



Подготовка преподавателей русского языка как иностранного для Республик Камерун и Экваториальная Гвинея в аспекте этноориентированного подхода

О. С. ШУРУПОВА, Н. А. СУШКОВА

АННОТАЦИЯ

Проблема и цель. В настоящее время перед российскими вузами стоит задача обеспечить высококачественную подготовку достаточного числа преподавателей русского языка как иностранного и русской культуры, которые могли бы принять участие в модернизации системы подготовительного обучения иностранных студентов. Нередко знания преподавателей о культуре страны, в которой родились и выросли их ученики, например таких государств, как Республика Экваториальная Гвинея или Республика Камерун, оказываются шаблонными и поверхностными. *Цель представленного исследования* – выявить ключевые особенности культуры Республик Камерун и Экваториальная Гвинея, необходимые для изучения преподавателем РКИ, и предложить рекомендации для успешного применения этноориентированного подхода при обучении представителей этой страны.

Материалы и методы. В качестве материала исследования выступили данные, полученные в ходе анкетирования 12 представителей Камеруна и Экваториальной Гвинеи, изучающих русский язык. В ходе изучения данных, полученных в ходе анкетирования, был использован системный подход, метод обработки полученных данных (обобщение, сопоставление, классификация, систематизация), метод интерпретации результатов исследования с опорой на типологии культур, предложенные Г. Хофстеде, Ф. Тромпенаарсом и Ч. Хэмпден-Тернером, Э. Мейер, а также общенаучные методы анализа и синтеза.

Результаты исследования. В рамках настоящего исследования удалось выявить основные особенности культуры Республик Камерун и Экваториальная Гвинея, знание о которых может обеспечить успешное применение этноориентированного подхода в обучении экваториальцев русскому языку: их культуры имеют значимые черты сходства с русской. Они так же, как и русская, занимают промежуточное положение между индивидуалистической и коллективистской, тяготеют к избеганию неопределенности, отличаются высокой дистанцией власти и привержены как к мужественным, так и к женственным ценностям. Носители этих культур, как показало анкетирование, склонны к партикуляризму, диффузности, ценят происхождение и семейные связи, достаточно гибко воспринимают временные рамки. Анализ полученных в ходе анкетирования данных позволил предложить практические рекомендации как по работе с такими студентами, так и по общей подготовке преподавателей РКИ для Экваториальной Гвинеи и Камеруна.

Заключение. В процессе подготовки преподавателей РКИ для Экваториальной Гвинеи и Камеруна необходимо обеспечить глубокое знание культурных различий и понимание особенностей как русской культуры, так и основных характеристик культур тех стран Африки, с представителями которых преподаватель будет взаимодействовать. Этой цели могут послужить проведение анкетирования как студентов, так и учителей, и сопоставительный анализ их ответов. Только при условии понимания преподавателями РКИ культурных особенностей стран Африки возможно грамотное использование этноориентированного подхода, эффективное обучение и построение доверительных, партнерских отношений с обучающимися.

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА

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Training of Teachers of Russian as a Foreign Language for the Republics of Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea in the Context of an Ethno-Oriented Approach

O. S. SHURUPOVA, N. A. SUSHKOVA

ABSTRACT

Problem and Objective. Russian universities currently face the challenge of ensuring high-quality training for a sufficient number of teachers of Russian as a foreign language and Russian culture who can participate in modernizing the preparatory education system for international students. Teachers' knowledge of the culture of their students' native countries, such as Equatorial Guinea or Cameroon, is often formulaic and superficial. *The purpose of this study* is to identify key cultural characteristics of Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea that are essential for Russian as a foreign language (RFL) teachers to understand and offer recommendations for successfully implementing an ethno-oriented approach when teaching students from these countries.

Materials and Methods. The study was conducted using data collected from a survey of 12 students from Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea studying Russian. A systematic approach was used to analyze the survey data, including data processing methods (summarization, comparison, classification, and systematization), and a method for interpreting the research results based on cultural typologies proposed by G. Hofstede, F. Trompenaars, and C. Hampden-Turner, as well as E. Meyer, as well as general scientific methods of analysis and synthesis.

Research Results. This study identified key cultural characteristics of the Republics of Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea, knowledge of which could ensure the successful application of an ethno-oriented approach to teaching Russian to Equatoguineans. Their cultures share significant similarities with Russian culture. Like Russian culture, they occupy an intermediate position between individualism and collectivism, gravitate toward uncertainty avoidance, are characterized by high power distance, and are committed to both masculine and feminine values. The survey revealed that the speakers of these cultures tend to be particularistic and diffuse, value their origins and family ties, and are quite flexible in their perception of time limits. Analysis of the data obtained during the survey allowed us to offer practical recommendations both for working with these students and for the general training of Russian as a foreign language teachers for Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon.

Conclusion. When training Russian as a foreign language teachers for Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon, it is essential to ensure a thorough understanding of cultural differences and an understanding of both the specific features of Russian culture and the key cultural characteristics of the African countries with which they will interact. This goal can be achieved by conducting surveys with both students and teachers and comparing their responses. Only if Russian as a foreign language teachers understand the cultural characteristics of African countries will it be possible to effectively utilize an ethno-oriented approach, teach effectively, and build trusting, partnership-based relationships with students.

KEYWORDS

teaching Russian as a foreign language, RFL teacher, ethno-oriented approach, culture, typologies of cultures, cultural dimensions, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, the Republic of Cameroon

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INTRODUCTION

Quality education is one of the seventeen Goals that were adopted by the United Nations Organization in "The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". As it is said in "The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025", "Education is vital for sustainable development, yet progress remains off track... Adult literacy increased globally. However, rates remained low in Sub-Saharan Africa" [1, p. 17].

