

## **The linguistic features of Bangala before Lingala: The pidginization of Bobangi in the 1880s and 1890s**

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### **Summary**

Described are the lexical and grammatical features of the pidgin Bangala, spoken between roughly 1880 and 1900 in western, northern, and northeastern Congo. This pidgin formed the basis of what after 1900 became, in northern and western Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lingala, and what in northeastern DRC remained known as “Bangala”. Pre-1900 Bangala arose out of the pidginization of Bobangi in the context of the arrival of the first European conquerors and their East and West African troops. First is discussed the sociohistorical evidence given by contemporaneous sources for the emergence of Bangala out of Bobangi and its development then into Lingala. The problematic notions of “pidgin” and “pidginization” is also addressed. The bulk of the article then describes the linguistic features of the pidgin. This is done on the basis of contemporaneous sources, documenting the language as it was spoken in its own time, and on the basis of strict data selection criteria. The linguistic features of the pidgin included, in the lexicon, the loss of the functional load of tone, the scarcity of function words, word category indeterminacy through generalization and multifunctionality, foreign input, and more than average use of transparent periphrasis; and, in the grammar, reduction of nominal class inflection and of agreement patterns in the noun phrase, reduction in subject person inflection on the verb, reduction of tense-aspect-modality distinctions, loss or reduction of root extensions, and a strong general tendency away from morphological syntheticity towards syntactic analyticization. The study of the colonial context and of the linguistics of pre-1900 Bangala is of major importance for our understanding of present-day Lingala and northeastern Bangala.

### **Résumé**

Cet article offre une description linguistique des caractéristiques lexicales et grammaticales du bangala, le pidgin parlé entre 1880 et 1900 environ dans l’ouest, le nord et le nord-est de l’actuelle République Démocratique du Congo. Ce pidgin a constitué la base de ce qui est devenu après 1900 dans le nord et l’ouest du Congo le lingala, et de ce qui dans le nord-est est resté connu sous le nom de «bangala». Le bangala d’avant 1900 est né de la pidginisation du bobangi dans le contexte de l’arrivée des premiers conquérants européens et de leurs troupes recrutées en Afrique de l’Est et de l’Ouest. Je discute d’abord les preuves sociohistoriques, fournies dans les sources historiques de l’époque, de l’émergence du bangala à partir du bobangi, par après devenant le lingala. La problématique de la notion de «pidgin» et «pidginisation» est également examinée. La majeure partie de l’article décrit ensuite les caractéristiques linguistiques du pidgin. Cela se fait sur la base de sources de l’époque, documentant la langue telle qu’elle était parlée en son temps, et sur la base de critères stricts de sélection de données. Les caractéristiques linguistiques du pidgin comprenaient, dans le lexique, la perte de la fonction distinctive du ton, la rareté de mots non référentiels, l’indétermination des catégories de mots par la généralisation et la multifonctionnalité, l’emprunt et l’utilisation plus que moyenne de la périphrase transparente; et, dans la grammaire, la réduction des classes nominales et la perte de l’accord dans la phrase nominale, la réduction des marqueurs sujet dans le système verbal, la réduction des distinctions de modalité, d’aspect et de temps, la perte des extensions verbales, et une forte tendance générale à s’éloigner de la synthéticité morphologique vers l’analyticité syntaxique. L’étude du contexte colonial et de la linguistique du bangala d’avant 1900 est d’une importance majeure pour notre compréhension du lingala et du bangala du nord-est actuels.

## **Zusammenfassung**

Beschrieben werden die lexikalischen und grammatikalischen Merkmale des Pidgins Bangala, das zwischen etwa 1880 und 1900 im westlichen, nördlichen und nordöstlichen Kongo (die heutige Demokratische Republik Kongo) gesprochen wird. Dieses Pidgin bildete die Grundlage aus der sich nach 1900 im nördlichen und westlichen Kongo Lingala entwickelte, und das im nordöstlichen Kongo als „Bangala“ bekannt blieb. Pre-1900 Bangala entstand aus der Pidginisierung von Bobangi im Zusammenhang mit der Ankunft der ersten europäischen Eroberer und ihrer west- und ostafrikanischen Truppen. Zuerst werden die zeitgeschichtlichen soziohistorischen Belege für die Entstehung von Bangala aus Bobangi und seiner weitere Entwicklung zu Lingala diskutiert. Die problematischen Begriffe "Pidgin" und "Pidginisierung" werden ebenfalls diskutiert. Der Großteil des Artikels beschreibt dann die sprachlichen Merkmale des Pidgins. Dies geschieht auf der Grundlage von historischen Quellen, die die Sprache dokumentierten, wie sie zu jener Zeit gesprochen wurde, und auf der Grundlage strenger Datenauswahlkriterien. Zu den sprachlichen Merkmalen des Pidgins gehörten im Lexikon der Verlust der Funktionen von Tönen, die geringe Anzahl von Funktionswörtern, die Unbestimmtheit von Wortkategorien durch Verallgemeinerung und Multifunktionalität, Sprachvermischung und die überdurchschnittliche Verwendung transparenter Periphrasen; und in der Grammatik Reduktion in der Klassenbeugung von Substantiven und Abbau der Konkordanz in der Substantivphrase, Reduktion in der Subjekt-Personenmarkierung, Reduktion in Zeit-Aspekt-Modalitätsunterschieden, Verlust von Wurzelerweiterungen und eine starke allgemeine Tendenz weg von der morphologischen Synthetizität hin zur syntaktischen Analytizität. Das Studium des kolonialen Kontexts und der Linguistik von pre-1900 Bangala ist für unser Verständnis des heutigen Lingala und des nordöstlichen Bangala von großer Bedeutung.

