by long-sided ruling elites whose main concern is the well-being of their citizens.

A careful observation shows that either the bad or negative sides of multilingualism and/or positive aspects often stress its societal aspect; that is, analyses are always at the societal levels. It is at the level of societal multilingualism that negative side of multilingualism transpires. In fact, along with the various analyses carried out by the authors who work on multilingualism, the focus has always been on its societal aspect, but less is said of the individual multilingualism. For me, a good and thorough analysis of

multilingualism should rather take into account, the societal as well as the individual levels. Do most of the authors purposely focus only on the societal aspect of multilingualism? Is it not to forcedly negatively depict multilingualism that most authors simply stress its societal side to the detriment of the individual aspect?

These questions may sound astonishing but they do have their reason. In fact, Africa is often seen as the continent in which multilingualism is seen as the most visible and determining characteristic. And I believe if less is said of individual multilingualism, it may contain aspects which necessarily need to be silenced. Along with the politics of positionality, never an argument or a space will be given or left to the opposite side to mark out a space or simply to dominate in some aspects. However, thanks to some studies on multilingualism and specifically those which have been carried out by psychologists, more and more there are information about the individual multilingualism. Therefore, I will resort to some of these studies to unveil what is said and needs be known on the individual multilingualism.

To begin with, I will refer to the stalls of authors and works quoted by Dieguez and Silke Hemmerle (2014) in their work on bilingualism. In their research Dewaele and Nakano (2012) survey a group of diverse multilinguals on their personal perception along with the language they use as they interact. Their informants indicate that they feel more authentic and logical, more serious and more emotional when they use their language1 (L1). Moreover, the degree of these feelings decreases along with the learned languages as well as their order of acquisition.

On the basis of the findings by Dewaele and Nakano (2012), Ozanska-Ponikwia (2012, p.31) who was interested in the source of these changes surveyed 102 Polish-English bilinguals just to check the nature of the influence on the personality and emotional intelligence of these bilinguals. It comes out that bilinguals with sound traits of personality in extroversion, personal goodness and opening are reported to notice a change in behavior when they change of language. By the same token, these changes also fall true for emotional intelligence which is composed of empathy, emotional expression or the social consciousness. The author therefore concludes that bilinguals showing more social and emotional competences will perceive more easily, personal changes bound to language context. These studies have help demonstrate that culture determines to a large extent, emotional perceptions and reactions; and as language and culture are bound, it comes out that language influences emotions<sup>8</sup>.

Working on the expressive facet of emotions, Panayiotou (2004, p.33) finds that individuals reactions are culturally adapted and therefore concludes

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<sup>8</sup> Dieguez et Silke Hemmerle (2014, p.185).

that, bilinguals do not only change languages but they also change perceptions and expressions along with the linguistic context. He then concludes that the character of the bilingual is contextual (Diegues et Silke Hemmerle (2014, p.185). In a research conducted in 2008, Dewaele worked on reactional emotions and found that the language 1 (L1) is most bound to our emotional reactions. In the same vein, Pavlenko asserts that mother tongue which we can also refer to as the language 1, is emotionally invested whereas a second language would be emotionally detached.

Moreover, the work by Costa et al. (2014) have specifically tested the hypothesis that bilingual individuals solve moral problems in a more useful way in Language 2 (L2) rather than in Language 1 (L1). It means that bilingual individuals broach problems in less emotional ways; that is to say, their reactions are more rational, automatic, based on contextual factors, that is, more logic, cool and detached<sup>9</sup>. Costa et al. justify this positive reaction of bilinguals by the decrease of their emotional resonance in foreign language which implies that decisions are more coherent and somehow immune of local variations. On this basis I can reasonably state that Senghor L.S (1939, p.295) was wrong to state that 'emotion is Negro and reason is Hellenic'. In fact, moving on the basis of the sus-mentioned works, it comes out that Africa in general and black Africans, in particular, who have been imposed foreign languages in addition to their own languages are obviously multilinguals. Therefore, they are liable to the positive skills and aptitudes bound to bi/multilingualism.