Our country is able to help African countries achieve a better level of education, vital for their development, as Russian universities are ready to provide foreign students from such countries with an access to reasonably-priced high-quality training. More than that, Russian universities are currently facing the challenge of implementing Decree No. 309 of the President of the Russian Federation dated May 7, 2024, "On the National Development Goals of the Russian Federation for the Period up to 2030 and for the Future up to 2036", which mandates increasing the number of foreign students studying at Russian universities to at least 500,000 [2, p. 14].

However, Russian higher education system must ensure high-quality training for a sufficient number of teachers of Russian as a foreign language and Russian culture, who can participate in modernizing the preparatory education system for international students. According to the UNESCO Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development, in the modern situation such educational competencies as "empathy, critical thinking, and intercultural understanding" [3] are crucial for building the long-lasting peace between different countries. It is obvious that intercultural understanding will help to rapidly expand and deepen fruitful cooperation in education between Russia and African countries with attractive economic potential. Mutually beneficial dialogue between our countries is only possible if Russian specialists in the field of Russian as a foreign language thoroughly study the cultural characteristics of students from these countries, which will enable them to select the necessary teaching methods and techniques and correct any potential shortcomings. In this regard, an ethno-oriented approach, taking into account the national, cultural, and psychological characteristics of foreign students as representatives of a specific ethnic group, can be successfully applied to teaching Russian as a foreign language to such students. One cannot but agree with E.I. Mishina, who asserts that "teachers themselves are obliged to know the culture, history, economic situation, and customs of the countries whose students they teach; mutual cross-cultural learning is necessary" [4, p. 100]. However, the practical application of this approach is complicated by the superficial, often formulaic, perceptions of the cultures of specific countries among those who teach Russian as a foreign language. Recommendations for applying an ethno-oriented approach when working with African students are rather generalized, since representatives of very different African countries often appear similar to RFL (Russian as a foreign language) teachers.

For example, it is difficult to confidently speak of in-depth knowledge of countries such as the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, which until recently remained a little-studied state, due to its history. For many years, this country was under Spanish influence and practically did not maintain serious partnerships with our country. Meanwhile, thanks to its rich resources (Equatorial Guinea is actively developing oil fields, and also grows coffee, cocoa, and peanuts), the country is of great value as a potential partner for the Russian Federation. According to the observations of A.A. Boltaevsky and A.A. Yarina, "the large oil fields of this country will attract more and more players on the world stage" [5, p. 3]. In this case, Russia may be interested in building a more sustainable, profitable, and diverse cooperation with this state, the opportunities for which have increased when the Republic began to strive to escape from the influence of the West.

Currently, works by Russian scientists are appearing aimed at studying various aspects of life in the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, in particular, "the peculiarities of the socio-political development and evolution of political leadership in the Republic of Equatorial Guinea" [6, p. 9]. A.V. Dolzhikova studies the ways to teach Russian to migrants from different countries [7]. A.I. Tope examines the demographic situation in the Republic [8, p. 84], whereas V. Gusarov and L.N. Kalinichenko conduct a detailed analysis of Equatorial Guinea's economic system [9, p. 47]. These researchers note an important feature that hinders the country's development, related to "the attitude of personnel... to work and to the performance of their professional duties" [9, p. 52]. Based on the scientists' observations, one can conclude that the country's culture, which remains largely agrarian, significantly influences its way of life and the organization of enterprises. Undoubtedly, taking into account the country's cultural characteristics is essential for building sustainable partnerships with it, but knowledge of these characteristics is very limited. Thus, guidebooks to this country limit themselves

to stating that it possesses abundant natural resources, that the majority of the population is Catholic or Protestant, and that magical rituals are passed down from generation to generation, attracting curious tourists. This rather superficial knowledge, of course, is insufficient for successful interaction with the Equatorial Guineans. In recent years, in Russian science works that examine the prerequisites for the study of Russian culture by residents of the Republic and substantiate the methods of teaching them Russian as a foreign language have appeared. The problems of relations between Equatorial Guinea and Russia in the field of education are raised in the works of I.A.N.M. Ana [10, p. 55]. Such researchers as V.O. Dubinin [11, p. 154] and V.M. Shelyuto [12, p. 175] described the main features of the education system in the Republic of Equatorial Guinea. I.Yu. Kotova [13, p. 273], O.S. Shurupova and N.A. Sushkova [14, p. 1509] analyzed the ways to carry out teaching Russian to Equatoguineans. However, there are no detailed studies yet on the possibilities of using an ethno-oriented approach in teaching Russian as a foreign language to Equatoguineans.

The same can be said about Cameroon. Most of the works devoted to the study of the economy and culture of this country are written in English. These are articles by L.P. Numbu and J.S. Belyaeva [15, p. 200], as well as Shiyan E.I. [16, p. 612], who study the economy of Cameroon, J.M. Nlate Ndongo [17, p. 3621], who analyzes Cameroon's connections with other countries, V.B. Ngitir and S.M. Ebwa Ebwa [18, p. 247], who study national cultures in Cameroon, M. Pütz [19, p. 294], exploring Cameroon's linguistic landscape, and D.F.J. Tcha and B.V.F. Agonoude [20, p. 329], who research the migration policy of Cameroon. The education system in Cameroon has been described in detail by authors such as O.I. Stepashkina, I.S. Nikolaenko, and I.V. Gaidukova [21, p. 82; 22, p. 17]. However, to date, no recommendations have been developed for the application of an ethno-oriented approach in teaching Russian as a foreign language to Cameroonians.