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Bangala out of Bobangi**

- <1> In this contribution, I describe the grammatical and lexical features of the pidgin Bangala as it was spoken between roughly 1880 and 1900 in the western, northern, and northeastern Congo (today the Democratic Republic of Congo). Bangala is the basis of what after 1900 became “Lingala” and of what today in northeastern Congo is still known as “Bangala”. The pidgin arose around 1881-1882 out of Bobangi on the western section of the Congo river just north of Malebo Pool (the pool where today Kinshasa is situated).
- <2> In 1881-1882 the European occupiers working for King Leopold II together with the very diverse groups of workers/soldiers they had hired on the coasts of West Africa, East Africa, in Zanzibar, and in the Lower Congo (Maurice 1955; Samarin 1982a; 1984; 1989a; Cornelis 1991), started to found state posts on the banks of the mentioned western river section. They immediately noticed the widespread, precolonial use of the Bobangi language there. Bobangi’s native speakers had been controlling the riverine trade on that river section, and the language was therefore also known as a second language by others, outside Bobangi’s own region: downstream, there was knowledge of Bobangi on the banks of Malebo Pool (which was Bateke territory), and upstream non-Bobangi communities living as high north as Iboko and Upoto also had a second-language, working knowledge of the language (Kund 1885:386; Sims 1886; Coquilhat 1888; 1885; Oram 1891; Lemaire 1895; Harms 1981; Vansina 1990; Petit 1996). The Europeans and their African troops acquired an imperfect knowledge of Bobangi, in the process strongly restructuring/pidginizing<sup>1</sup> it (de Lichtervelde 1912; Samarin 1982b; 1986; 1989b; 1990; Whitehead 1940s; Hulstaert 1946; 1953; 1989; Hulstaert & De Boeck 1940; Tanghe et al. 1940; Mufwene 1989; 2003; 2013; Mbulamoko 1991; Meeuwis 2001a, b; 2002; 2006; 2013; 2014; 2019), leading to a new stable linguistic system of which I describe the features below. They used this pidgin with the local populations, who acquired it for contact with the new conquerors, and soon (especially after 1884 in Bangala-Station, see

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<sup>1</sup> See section 1.5., “Pidginization”, for a clarification of these terms.

below) also used it among themselves for interethnic communication.

