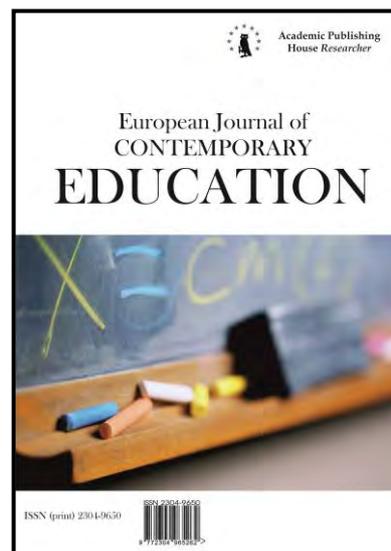




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Native Kalmyk Language and Creative Musical Abilities of Adolescents in Folk Musical Art: Features of Connection

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Abstract

The present study takes an unconventional look at the challenges of bilingualism. High school students' level of the native Kalmyk language is viewed in connection to creative musical abilities (instrumental, vocal, choreographic) in the field of Kalmyk folk musical art. The vector of research is determined by the revitalization of the native language mostly lost due to J. Stalin's repressions.

The research was carried out in three stages. First, the ethnopsychological questionnaire (the **features of the «Self-concept» of a high school student's personality**) developed by the authors were used together with other psychodiagnostic tools. Then, the subjects' performance was divided into four groups: from comprehensive versatility to latency and absence of creative abilities. At the third stage, an attempt was made to determine the connection between the level of the native Kalmyk language and the level of creative abilities in folk musical art. The statistical calculations were made using the Matt-Whitney non-parametric test.

The obtained applied results give reason to view the Kalmyk language as an effective resource for educational, intellectual and ethnocultural development of the younger generation of the Republic of Kalmykia.

As a result, the authors have identified a large potential for the development of creative musical abilities in adolescents (one in three showed a low level of the native Kalmyk language). This makes it possible to ultimately utilize the innovative resources of school-based language training using the national musical culture to unlock the creative potential of high school students.

The study has identified a stable trend: there is a connection between the level of the native Kalmyk language and the level of a person's creative musical abilities in the field of folk musical art in the context of their ethnocultural identification. Other possible lines of research within the aforementioned area have been named considering the significant dominance of the right

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hemisphere of the brain, the polylinguistic focus of education, etc. The research strategy and the obtained results can also be used in other regions of the Russian Federation considering the multicultural composition of the population.

Keywords: adolescence, artistic musical abilities, bilingualism, ethnocultural identification, Kalmyk folk musical art, music education, native Kalmyk language.

1. Introduction

The Republic of Kalmykia is a unique experimental space as it is a federal subject of the Russian Federation and the only region in the European part of Russia where the local population (the Kalmyks) is of Eastern origin. The demographic composition of the republic is polyethnic (over 30 nationalities) and multiconfessional (Buddhists, Christians, Muslims). These characteristics make it possible to view Kalmykia as an extraordinary experimental space and determine the choice of the interdisciplinary research approach with its possibility to provide the broad scientific and cultural context for the interpretation of empirical data.

The emphasis on the creative development of schoolchildren through the focus on the ethnocultural component of the educational environment is determined by the need to revive the Kalmyk national cultural traditions which were mostly lost due to political and social turmoil of the past, predominantly as a result of J. Stalin's repressions (forced acculturation with the elements of assimilation – operation «Ulusy», 1943–1944). As a result, after the rehabilitation of the repressed peoples in 1957, the ethnocultural upbringing of the young generation was in a difficult position that required the revival of the nearly lost native language, culture, traditions and customs. During the first decades after the adoption of the Constitution of the Republic of Kalmykia (the Steppe Code dated 5 Apr. 1994), the willingness of the younger generation to revive the national culture became apparent, as they sometimes became their parents' tutors. This situation marks the implementation of the new stage of the program for the national revival of the native Kalmyk language, the development of the national culture, customs, traditions and beliefs.

As there are two equal state languages in the steppe region, the Russian and the Kalmyk, the bilingual wealth creates additional favorable conditions for the development of adolescents' creative abilities. The key role in this process is played by the education system that includes national and regional programs. In Russia, it is considered one of the innovative and promising systems.