If we study the works by the modern scholars in this field, they, as a rule, present recommendations regarding the teaching of students from various countries. A large number of works are devoted to Asian students, such as the Chinese (E. Yu. Nikolenko and G.V. Nikolenko [23, p. 35]), the Japanese (E.V. Krapivnik [24, p. 186]), Indians (M.M. Belyakova, E.S. Kurzina [25, p. 32]), Tajiks (Yu. Timofeeva [26, p. 267]). Recommendations for teaching Russian as a foreign language to students from African countries, however, are rather sparse and brief. Thus, I.G. Chuksina offers the following characterization of them, taking into account the division between English-speaking and French-speaking students, "With rare exceptions, French-speaking Africans are highly teachable, quick-witted, sociable, inquisitive, meticulous, and often possess exceptional talent and a sense of humor" [27, p. 279]. Thus, French-speaking students from the Maghreb countries are closer to the Middle East in their psycho-emotional and ethical characteristics, while students from Central African countries belong to a different psychological type, characterized by thorough judgment and a slow verbal response (usually characteristic of introverts). While receiving a vocational education, African students exhibit a tendency toward a deep, thoughtful approach to learning a foreign language (Russian), and usually memorize new information firmly and for a long time, but are slow in the learning process (especially English-speaking students), take a long time to ponder answers, and are slow, albeit competent, in writing dictations. However, since African students, despite their high productivity and diligence, lack self-organization skills, the teacher's task is to focus their efforts on instilling these skills. It is also important to remember that African students are characterized by a lack of self-control and a tendency toward anxiety, "They are extremely touchy, suspicious, and the slightest careless word provokes an immediate reaction associated with discrimination" [27, p. 279].

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea is a Spanish-speaking country where French and English are also spoken. Characteristics of Central Africans, such as slowness and thoroughness, can be applied to the country's inhabitants. However, since their linguistic consciousness is linked to a Romance language, it is believed that they may also possess some traits, typical of French-speaking students. It is also important to consider that Equatorial Guinea is home to several ethnic groups, meaning that the state can be considered multicultural, like most African states. As D.M. Bondarenko mentions, "the colonizers, naturally, had no desire to promote the formation of nations in their possessions, but, on the contrary, wanted to instill in Africans a sense of loyalty to the metropolis. The shoots of national consciousness and identity that emerged in the colonies by the time they gained independence were contradictory in nature as they expressed a rejection of the colonialist idea..., but also affirmed loyalty to the communities engendered by colonialism" [28, p. 266]. I.G. Chuksina rightly believes that the history of a country marked by colonization and discrimination, one way or another, shapes the behavior of Equatoguinean students, forcing them to be wary of the behavior of teachers and their careless words [27].

The Republic of Cameroon, which borders Equatorial Guinea, was also under European rule for a long time. Since 1884 the country had been a German colony, and then, following the First World War, was divided into zones of influence between Great Britain and France. To this day, the country's population is divided between French-speaking and English-speaking speakers, and serious clashes and conflicts between the speakers of these different languages are not uncommon. As S.P. Myasoedov and L.G. Borisova emphasize, representatives of various African ethnic groups live within a single African state. "Their confrontation and rivalry have deep historical roots and have lasted for several centuries. It may take a long time for the traditional attitudes of these ethnic groups toward each other to change. Currently, significant tensions are often observed in the functioning of working groups and teams that include representatives of various ethnic groups" [29, p. 277]. It is worth noting that both Christians and Muslims live in the country. Although Cameroon's population repeatedly rebelled against colonial rule, the Republic only gained independence in 1960. However, Cameroon is still part of the Commonwealth of Nations, which includes Great Britain and its former colonies. Cameroon is a promising economic partner for our country: the country has oil reserves and favorable agricultural conditions. Unfortunately, Russian is not taught in Cameroonian educational institutions.

Therefore, the cultures of Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon are practically unstudied, that is why the application of an ethno-oriented approach is difficult. The purpose of this article is to identify key cultural characteristics of these countries that must be studied by teachers of Russian as a foreign language and to offer recommendations for the successful application of an ethno-oriented approach when teaching Equatoguineans and Cameroonians.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

During the study, a survey was conducted among 12 students from Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea Republics studying Russian. To understand the perception of Russian by Cameroonians and Equatorial Guineans who do not yet have sufficient Russian proficiency to understand and respond competently to complex questions, the authors developed a questionnaire in English, French, and Spanish. A systematic approach, as well as general scientific methods of analysis and synthesis, were used to analyze the data obtained through the questionnaire. General scientific methods of analysis and synthesis were used to analyze the data obtained through the questionnaire, as well as a systems approach, a method for processing the obtained data (generalization, comparison, classification, systematization), and a method for interpreting the research results based on the cultural typologies proposed by G. Hofstede, F. Trompenaars, C. Hampden-Turner, and E. Meyer. G. Hofstede created a model for studying culture based on four main dimensions, including power distance ("the extent to which the least influential members of a community, organizations, and institutions accept as a given the fact that power is distributed unevenly" [29, p. 128]), individualism ("the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups of people" [29, p. 128]), masculinity ("the ratio in society of male values, associated with setting clear strategic goals, money, career, and female values, connected with interpersonal relationships, childcare, and comfort"), and uncertainty avoidance ("society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity" [29, p. 128]).

The concept of F. Trompenaars and C. Hampden-Turner, in addition to individualism, which is manifested in the individual's concern for satisfying their interests, achieving their own well-being and self-development, as well as the ability to independently make important decisions, and collectivism, which presupposes the prevalence of public interests over private ones and the importance of a sense of belonging to a group, includes such parameters as universalism-particularism, achievement-origin, emotionality-neutrality, specificity-diffusion, external and internal control, consistent and synchronous time perspectives, and orientation toward the future or the past and present. Representatives of a universalistic culture value strict adherence to laws and rules and behavior that will meet the expectations of society; they are supporters of compliance with the laws adopted by society, while the main value of bearers of a particularistic culture is well-established relationships between people (family members, colleagues, etc.). Achievement-oriented cultures place greater value on self-achieved results (professionalism, success at work and school, and various acquired skills and abilities), while other cultures prioritize a person's connections with other members of the culture, such as their family, clan, or social class. Emotional cultures tend to openly express emotions that arise during interactions, while neutral cultures typically control emotions. Specific

cultures distinguish between personal space, where strangers are not allowed, and public space, with representatives of this culture typically seeking to expand their public space by establishing new contacts with a variety of people. Within a diffuse culture, relationships are structured in such a way that outsiders are relatively easily admitted into personal space. Representatives of externally controlled cultures strive for the rational management of natural resources and the results of human activity, while externally controlled cultures typically believe in predetermination and the course of events that cannot be changed. Proponents of a sequential approach to time strive to create detailed plans and clearly and efficiently allocate time to address pressing tasks. In cultures oriented toward synchronicity, people can multitask. Time is not perceived as a valuable resource in such cultures, so being late for business meetings is acceptable without damaging one's reputation, and if a task is not completed on time, it's considered possible to postpone it and successfully complete it later. Past-oriented people tend to work on short-term projects that can yield immediate benefits. Future-oriented cultures may enter into long-term contracts and invest in projects that will not yield immediate benefits but may offer some potential in the future.