- <3> Bobangi was, thus, the main source of the emerging pidgin. Other influencing adstrates included the following: the commanding European officers were speakers of French, English, Flemish, Dutch, German, Danish and/or Portuguese, some also knew West African pidgin and creole varieties of these, many had a basic knowledge of Swahili, and some also of Kikongo or of Kikongo-Kituba (also called “Fiote”, “Kikongo ya Leta”, “Munukutuba” and others), the pidgin that had recently arisen in the Lower-Congo area out of Kikongo varieties.<sup>2</sup> For their occupation of the Congo, the Europeans and their West and East African troops worked their way upstream on the Congo river beginning from its Atlantic estuary. This means that they reached the area north of Malebo Pool (the critical region in the pidginization of Bobangi) after first passing through the Lower-Congo area, where some of them picked up some Kikongo or Kikongo-Kituba. Also, books documenting Kikongo were available from earlier times. Secondly, the workers recruited on the East African coast and in Zanzibar spoke Swahili. Third, the languages spoken by the workers hired on the West African coasts included Hausa, Bambara, Ewe, Igbo, and Yoruba, as well as English-, French- and Portuguese-based pidgins and creoles (Samarin 1982b:417; Samarin 1989a; Cornelis 1991; Meeuwis 2013). Fourth, when passing through the Lower-Congo area, the Europeans also recruited “Bakongo” to complement the troops of East Africans and West Africans. These Bakongo were native speakers of varieties of Kikongo and also knew Kikongo-Kituba (see Mufwene 2009; 2013; Samarin 2013).
- <4> The resulting new variety was at first referred to by a volatile range of labels, some of which highlighted its functions, as “*la langue commerciale*” and “*la langue de traite*”. Other labels emphasized its typical geographical zone of use, as “*la langue du fleuve*”; others its verticality as a language at first mainly used with the new occupiers, as “*la langue de l’Etat*” and “the State polyglot”; and still others the source language Bobangi, as in “broken Bobangi” (Meeuwis 2001a; Meeuwis & Vinck 2003).
- <5> In 1884, the Europeans imposed the pidgin as language of interethnic and vertical communication in the important state post “Bangala-Station”, in 1890 renamed “Nouvelle-Anvers” (Coquilhat 1888; Thonner 1898; Buls 1899:158-161; Weeks 1913: 49; Hulstaert & De Boeck 1940; Hulstaert 1989; Mumbanza 1995:371; Vinck 1994; Meeuwis & Vinck 2003). The European officers had chosen the name “Bangala-Station” for their new post on the basis of what during his first passage in 1877 the explorer H. M. Stanley had thought was a local ethnic population called the “Bangala” (Stanley 1878:287; Mumbanza 1973; Hulstaert 1974; Burssens 1954; 1958; Samarin 1989a, Samarin 1989b; Mbulamoko 1991). The Europeans’ reasons for importing and imposing the recently emerged Bobangi pidgin in Bangala-Station, strictly speaking situated *outside* (north of) the original area of the Bobangi, included the following: individual autochthons of the villages on which grounds it was erected knew some Bobangi, as a second or third language, from their precolonial trade activities with the Bobangi. In addition, the scores of non-natives who were forcefully displaced to Bangala-Station as needed work force, or who moved there to try their luck, included (a small number of) Bobangi. The high linguistic diversity resulting from the extreme multiethnic and multilingual composition of the post – De Boeck recalled that in 1901-2 Bangala-Station was composed of “people *ex omni tribu et lingua*” and a real “Tower of Babel” (De Boeck 1940a: 91) – made a lingua franca a dear necessity, for which the Europeans considered the Bobangi pidgin the most ready candidate.

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<sup>2</sup> For critical overviews of the variety of hypotheses on the origins of Kikongo-Kituba suggested in the colonial literature, and new findings, see Hulstaert (1961); Bokamba (1993); Mufwene (1990; 1994; 1997; 2009; 2013); Samarin (1984; 1986; 1989b; 1990; 2013).

- <6> In this multilingual ecology, the language's function was not only that of a means of vertical, colonial communication between the Europeans and their foreign African troops on the one hand and the local and newly arrived Congolese on the other. It also immediately served as interethnic lingua franca among the linguistically diverse Congolese themselves who composed Bangala-Station's "Tower of Babel" (De Wilde 1893; 1894; Mumbanza 1971).
- <7> Because of its tied link with the station, the variety soon, i.e. from the late 1880s onwards, came to be called after it, i.e. "Bangala". Thus, there was first, i.e. from 1877, "Bangala" as an imagined ethnonym, i.e. the name Stanley and Europeans after him erroneously but determinedly continued using to refer to the populations living around the northwestern bend of the river; secondly there was "Bangala-Station", the name of the station the colonial occupiers founded in 1884 and named after the alleged ethnic group living there; and now, in this second half of the 1880s, "Bangala" also became a language name, referring to the Bobangi pidgin imported to the station and imposed there.
- <8> With regard to this use of "Bangala" as a language name, it is of importance to distinguish, on the one hand the "Bangala" trade language that was the result of the pidginization of Bobangi, from, on the other hand, the local languages of the communities originally living in and around Bangala-Station, whom as mentioned the Europeans had been ethnically categorizing as "Bangala" since 1877. The languages of the latter populations included Liboko, Mabale, Libinza, Boloki and other Bantu Zone-C languages, and certainly influenced the lingua franca Bangala as it developed further at the station. But the initial origins of the trade language are to be found in Bobangi.
- <9> In this context, it can also be noted that some of these original local communities occasionally adapted the language name "Bangala" to the rules of their own respective grammars. Speakers of Mabale, for instance, a language in which *ma-* was the prefix used for language names, occasionally called "Bangala" "Mangala" when conversing among themselves (Johnston 1902:897; Mumbanza 1995). But "Bangala" was certainly the general label by which Whites as well as Congolese referred to it.
- <10> These are some of the contemporaneous sources witnessing the developments I have described so far. The Congo Free State Lieutenant Charles Lemaire worked in the region in the late 1880s and 1890s (i.a. Laude 1951) and wrote about Bobangi as the source of the "commercial language":

"Tous ceux qui se rendent dans le Haut-Fleuve auront avantage à étudier le «kibangi»<sup>3</sup> qui entre pour la majeure partie dans la langue commerciale parlée le long des rives." (Lemaire 1897:4)