Besides, multilingualism induces a multiculturalism made of the knowledge of various cultures. And yet, the knowledge of various cultures leads to what is called interculturalism made at the same time of cultural knowledge and the knowledge of how to behave. In fact, our moral judgements sometimes require a delicate dialectic between our emotional reactions and our rational reflections in face of some events (Diegues et Silke Hemmerle (2014, p.187).

Another approach to multilingualism which is often paralleled with bilingualism is the control over two or more languages, mainly in the great capacity of speakers to solve the suppression of interferences between languages (inhibition) and/or the change of language (code swithing) along with contexts. For Diegues and Silke Hemmerle (2014, p.183) the permanent requirement of this control on language along with context, as well as the plea to other cognitive and motivational resources is associated to a superiority for executive functions which allow to overcome mechanic reactions and to coordinate other cognitive processes. This specific particularity of bilingualism seems, according to the author, associated to a cognitive stock which would delay the emergence of

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<sup>9</sup> Diegues et Silke Hemmerle (2014, p.186).

deteriorative processes bound to age. Therefore, this entails that bilingualism somehow constitutes a protecting factor or a delaying factor against mental diseases of the Alzheimer type.

The importance of all these researches is that they work out that a multilingual individual is emotionally moderated. In fact, the possible alternative (choice) between languages somehow forges the bilingual's self-perception, his personality as well as his emotional reactions. It predisposes him to a more social living; that is, the acceptance and management of differences. As an illustration, the work by Danziger and Ward (2010) is a perfect example. In fact, these authors investigated through an Implicit Association Test (IAT) the influence of language on the force of stereotypes between two antagonist ethnic groups: the Jews and Arabic coexisting in Israel. Their results show that using the language of other group, reduces the force of prejudices and stereotype associated to it.

This observation is so much important in as much as negative prejudices and stereotypes have this faculty of being unpleasant or discriminatory for those who undergo them. They also affect their cognitive performance, an aspect known under the denomination of 'threat of the stereotype' (Dieguez et Silke Hemmerle (2014, p.186). I can say with these authors that social stereotypes are irrational, emotional and unconscious evaluation of the reality.

Africa, is rich by its multilingual profile, and at the same time, these riches have been extracted by means of stereotypes. One the most salient example is our incapacity in believing in our own selves in everything we do. To illustrate that aspect, I'll refer to the case of the Covid-organic developed by Madagascar during the current world health crisis known as Covid19 and its rejection by other African nations on the basis of the instructions of the World Health Organization (WHO). Africans only believe on what is from abroad, mainly when it concerns the results of research, and they pay less credit to whatsoever is purely the findings of some Africans.

Along with all what have been said, we can state that multilingualism is actually profitable to individuals. The advantages can be either economical, intellectual, cultural and even sanitary. In the same perspectives, Baker C. (2014, p.2) has discovered three main benefits for an individual who can speak more than one language. There are the economic advantage, the cognitive advantage and what he calls the 'bridge building' advantage. Along with the latter advantage, he points out that 'those who speak two languages symbolize the essential humanity of building bridges between people of different color, creed, culture and language' (p.4). It comes out that an individual capable of speaking more than one language will constantly challenge the fixities of cultural and linguistic differences. He has a broad view of the world which he considers as a set. For such an individual, linguistic and cultural frontiers do not exist as such.

### Conclusion

In a nutshell, it comes out the simple comparison between the negative side of multilingualism alongside its positive aspect shows that there are much more components in the positive aspect of multilingualism compare to its negative aspect. Moreover, there is a necessity to discriminating between societal bilingualism and individual bilingualism so that to have more insight on the way each of the two actually functions. In fact, simply basing on the societal multilingualism, the first element which transpires is the difficult possibility of bringing all the diverse and various speech community to live together. Such a way of thinking necessarily conceals the fact that cultures and languages represent negotiable terrains that can be traversed to obtain a sustainable peace between communities.

In fact, the current analysis has help show that bi/multilingualism is actually beneficial for the individual either at the intellectual, economical and even at the sanitary level. As it been said, bi/multilingualism is a mark of true humanism, for the individual learns to accept difference, the key which governs the whole functioning system of the world and its composing entities. Therefore, African should not 'darken' for their multilingual profile, and multilingualism should rather be considered as a pride, not only to be pleased with but also to learn to live with by devising good policies which would bring the various social sets to live together in harmony.

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