In this context, the work on identifying and supporting gifted children, their creative abilities and activities becomes more meaningful. Setting and solving such tasks is quite logical and reasonable: the young generation will have to not only take an active part in further innovative changes in various sociocultural areas but also take responsibility for the results. In view of this, there is an urgent need to develop a creative person of a new type who can think creatively and find unconventional original solutions to current and prospective strategic tasks.

The following organizations contribute to the solution of these tasks: the P. O. Chonkushov College of Arts, the Elista Pedagogical College named after Kh.B. Kanukov, the B. Basangov National Drama Theatre, the Republican Russian Theatre of Drama and Comedy, the National Orchestra, the National Symphonic Orchestra, A.O. Tsebekov State Choir, the Kalmyk State Song and Dance Ensemble «Tyulpan», the Kalmyk State Dance Theatre «Oiraty», the Folk Dance Ensemble «Dzhangar», the Folk Song and Dance Ensemble «Bumbin orn» of the Kalmyk State University, E. Mandzhiev Children's Exemplary Performance Ensemble «Gerel», Children's Choir «Kolokolchik», as well as republican and regional festivals including those broadcast on the Kalmyk television. However, in general, their activities are complementary to general education.

The system of school education currently includes federal, regional and local components and the ratio between them is 50:30:20 % respectively. Music education is enshrined as a compulsory component. At first glance, this is the way to implement state-wide educational standards, like everywhere in the country. However, the analysis of their particular content makes it possible to identify the regional uniqueness and the local features of the Republic of Kalmykia. First of all, schoolchildren study the jewel of the Kalmyk folklore – the literary-musical epos «Dzhangar», as well as other works of Kalmyk folk art. Students of national specialized classes learn «Clear Script» created by the great Oirat scholar and educator Zaya Pandita, organize local and republican competitions of throat singing, performance contests for playing national instruments and Kalmyk dancing.

The majority of the population in the Republic of Kalmykia lives in villages and small towns. In this context, secondary general education schools, including advanced secondary schools (gymnasiums), serve as ethnocultural centers. On their basis, using the potential of the school-based additional education (clubs and teams) and extracurricular activities (events and elective courses united in a single space), together with clubs and community centers with the active participation of high school students, festivals, academic and musical competitions, youth talent shows are held and national celebrations are organized in the spirit of centuries-old traditions and customs of the Kalmyk people. This approach enables the systematic development of the ethnocultural personality in the young generation, including by actively involving the means of musical culture which are an integral part of the general educational and ethnocultural strategy adopted on a regional level and successfully implemented in the Republic of Kalmykia.

The transformations of the 1990s in Russia unlocked great potential for the national cultural revival, the development of the concept of the national-regional education system and its varied implementation in the Republic of Kalmykia. This process yielded positive results but proved complicated and controversial. It turned out that it was easier to revive national traditions, customs and rituals, introduce the rich, multigenre folklore and literature than learn the native Kalmyk language from scratch in the modern conditions. That is why learning a national language at school in the absence of a language environment at home can be compared to learning a foreign language.

At the same time, one must admit that the introduction to the Kalmyk folk singing and musical art additionally activates a person's speaking abilities. However, the issue of finding a balance between the national linguistic competence and its manifestation in the Kalmyk folk musical art remains relevant. Within the study, an attempt has been made to scientifically establish whether learning the native national language significantly helps schoolchildren to develop creative musical abilities (instrumental, vocal, choreographic) in the field of Kalmyk folk musical art.

2. Materials and methods

A set of the following diagnostic means was utilized in the study: polling (the questionnaire was developed by E.A. Sokalskii to include the ethnopsychological characteristics of the participants); testing (the Eysenck Personality Inventory adapted by A.G. Shmelev) ([Ishov, 2004](#)); the creative test of the A. Maslow Self-Actualization Scale ([Aleschina et al., 1987](#)); the short Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (shapes task) adapted by E.I. Shcheblanova and I.S. Averina ([Kratkiy test..., 1995](#)); the projective method (unfinished sentences adapted to obtain information about family).

The procedures of statistical verification were used for quantitative processing. The utilized statistical analysis methods included the Mann-Whitney and the φ^* Fisher criteria. The Mann-Whitney non-parametric criterion was used to establish the statistical significance of the differences between the groups of respondents divided according to the level of the native Kalmyk language (high – low, high – medium, medium – low) compared to the level of creative musical abilities in high school students in the area of folk musical art.