E. Meyer is the author of the cultural differences map, a model that can be successfully applied to the analysis of different cultures. "Each of the eight scales of this model describes one of the key areas... and serves to demonstrate the location of cultures along a spectrum – from one extreme to the other [30, p. 29]. These eight scales, such as communication, evaluation, persuading, leadership, decision-making, trusting, disagreeing, scheduling, allow us to assess how representatives of a particular culture communicate, how to build a conversation in order to convince them of something, express disagreement or criticism, how to successfully achieve a joint decision that would satisfy both parties. Thus, on the "Communication" scale, cultures can gravitate towards a low context of communication, which assumes that there are almost no implicit instructions in a particular message of the interlocutor and that there is no need to try to figure out whether there is a hint in the person's words, or towards a high context, which requires the interlocutors to be able to "read the air", sensitively catching hints that are not expressed aloud. The "Evaluation" scale reflects the tendency of culture representatives to offer direct, overt criticism or, conversely, to gently point out shortcomings, disguising criticism with praise. The "Persuading" scale illustrates the type of thinking and perception of new information that culture representatives tend to adopt: inductive, which requires beginning the presentation of a new idea with the analysis of numbers, statistics, and practical situations, or deductive, which requires first presenting a theory and only then providing practical information to illustrate it. On the "Leadership" scale, cultures can be classified as egalitarian, where equality remains a core value (that is acceptable to disagree with a boss in the presence of other employees and to sit and speak at meetings without following a specific order) or hierarchical, where a boss must approve an employee's actions, and "communication occurs along a hierarchical chain" [30, p. 151]. The "Leadership" dimension is also linked to the "Decision-Making" dimension, according to which cultures are divided into those where decisions are made by community or organizational members based on consensus or, conversely, hierarchically. Furthermore, some cultures exhibit a tendency toward open confrontation in the event of disagreement, while others avoid confrontation. On the "Trusting" dimension, cultures are divided into those that emphasize cognitive trust, based on confidence in a person's professional achievements and objective data, and those that favor affective trust, arising from emotional closeness and friendship. Regarding scheduling and time management, cultures with a linear perception of time value time and frown upon tardiness, whereas in cultures with a flexible perception of time, people are more tolerant of surprises, schedule changes, lateness, and so on.

These characteristics, which were identified in the questionnaire we had administered to the respondents, formed the basis for describing the cultures of Equatorial Guinea, and Cameroon, as only a careful consideration of them can provide a deep understanding of the culture, which, in our opinion, is necessary for ensuring stable and high-quality Russian as a foreign language instruction for students from these countries. When working with students, a Russian teacher can try to identify similarities between their culture and the cultures of Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea and build on these similarities to establish more positive relationships with students. Knowing the differences between Russian culture and the cultures of Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea, a teacher can more successfully avoid potential disagreements and misunderstandings and offer students tasks that best suit their culture.

RESULTS

During the survey, the respondents were asked to name the three people who had the greatest influence on them. All respondents named only their parents and older relatives. Fifty-nine percent of students ranked their father first, while 41% named their mother. Uncles, aunts, grandmothers, and, in 17% of cases, elder sisters were also mentioned. Only one questionnaire, besides parents, mentioned the best friend or a person who was not a blood relative. Not a single person named a younger brother or sister. Thus, the respondents' answers imply that family is among the core values of this culture, with the father playing a particularly important role within the family, making key decisions and shaping the lives of his children, and that older relatives are also revered. In this respect, Cameroonian and Equatoguinean cultures are somewhat reminiscent of Russian culture, where family is also a core value, and power distance, according to Hofstede, is quite high. It is believed that Cameroonians and Equatoguineans would respond positively to assignments involving reading and writing about family, keeping in mind that Equatoguineans place importance on vocabulary related to family members such as uncle, aunt, nephew, and so on, and that the father occupies a crucial place in their lives. However, in Russian culture, the mother is especially valued. Most of people who teach Russian as a foreign language are women, while residents of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea might favor a male teacher. However, when asked whether women should work, over 90% of respondents answered yes (30% of respondents indicated that a woman should both work and look after the home). 100% of respondents believe it is possible to teach boys and girls together in the same class. Thus, women also occupy a significant place in this culture. They can study and work, including teaching.

Early marriage is considered common in Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea. However, when asked what age they consider most favorable for getting married and starting a family, respondents cited 24-30, and even 35 for men. Many specified that a man starting a family must be mature, secure, and ready to provide for children. One respondent wrote that God should determine the age at which a person marries. In modern Europe, the desirability of late marriage is also common, but in Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea, such views are characteristic not of an individualistic desire to build a career and achieve professional fulfillment, but of a serious commitment to family, which will inevitably include children who require the care and protection of their parents, especially their father.

In general, Cameroonian and Equatorial Guinean cultures appear collectivistic, particularistic, and focused largely on lineage, although individual achievements are also significant. For residents of these republics, family ties and the hierarchy that governs decision-making are of paramount importance. Consequently, RFL teachers have considerable freedom in choosing assignments and can propose them to students not by consensus, as is required when teaching students from Scandinavia or the Netherlands, but rather by their authority, as is typical in Russia. However, although 90% of respondents answered affirmatively when asked whether a teacher can criticize a student, most added that criticism should be constructive and non-offensive. One respondent wrote that a teacher shouldn't criticize a student because they "do not know their lives". Accordingly, hierarchy must be respected, but the right to criticize belongs to an elder who knows the student well and has strong ties to them.