The distribution of several traits in the population was close to normal. The φ^* Fisher criterion was chosen, first, due to its sensitivity in the context of the significance of comparing the assessed parameters and, second, considering the planned expansion of the sample up to 1,000 respondents and the statistical processing of the data using almost the only criterion suitable for an expanded sample.

The population of the participants amounted to 530 students in years 10-11 of three prestigious and three general education institutions; boys and girls were almost equally represented. The sample was fully reflective of the general characteristics of high school students in the Republic of Kalmykia.

The purpose of the study was to establish the connection between the high school students' level of the native Kalmyk language and the level of creative musical abilities in the field of folk musical art. The article is focused only on the few significant and insufficiently studied aspects of the broad academic inquiry concerning the creative abilities of adolescents ([Chernikova, Sokalskiy, 2018](#)).

The description and analysis of the results are provided particularly for the sample consisting of 291 students in years 10-11 based on the integrated ethnopsychological questionnaire created by us. The questionnaire was developed based on several statements from a high school student's «**Self-concept**»: the assessment of self-awareness features, the level of the native language, the

manifestation of creative abilities in the areas of folk instrumental, vocal and choreographic art. The participants were given the five-point scale to grade the results.

3. Discussion

As the point of view in the study is unconventional – the nature of the connection between the national language knowledge and the level of musical abilities in adolescents in the field of Kalmyk folk art – the scientific search was carried out by the two-step theoretical and methodological justification. The first step was based on the main ideas and notions on the nature and the mechanism of musical abilities (L.L. Bochkarev, D.B. Kabalevskii, B.M. Teplov and others). The second step was developed through the concepts that described the role, functions and meaning of the native language in a person's ethnocultural identification (P.Ts. Bitkeev, N.Ts. Bitkeev, B.A. Bicheev, G.N. Volkov, B.B. Dyakieva, A.Sh. Kichikov, O.D. Mukaeva, A.B. Pankin and others).

In the process of the study, the key provisions of several biogenetic, biosocial and social concepts aimed at the formation and development of creative musical abilities were considered. The term **«musicality» was adopted as a basic concept in this context. Most researchers interpret musicality as a combination of abilities and emotional aspects of the personality, manifested in musical activity (Bochkarev, 1983)**. The alternative point of view considers musicality as a set of separate, unconnected manifestations of artistic abilities that are combined into five large groups: 1. Musical sensations and perception. 2. Musical action. 3. Musical memory and musical imagination. 4. Musical intelligence. 5. Musical feeling (Loganova, 2001).

Long before alternative interpretations and the terminological discussion, B.M. Teplov (Teplov, 1996) considered emotional responsiveness to music to be the main indicator of musicality and believed the main abilities to be those related to the perception and reproduction of pitch and rhythmic movement, i.e. the ear for music and the sense of rhythm. The scholar identified two components in the ear for music – perceptive and reproductive. The additional components of the set of musicality included timbre, dynamic, harmonic and absolute hearing.

Although the question of the structure of musicality is still open, the importance of musicality can hardly be overestimated not only in relation to aesthetic and moral education but also to the development of the psychological culture of the individual. The essence of musical culture was considered by D.B. Kabalevskii as the ability to perceive and realize music as a living figurative art, born of life and inextricably connected to it. This statement by the composer-pedagogue contains the phenomenology of a person's ethnocultural identification. At present, the integrative processes of globalization are actively invading the musical upbringing and education of young students, **hindering ethnocultural identification. In D.B. Kabalevskii's concept, the task of forming a child's musical culture is successfully solved when the schoolchildren themselves are active creators in the world of musical creativity and the teacher directs their activity.** L.L. Bochkarev proved that musicality strengthens a person's emotional-volitional tone and helps them master a form of active emotional-creative attitude to the world which is very important for psychological development.

The review of the Kalmyk academic literature indicates that abilities and creative potential are most comprehensively explored in the pedagogical and ethnopedagogical context (G.V. Artaeva, B.E. Belyaeva, O.G. Krasnokutskaya, N.G. Krasnorutskaya, I.V. Kyunkrikova, M.Z. Elderova and others). At the same time, the authors focus their attention on the prerequisites and the process of artistic creativity of participants in preschool, primary school and adolescent ages. Special attention should be paid to the academic works that systematize the creative experience of students – future teachers of handicrafts. The original study by I.T. Baldashinova and E.A. Pipko (Pipko, 2007) addressed to future physical education teachers is unique content-wise. In this context, the works by Z.S. Badmaeva (Badmaeva, 1997) and A.B. Imkenova (Imkenova, 1999) are exceptions as they deal with the matters of ethnopsychology of the Kalmyks. The works by G.Sh. Khulkhachieva (Khulkhachieva, 2006) and T.N. Dzhambinova (Dzhambinov, 2004) are also closely connected to the topic of the present study.

G.Sh. Khulkhachieva proved (2006) that «the process of ethnopedagogical training of future primary school teachers in national classes based on the traditions of the Kalmyk musical folklore will be efficient if:

– it is based on the integration of historical traditions of training teachers for public schools and music education, systemic, culturological, personality-oriented approaches;

– the pedagogical value of the Kalmyk musical folklore, its educational potential in the music education of schoolchildren is revealed;

– the readiness of the future teacher for ethnopedagogical activity by means of the Kalmyk musical folklore is understood as professional and personal education and the sum of the need-based and motivational, cognitive, activity-related and creative and emotional-axiological **components»**.

The academician G.N. Volkov emphasized the importance of the native language in the context of bilingualism for learning folklore, including musical, for the development of an individual's creativity. The word is the most universal, decisive factor in folk pedagogy, especially when it means the word of the native language and native speech. The scholar argued that the traditional national direction in education is the mastering the culture of native speech and, therefore, the awareness and acceptance of one's national identity occurs through comprehension of the native language (Volkov, 1993).

In modern conditions, the phenomenon of bilingualism, that is, the knowledge of two languages – native and Russian – to a sufficient extent for communication is mainly present in Kalmyk families (Gavranek, 1972). Advanced knowledge and ability to speak two or more languages makes one more likely to freely operate concepts, carry out the cross-linguistic and cross-cultural transfer of meanings from one culture to another, which brings elements of novelty to speech, and improve over time. According to the research results, bilingualism is one of the main elements of generating creative ability to develop creativity and the creative potential of a modern civilized person. This was shown, in particular, by N.L. Vigel's results (Vigel, 2014) on the materials of the comparative analysis of language processes in monolinguals and bilinguals, by D.S. Medvedeva (Medvedeva, 2017) using the example of the development of verbal and thinking activity in bilingual primary school students and by R.D. Sandzhaeva (Sandzhaeva, 2001) on a sample of Buryat schoolchildren and students with the significant dominance of the right hemisphere of the brain.

4. Results

The influence of the native Kalmyk language level in high school students on the development of creative musical abilities was studied based on the Ketchenerovskaya, Yashkul'skaya and Troitskaya rural multidisciplinary gymnasiums, as well as the Yashkul'skaya and Arshan-Zelmenskaya secondary general education schools. This choice was not accidental: the scope of the research included the regions of the republic where the representatives of one of the titular nations – the Kalmyks – are territorially concentrated and where a favorable linguistic environment has been preserved. All students from years 10-11 were studied which amounted to 291 people.

In the first stage, the ethnopsychological questionnaire developed by us was used together with other psychodiagnostic tools. The questionnaire reflected several statements based on a high school student's **«Self-concept»: the assessment of self-awareness** features, the level of the native language, the manifestation of creative abilities in the areas of folk instrumental, vocal and choreographic art. The participants were given a five-point self-assessment scale of answers to grade the results. The scale had the following markers: 5 – very high, 4 – high, 3 – medium, 2 – low, 1 – very low level. When processing the empirical material, we united the participants' self-assessment data on the Kalmyk language knowledge into three logical blocks: 5 and 4 points – high level, 3 points – medium level, 2 and 1 points – low level. As a result, 36.7 % of participants assessed their level of the Kalmyk language as high, 30.1 % as medium and 33.2 % as low. These results partly confirmed the conclusions of several researchers that the results of systematic learning of the native (Kalmyk) literary language are comparable with the results of learning a foreign language at school. A comparison of high figures with other indicators showed a large potential for improving the quality of students' knowledge of the native Kalmyk language: the low and medium levels were present in two-thirds of the sample.