Among the qualities necessary for a person, respondents noted patience, courage, perseverance (2), kindness (2), honesty (2), willingness to help people, loyalty (4), discipline, reliability, patience, humility, wisdom (2), compassion (3), the ability to respect others, and self-esteem. In general, these values correspond to Russians. In our cultures, kindness, mercy, perseverance, and honesty are valued. Interestingly, along with persistence in achieving goals, residents of Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea value humility, a willingness to endure, and loyalty (apparently to one's family, connections with people, and the Motherland). Unlike representatives of Anglo-Saxon culture, which welcomes ambition and goal-oriented behavior, Africans emphasize the ability to give in without losing one's dignity, respect for people, and wisdom. Not a single respondent noted such qualities as "intelligent", "educated", or "sociable". They believe that wisdom as the ability to avoid problems rather than solve them; the ability to nurture existing relationships rather than establish new contacts, remaining a reliable, loyal partner and showing respect, mercy, and compassion is essential. Thus, when faced with disagreement, residents of Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea are more likely to avoid direct confrontation.

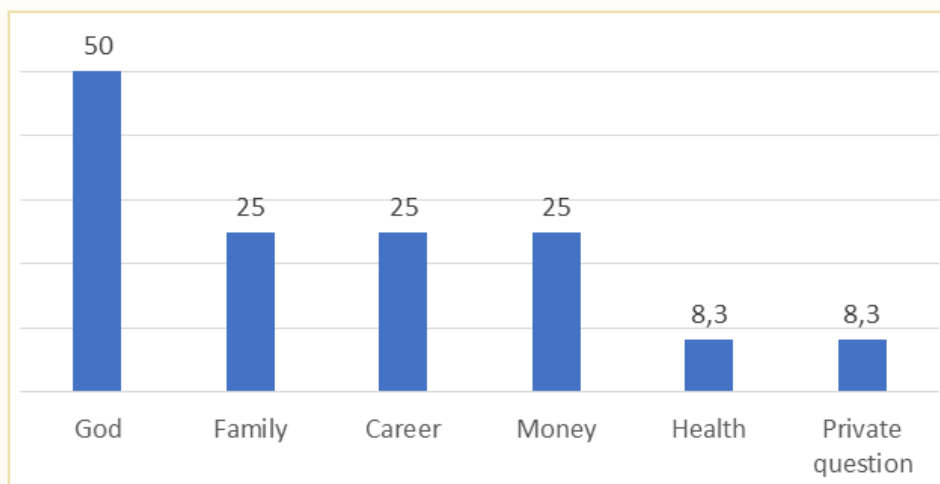
It is worth noting that, when asked how many friends they have, more than half of respondents gave small numbers (25% of them have three, 20% have two, and about 10% have one).

Apparently, strong, long-term relationships are important to them. At the same time, one respondent wrote that he considers “many, anyone who wishes him well” as his friends. This demonstrates, on the one hand, openness to connections with people, and on the other, vulnerability and heightened sensitivity to any words or actions of others that might be perceived as ill-intentioned.

When establishing relationships with these people, it is essential to invest time in building long-term affective trust. This requires identifying what the teacher and students from Equatorial Guinea might have in common: discussing hobbies, favorite music, perhaps sharing a little about their family, and encouraging them to talk about their own. It's important to be attentive to details to avoid offending Equatoguineans or inadvertently disregarding their extremely sensitive sense of self-worth. To this end, it's crucial to research the history of their country, its significant figures, and so on, and to demonstrate emphatic respect for names and symbols that are significant to them.

It was concluded by such modern researchers as O.S. Gilyazova, I.I. Zamoshchansky, and A.N. Zamoshchanskaya that “the role of education is not limited to the role of a social elevator; rather, it reinforces the existing status quo, thus contributing to the increasing crystallization of social strata” [31, p. 20]. It is absolutely true for students from Africa, who are really sensitive about their positions and analyzing their main values can help to establish positive relationship with them.

To identify other key values for the respondents, we asked them to choose their top value from a list that included options such as family, friendship, God, money, career, freedom, and homeland. The responses that we received are presented in Picture 1.



Picture 1 Cameroonian and Equatorial Guinean key values

50% of responses indicated that God was their top value. This suggests a deep religious commitment among respondents, which led them to select this answer. This characteristic also needs to be taken into account in their education. Another 25% of them named family, which was generally expected, judging by their responses to the most important people in their lives. Three responses “Family, career, money” were present. People mentioned the importance of a good career that would bring a high salary, but still ranked family first. Not a single respondent chose only career or only money. One selected health, and another one declined to answer, citing the question as “very personal”. Here again, the high sensitivity and vulnerability of African students was evident, who are reluctant to open up to strangers with whom they have not yet formed strong friendships.

It is worth mentioning that none of the respondents chose the answer “freedom” or “homeland”. On the one hand, we were convinced of the need for African students to demonstrate an interest in their home country during their studies and to exercise extreme caution when discussing topics related to its history, politics, and economics. On the other hand, due to the long colonial period, Equatoguineans’ perception of their homeland can be distorted. The several different ethnic groups living within the country have not yet united into a nation proud of its history and committed to ensuring the country's prosperity. It seems that for residents of the Republic, their homeland is primarily associated with family.

Another question in the survey asked respondents, "If you could receive any gift for your birthday, what would it be?" Sixty percent chose travelling across the world. This suggests that interest in other countries is widespread among African students. Furthermore, many students expressed a desire for a car or a phone as a gift. However, other responses were also observed. Thus, one respondent wrote that the best gift would be his mother's health, while another wrote about his own health. One questionnaire suggested the best gift would be the fulfillment of a dream, without specifying what kind. Finally, another respondent stated that the best gift for him is justice. The answers to this question again illustrated the love of Equatoguineans and Cameroonians for their families and a heightened sense of justice.