In the second stage of the study, the subjects' performance was divided into four groups of **creative ability manifestation according to the criteria «versatility»/»one-sidedness»**. The first group (**«comprehensive versatility»**) included participants who had abilities simultaneously in

several fields of Kalmyk folk musical art: instrumental (dombra, yochin), vocal, choreographic if performance culture was present. The second group («versatility») included participants with less versatile creative abilities in the field of Kalmyk folk musical art: only vocal and choreographic. The third group («one-sidedness») included high school students with either vocal, choreographic or instrumental (dombra, yochin) abilities in the field of Kalmyk folk musical art. The fourth group («low/absent creative abilities») consisted of participants who were not engaged in musical art based on Kalmyk folklore traditions.

In the third stage, an attempt was made to determine the connection between the level of the native Kalmyk language and the level of creative abilities in the field folk musical art. The statistical calculations (the software IBM SPSS Statistics 26.0) were made using the Matt-Whitney non-parametric test – the measurements were taken in the range scale.

The first group of the compared indicators to determine the nature of the statistical connection included quantitative data of the participants' self-assessment of their Kalmyk language level (high, medium, low).

The first group of the compared indicators consisted of the expert assessments assigned to each participant according to the criterial indicators of creative ability manifestation. This approach made it possible to divide the participants into four groups: «comprehensive versatility», «versatility», «one-sidedness» and «low/absent creative abilities».

The Mann-Whitney test was used to identify the differences between pairs of groups of bilinguals with different levels of the native Kalmyk language (high – low, high – medium, medium – low) according to the level of creative musical abilities in the field of folk musical art (Tables 1–3).

Table 1. The calculation data of the Mann-Whitney test to identify the differences between the groups with high and medium levels of the native Kalmyk language compared to the level of creative musical abilities in the field of folk musical art

| Groups | Mean rank | V empirical | Significance level |
|---------------------|-----------|-------------|--------------------|
| High level (N=105) | 108.66 | 3,186.00 | 0.000 |
| Medium level (N=86) | 80.55 | | |

The differences between the groups with the high and medium levels of the native Kalmyk language were identified (Table 1). A higher level of creative musical abilities in the field of folk musical art was identified in high school students with a high level of the native Kalmyk language compared to the medium level.

Table 2. The calculation data of the Mann-Whitney test to identify the differences between the groups with high and low levels of the native Kalmyk language compared to the level of creative musical abilities in the field of folk musical art

| Groups | Mean rank | V empirical | Significance level |
|--------------------|-----------|-------------|--------------------|
| High level (N=105) | 131.81 | 2,224.5 | 0.000 |
| Low level (N=100) | 72.75 | | |

The differences between the groups with the high and low levels of the native Kalmyk language were identified in the level of creative musical abilities in the field of folk musical art (Table 2). A higher level of creative musical abilities in the field of folk musical art was identified in high school students with a high level of the native Kalmyk language.

Table 3. The calculation data of the Mann-Whitney test to identify the differences between the groups with medium and low levels of the native Kalmyk language compared to the level of creative musical abilities in the field of folk musical art

| Groups | Mean rank | V empirical | Significance level |
|---------------------|-----------|-------------|--------------------|
| Medium level (N=86) | 109.90 | 2,890.0 | 0.000 |
| Low level (N=100) | 79.40 | | |

The statistical analysis indicated, as it is obvious from Table 3, that a higher level of creative musical abilities was typical for the high school students with the medium level of the native Kalmyk language compared to those with the low level of the native Kalmyk language.

Among the bilingual participants, the high school students with a high level of the native Kalmyk language showed a higher level of creative musical abilities.

As a result, the calculations using the Mann-Whitney non-parametric test showed the connection between the level of the native Kalmyk language and the level of creative musical abilities in the field of folk musical art in the studied population.