To determine whether African respondents' cultures are masculine or feminine, we asked them how they would like to spend an ideal weekend. One-third of the responses indicated that it would be best to spend the day with family. The rest preferred staying home to sleep, listen to music, meet with friends, or go to the beach. Among their hobbies, Equatoguineans and Cameroonians cited sleeping (20%), sports (25%), and reading (35%). The remaining responses were isolated, such as "thinking" or "carpentry". These responses demonstrate a tendency toward the characteristic of feminine cultures, whose representatives value personal comfort and time spent with loved ones.

Femininity is also associated with the flexible attitude toward time characteristic of Cameroonians and Equatorial Guineans. These cultures can be considered polychronic, viewing time as event-driven. While in American or German cultures, time is measured in short intervals and people strive to be on time and strictly adhere to agreements, in African countries, being late is acceptable, and the ability to easily cope with change and adapt to the unexpected is essential. In such cultures, good relationships are more important than strictly adhering to a schedule. The relaxed attitude of African students toward being late to class may upset and surprise a Russian teacher, but applying an ethno-oriented approach requires recognizing that even being late in Equatoguineans or Cameroon is not a sign of disrespect for the teacher. They are accustomed to multitasking and value flexibility and adaptability over organization.

In response to the question about their deepest dreams, many respondents mentioned family. Along with career aspirations (becoming the best lawyer in the world, earning all the money in the world, opening a beauty salon), they expressed aspirations driven by concerns for their country (improving the healthcare system, caring for orphans, changing everything in the country). One person wanted to send his parents on a trip to Europe, another to meet his future wife. One answer expressed a dream of resurrecting his deceased father. Thus, the cultures of Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon feature both masculinity and femininity, but family-related values prevail.

A good opportunity for Cameroonians and Equatoguineans to talk about their family would be a description of their favorite dish. They readily answered this question, with only one respondent naming spaghetti Bolognese. The rest wrote about the national dishes of their countries. For example, almost all respondents from Cameroon mentioned ndole, a stew whose main ingredients are the bitter leaves of the vernonia plant and unsweetened peanut butter. Cassava couscous was mentioned in several studies as well. Therefore, students could be encouraged to share their favorite recipes and then compare their national cuisine with Russian cuisine. Discussing favorite dishes will help build a more trusting relationship between the teacher and students, demonstrate respect for their culture, and gradually introduce them to Russian traditions.

Among the most preferred professions, respondents named being a doctor (35%), including pediatricians. They also expressed a desire to become engineers, flight attendants, lawyers, analysts, and salespeople. However, not everyone was able to answer this question. It seems that learning Russian could help residents of Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon gain a deeper understanding of medicine and pursue their dream profession. The opportunity for a good education in Russia, where they can receive excellent training as doctors and engineers, could motivate students from Africa to study Russian. Almost all respondents mentioned studying the natural sciences: biology, medicine, mathematics, computer science, and physics. Getting the education in Russia could provide residents of African countries with a thorough knowledge of these sciences.

The questionnaire asked respondents about their favorite plant. They named the rose (50%), tulip (20%), hibiscus, aloe, sunflower, and banana. It turns out that the lion is one of the most beloved animals among Africans, apparently symbolizing strength and royalty for them, as it does for

Russians. It seems that the tasks related to this vocabulary would be interesting for Africans learning Russian. It is essential, first of all, to learn the Russian names of these particular plants and animals.

While teaching Equatoguineans and Cameroonians, it is necessary to focus on using the inductive method. Ninety percent of respondents said that they are most persuaded by real-life examples and that they would begin their presentation with a story from their own life. This may be explained by the fact that educational institutions in these countries speak European languages (English is widely spoken, in particular), and the teaching is usually based on the “applications-first” principle adopted in schools in the UK and the USA. Interestingly, however, Spain and France, compared to English-speaking countries, focus more on theory or concepts, based on the study of which conclusions about certain facts are drawn. They are significantly closer to Russia, which also adopts a deductive approach to teaching, than English-speaking countries. However, African countries, apparently gravitate toward an inductive approach, despite the influence of countries like Spain and France on their history. This must be taken into account when teaching these students to make it easier and more interesting for them.

The results of our study are shown in Chart 1 where Russia and African countries are compared using the cultural dimensions proposed by E. Meyer. We can see that Russia and these countries are similar in many areas. This can be useful for RFL teachers as they can often rely on the same principles that are used while teaching Russian students.

Chart 1 Comparison of Russia, Cameroon, and Equatorial Guinea based on cultural dimensions proposed by E. Meyer

Cultural Dimensions	Russia	Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea
Communication	High-Context	High-Context
Evaluation	Direct Feedback	Direct Feedback
Persuading	Principles-First Reasoning	Applications-First Reasoning
Leading	Hierarchical Leadership	Hierarchical Leadership
Deciding	Top-down Decision-Making	Top-down Decision-Making
Trusting	Relationship-Based Trust	Relationship-Based Trust
Disagreeing	Confrontation	Avoiding Confrontation
Scheduling	Flexible-Time Orientation	Flexible-Time Orientation

We asked respondents to give advice to those planning to visit their home countries. Specifically, respondents were asked to indicate what Russian tourists should be wary of when traveling to the aforementioned African countries. 42% of respondents stated that the main danger was accidents and plane crashes. However, there were also responses emphasizing the risk of letting down one's guard and getting into trouble. Not a single respondent refrained from recommending caution in one way or another. Moreover, one response contained more detailed advice to be wary of plane crashes and illness and to bring medication. Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea appear to rank middle in their tolerance for uncertainty. When learning Russian, this may manifest itself in fear of judgment from teachers and classmates and a certain wariness of assigned tasks. However, students from Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon are clearly open to change and to seeking opportunities for dialogue with representatives of other cultures. They are ready to learn a new language, travel and strive to make their dreams come true.