In terms of detailed percentages, various manifestations of creative indicators («comprehensive versatility», «versatility», «one-sidedness», «low/absent creative abilities») clearly demonstrated their connection with the level of the native (Kalmyk) literary language. The quantitative indicators of the first group («comprehensive versatility») among the three categories of respondents definitively indicated that a high level of the Kalmyk language largely determined the presence of ethnoculturally connotated creative abilities in Kalmyk students. The indicator «comprehensive versatility» in the category of participants with a high level of the Kalmyk native language amounted to 14.6 % of the entire studied dataset. For high school students with a medium level, this indicator was two times lower (7.6 %), with a low level – two and a half times lower (5.9 %). Similar results were observed during the analytical comparison of the indicators of the second group («versatility») between the three categories of participants, depending on the level of the native Kalmyk language. Among the participants with a high level of the native Kalmyk language, 11.1 % showed a versatile interest in musical folk art. This indicator was lower (8.0 %) for the people with an average level of language proficiency and for the students with a low level, it was completely absent.

The empirical results were reversed when we examined the group of weak manifestation of participants' creative abilities named «one-sidedness» in its connection with the level of the native Kalmyk language. In the group of participants with a high level of the Kalmyk native language, this indicator was the lowest – 7.2 %. For the high school students with medium and low levels of knowledge of the native Kalmyk language, this indicator was 9.0 % and 14.8 %, respectively. At the same time, their prevailing type of creative ability was dancing which does not require mandatory knowledge of the Kalmyk language. When considering the parameter («low/absent creative abilities»), the same situation was observed: participants with a high level of knowledge of the native Kalmyk language made up 3.8 % of the entire sample, with an average level – 5.5 %; with a low level – 12.5 %.

The obtained statistical results fully answer the main research question. The study revealed a strong connection between the level of knowledge of the native Kalmyk language and the level of the person's creative musical abilities in the field of folk musical art. At the historical stage of the full-scale revival of ethnical heritage, the young educated generation masters the means of not only comprehending folk sources but also gaining a full ethnocultural identity as the fundamental personal culture among citizens of a multinational state.

According to the results of the study, the organizers of school education in Kalmykia got a substantial reason to consider the Kalmyk language as a resource for the national-cultural and educational development of the population, drawing up state-level means to intensify its learning. The large potential revealed in this aspect – the low level of the Kalmyk language in 33.2 % students (one in three participants) – makes it possible to use innovative resources of school language training in future, relying on the national musical culture to unlock the creative potential of high school students.

5. Limitations

The described theoretical and methodological developments, the applied diagnostic tools based on the selected research base can be efficiently used to study the personality of students in years 9–11 of general educational institutions of various types with a multinational student base.

6. Conclusion

The indicated problem is far from exhausted and requires the continuation of research. In view of this, the words of the academician G.N. Volkov remain relevant: the socialization of younger members of society in the context of natural bilingualism will be more efficient if pedagogues consider as much as possible the cultural potential of the native language combined with the capabilities of the Russian language as a means of intercultural communication. This is particularly important for those ethnic groups that, for various reasons, were put on the brink of losing their identity (Volkov et al., 2004).

G.N. Volkov's fundamental statements are axiomatic: «bilingualism and multilingualism significantly enrich the brain of both a child and an adult. Students can learn other languages, especially since practice indicates that learning a third language on the basis of two, the fourth on the basis of three, etc. is easier» (Volkov et al., 2004: 9).

The most difficult task is to create a multiculturally satiated educational environment in the Republic of Kalmykia where the native Kalmyk language will function along with the Russian language and will be enshrined in the law as a state language. In view of this, another insufficiently studied field of research activity is revealed – the determination of the influence of the high level of the native Kalmyk language on learning Russian and other languages (foreign, languages of peoples of Russia) at school.

The new law «On education in the Russian Federation» (dated 29.12.2012 N 273-FZ as amended on 25.11.2013) makes significant contributions to the investigation of the issue. For instance, particular importance is given to identifying and supporting the creative abilities of students. The emphasis is moved to the system of additional education, as well as to academic contests and other intellectual and (or) creative competitions, physical education and sports events aimed at identifying and developing students' mental and creative abilities, interest in scientific (research) activities, including comparative linguistics. When identifying artistic and musical abilities, it is efficient to aim for their combination and development in close connection with physical health and ensuring life safety. The law indirectly reflects the theoretical and practice-oriented conclusion that only a teacher as a creative person can prepare and educate creative schoolchildren.

Therefore, further investigation of the problem requires continuation on a larger scale in the Republic of Kalmykia, considering the interdisciplinary and integrative approaches, biogenetic (inheritance of abilities), psychophysiological (functional asymmetry of the cerebral hemispheres), social (enriched space of additional education) and other factors.

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