In Chart 2 the key features of Cameroonian and Equatorial Guinean cultures that are connected with the dimensions proposed by G. Hofstede are shown.

Among the tips Equatoguineans and Cameroonians offered to tourists visiting their home countries were the advice to be wary of scammers, to behave modestly and discreetly, and to be prudent. However, most of the recommendations focused exclusively on places they believed tourists should visit, such as parks, beaches, and so on. While soberly assessing the tourism potential of their home countries, residents of Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon are nonetheless proud of them and readily name places worth visiting for international tourists.

Chart 2 The key cultural features of Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea

Cultural Dimensions by G. Hofstede	The Republic of Cameroon The Republic of Equatorial Guinea
Individualism – Collectivism	Collectivism
Uncertainty Avoidance	Medium
Power Distance	High
Masculinity – Femininity	Medium

We also asked respondents to name several representatives of their countries who they are proud of and who have made significant contributions to their culture. Among the names suggested, only the names of politicians were included. Perhaps this interest in national leaders could make texts about their lives more engaging for students. Firstly, those teaching Russian as a foreign language should carefully study the history of Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea, particularly the names of politicians who played a significant role in it. Secondly, when offering students texts about famous people, they should prioritize those about historical figures and politicians.

Cameroonians and Equatoguineans' knowledge of Russia is not particularly deep. However, among the places they would like to visit, they mentioned not only Moscow and Red Square, but also St. Petersburg, Krasnodar, Novosibirsk, and Kaliningrad. Almost 30% of respondents (students from Cameroon and possibly Muslims) mentioned Kazan. They are practically unaware of specific attractions associated with these cities. Thus, Russia is of interest to young Africans who dream of getting to know it better.

DISCUSSION

According to E.Yu. Nikolenko and G.V. Nikolenko, when teaching foreign students Russian language and Russian culture, "in most cases, teachers not only teach them a foreign language, but also offer them a new educational model, which, of course, causes additional difficulties" [23, p. 35]. Therefore, the consistent application of an ethno-oriented approach in teaching Russian as a foreign language, which assumes that the teacher understands the culture of those he teaches and relies on its characteristics, can help him achieve tangible success. However, for its successful application, it is necessary to thoroughly study the culture of those he will teach. In order to achieve it, we applied the cultural dimensions used by such researchers as G. Hofstede, F. Trompenaars, C. Hampden-Turner, and E. Meyer in their typologies of cultures. Having studied the characteristics of a particular culture, we can compare them with our own ones, identifying both the points in which a teacher is likely to make mistakes in the process of interacting with students, and the strong points on which we are able to rely. For example, the results of the study show that we can completely agree with I.G. Chuksina who says that "taking into account that African students, despite their high productivity and hard work, lack self-organization skills, the teacher's task is to focus their efforts on instilling these skills" [27, p. 68].

The study also showed that while teaching the students from Cameroon and the Republic of Equatorial Guinea we should remember that it is important to find a "golden mean" between individualistic and collectivistic approaches, while also motivating students to learn by citing the potential for their knowledge to both achieve important career goals and meet the expectations of their families. We cannot but agree with S.P. Myasoedov and L.G. Borisova that "in countries with a predominantly collectivist value system, the generally accepted view is that intensive and persistent study is necessary in youth... In educational institutions, the learning process emphasizes the acquisition of practical skills, i.e., the most correct and effective learning is considered to be that aimed at learning how or in what way to solve a particular problem" [29, p. 132]. In societies with individualistic values, a life-long learning approach is adopted. "The emphasis in learning is on the student acquiring the ability to independently learn what is required to complete a variety of tasks. Thus, school teaches a person not how to do something, but how to learn to do something himself" [29, p. 132].

However, while preparing RFL teachers for African countries, Russian universities do not also pay proper attention to their understanding the certain cultural dimensions. For instance, in Lipetsk State Pedagogical University named after P.P. Semenov-Tyan-Shansky the curriculum for the "Global Russian Studies" program for future teachers of Russian as a Foreign Language (RFL) includes such courses as "Methodology of Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language" and "Linguistic Aspects of Slavic Culture in Synchrony and Diachrony", but lacks courses focused on studying the theory of cross-cultural communication in general and the cultures of a number of countries with whom future teachers will work, particularly African ones. Although the university offers courses in Russian for English and Chinese speaking beginners, which emphasize the cultural specificities of language acquisition in these countries, the curriculum lacks courses that would help future teachers understand African cultures. Furthermore, we believe that future RFL teachers training in this program may lack a deep understanding of cultural typologies in general.

We are sure that, when training RFL teachers for Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon, it is necessary to:

1. explain to them the depth of cultural differences using the typologies of G. Hofstede, F. Trompenaars, C. Hampden-Turner, and E. Meyer;
2. survey teachers using the questions we proposed, and then conduct a detailed analysis of their responses, comparing them with the responses of students from African countries;
3. emphasize to teachers the need to develop trusting, friendly relationships with students based on the inherent power distance, communication context, and perception of criticism in their cultures;
4. draw teachers' attention to the difference between inductive and deductive approaches to teaching and to illustrate possible strategies for selecting assignments for students from Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea, using the survey data,;
5. invite RFL teachers to consider independently what could be done to improve the effectiveness of teaching Russian to students from Africa and discuss their opinions.

So, our study can be useful for future RFL teachers who should use the questionnaire we proposed to research their future students' cultural features which can be important for making strategy of teaching. To apply the parameters recommended by researchers for characterizing culture, teachers can first administer a questionnaire similar to the one we developed. We included questions aimed at identifying respondents' key values ("Could you name the people who have influenced you most?", "Could you describe the best gift you would like to receive for your birthday?", "Could you select your main value from the list provided?", "Could you name three essential human qualities?"). Asking respondents how they would spend an ideal day, where they would like to travel, what they would like to be in future, etc., also helps clarify their list of important values.

Questions related to respondents' preferences can be useful for identifying the key characteristics of a particular culture (we asked them to name their favorite plant, animal, dish, hobby, etc.). A list of values that are important to members of a culture will reveal their commitment to individualism or collectivism and provide an opportunity to adjust the assignments offered to students.

To explore the respondents' perceptions of their country and culture, you can ask them what advice they would give to visitors: what places tourists should visit, what souvenirs to buy, what to be aware of, etc. The last question, in addition, allows us to determine the degree of respondents' tolerance for uncertainty, giving us an opportunity to subsequently adjust the tasks offered to students. People from cultures with a high tolerance for uncertainty are likely to prefer free-flowing conversations with the teacher on various topics to tasks involving formulating statements based on a model.

To understand the respondents' perceptions of their country and culture, one could ask them what advice they would give to visitors: what places tourists should visit, what souvenirs to buy, what to be wary of, etc. This last question also allows us to determine respondents' tolerance for ambiguity, allowing us to subsequently adjust the tasks offered to students based on this. Representatives of cultures with a high tolerance for ambiguity are likely to prefer free-flowing conversations with the teacher on various topics to tasks involving formulating statements based on a model.

Thus, such a survey of students before beginning Russian language instruction can be useful for determining the most beneficial teaching strategy for these students. However, it can be equally important for the RFL teacher, who, after such a survey, will better understand the similarities and differences between their culture and their students' inherent worldview and cultures.

CONCLUSION

Thus, the cultures of Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon require serious and meticulous study. Only by taking their unique characteristics into account can we ensure a successful dialogue with their representatives based on mutual respect. Applying an ethnically oriented approach to teaching Russian to students from these countries requires taking into account the specifics of their culture and the difficulties that may arise due to the specific characteristics of these countries. They are:

- the proximity of several ethnic groups within the same territory, which may lead to a certain competitiveness in studies and work;
- the prevalence of the languages, such as Spanish, French, and English, in these countries, which has influenced the teaching strategies and beliefs adopted in Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea;
- their almost complete unfamiliarity with Russian culture, its main names and artifacts;
- their tendency to be late and their flexible perception of time;
- their high sensitivity, vulnerability, and some suspicion of the words and actions of representatives of other cultures, which is explained by the long period of colonialism.

Nevertheless, the cultures of Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon share a number of characteristics with those of Russian culture. These are key considerations for a teacher of Russian as a foreign language. Their cultures occupy a middle ground between individualistic (such values Africans may have learned from interactions with Westerners during colonization) and collectivistic cultures focused on family and social connections. Like Russia, they are characterized by the values such as God, family, and friendship. These cultures are oriented toward relationships based on gradually acquired trust. Like Russian culture, Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon are characterized by a high power distance and a commitment to both masculine and, to a greater extent, feminine values. All of these cultures can be named specific and emotional.

Having thoroughly studied the cultural characteristics of Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon, a teacher of Russian as a foreign language can rely on the similarities between our cultures and avoid potential mistakes.

However, a teacher from Russia should remember that Equatorial Guineans and Cameroonians may be reluctant to engage in direct, open confrontation, seeking to understand the opinions of their elders and respected people and avoiding speaking out directly in their presence. While Russian culture is generally characterized by tolerance for criticism and confrontation, the same cannot be said about the cultures of Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea. They will expect the teacher to give them fairly clear instructions, just like Russians. A group of African students will respectfully defer to the teachers, even if they disagree with their decisions, but some irritation may later surface and complicate further work. Criticism from the teacher is readily accepted, but it should be constructive and gentle. Under no circumstances should negative comments be made about African countries, including their climate, flora or fauna, education systems, healthcare, etc. Teachers should avoid asking students inquisitively about their families, living conditions at home, etc. Compared to Russia, these countries are characterized by a relatively high tolerance for uncertainty.

Nowadays, when it is urgent to foster mutually beneficial dialogue between Russia and African countries and to increase the presence of students from these countries at Russian universities, RFL teachers are called upon to carefully and thoughtfully study their students' cultures and incorporate them into their teaching. Only then will it be possible to achieve tangible success in the crucial task of promoting the Russian language and culture abroad.

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Авторы

Шурупова Ольга Сергеевна

(Россия, г. Липецк)

Доктор филологических наук, доцент,
профессор кафедры английского языка

ФГБОУ ВО «Липецкий государственный педагогический
университет имени П.П. Семенова-Тян-Шанского»

E-mail: shurupovaolgas@mail.ru

ORCID ID: 0000-0001-6987-9883

Сушкова Наталья Алексеевна

(Россия, г. Липецк)

Кандидат педагогических наук, доцент,
заведующая кафедрой английского языка

ФГБОУ ВО «Липецкий государственный педагогический
университет имени П.П. Семенова-Тян-Шанского»

E-mail: sushkovanatalia@yandex.ru

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-7220-2029

Authors

Olga S. Shurupova

(Russia, Lipetsk)

Dr. Sci. (Philology), Associate Professor,
Professor of the English Department

Lipetsk State Pedagogical University named after P.P.
Semenov-Tyan-Shansky

Email: shurupovaolgas@mail.ru

ORCID ID: 0000-0001-6987-9883

Natalya A. Sushkova

(Russia, Lipetsk)

Cand. Sci. (Educ.), Associate Professor,
Head of the English Department

Lipetsk State Pedagogical University named after P.P.
Semenov-Tyan-Shansky

Email: sushkovanatalia@yandex.ru

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-7220-2029

Вклад авторов

Шурупова О. С.: концептуализация, администрирование
данных, создание черновика рукописи, визуализация

Сушкова Н. А.: методология, создание рукописи и её
редактирование, руководство исследованием

Authors contribution

Olga S. Shurupova: Conceptualization, Data Curation,
Writing - Original Draft, Visualization

Natalya A. Sushkova: Methodology,
Writing - Review & Editing, Visualization, Supervision

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