- <11> The Baptist missionary John Weeks (1861-1924) wrote about the period between 1880 and 1890 (see also Samarin 1986):

"On the main river there was a mixed language, commonly called among us the "trade language"; (...) There was a large element of Bobangi in it, some Kiswahili words, and a few Lower Congo words and phrases." (Weeks 1913:48)

- <12> Weeks's continuation is significant for the degree to which restructured Bobangi was, with time, strongly associated with, and named after, Bangala-Station:

"For a considerable time Diboko (Nouvelles Anvers), or as it is most frequently called by white men generally when speaking to natives, Bangala [Station], was the largest State station above Stanley Pool. A large number of natives were imported there from all the tribes on the Upper Congo, and this heterogeneous mass of humanity, often numbering over two thousand soldiers, workmen, and women, held communication with each other by means of

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<sup>3</sup> The author uses the prefix *ki-* ("Kibangi") on the basis of his knowledge of Kikongo and Kiswahili.

the ‘trade language’. The smartest of the natives in the towns adjacent to Diboko quickly learned this jargon, and used it more or less fluently when communicating with the State soldiers and workmen; and the white men hearing the natives of the neighbourhood talking this lingo jumped to the conclusion that it was their own tongue in which they were conversing, and thus called it the Bangala language, and by that name it is now generally known on the Upper Congo.” (Weeks 1913: 48-49)

<13> Writing down his observations of the 1890s, another missionary, John Whitehead, wrote:

“the Bobangi language is the most important one from Stanley Pool to beyond Bangala [Station]. It is also the basis of the eclectic ‘trade’ language used by the officers of the Congo Independent State, by traders and other travellers, and further copied from them by the strangers from other parts of the Congo brought to the various posts and stations to act as servants and labourers.” (Whitehead 1899:vi)

<14> In an unpublished document, the same Whitehead noted (Whitehead 1940s):

“the jargon agglomeration called Bangala whose basis is the Bobangi and whose most valuable vocabulary and phrasing is derived from the Bobangi”.

<15> In 1896, the German explorer Franz Thonner made a trip on the Congo and Mongala rivers. When arriving in Nouvelle-Anvers (Bangala-Station’s new name since 1890), he observed, as many other observers did at the time, that the trade language “Bangala” was different from the original languages of the communities living in and around Nouvelle-Anvers:

“Die Handelssprache ... scheint auch aus anderen Sprachen Wörter aufgenommen zu haben und ist vielleicht nicht die ursprüngliche Sprache der Bangala, denn es soll noch eine andere Sprache unter ihnen in Gebrauch sein, über welche ich aber nichts näheres in Erfahrung bringen konnte.” (Thonner 1898:20)

The same caution not to confuse the trade language “Bangala” with the languages of whom the Europeans had been labelling and categorizing as “the Bangala” was made in an early article by Alice Werner:

“A jargon called “Bangala” (not be confounded with the Ngala language, which is, how-ever, one of its constituents) has grown up, and is spreading rapidly over the whole of that part of the Congo.” (Werner 1905:62)

<16> The sociohistorical evidence documents, in sum, that and how pre-1900 Bangala, on which Lingala after 1900 has been based, grew out of Bobangi in the 1880s and 1890s. In addition to this, and independently, linguistic comparisons corroborate that the largest contribution to both the lexicon and the grammar of Lingala comes from Bobangi. Among these comparisons are Carrington (1954), Knappert (1958; 1979), Hulstaert (1959, 1989), Bokula (1983), Sesep (1986), and Roelandt’s vast grammatical-comparative study (1988).<sup>4</sup> In any case, linguistic-comparative and reconstructive techniques are indirect methods, taken recourse to in order to generate hypotheses about time frames for which no direct sociohistorical evidence is available, evidence which we do have at our disposal for the evolvement of Bobangi into Bangala.

## **1.2. The area of diffusion of pre-1900 Bangala**

<17> By the turn of the century, this Bobangi-based pidgin had spread as a lingua franca across an immense geographical expanse. The most southwestern tip of this expanse was Leopoldville (now Kinshasa). It then stretched along the Congo river and its affluents, and continued north

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<sup>4</sup> McWorther’s remark that such comparisons for Lingala are “rare in the literature” (McWhorter 1998: 811), and similar remarks made by Motingea (2002:287), therefore deserve to be revised.

of the river in the entire Uele basin. In northeastward direction its northeastern tip reached as far as the Redjaf-Lado district which today lies in southern South Sudan and northwestern Uganda (Witterwulghé 1899; Reynolds 1904; Madan 1905; Mackenzie 1910; Crabtree 1922; Stigand 1923; Abdelhay et al. 2016). The history of how this led to the actual linguistic border between Swahili's area of diffusion and Lingala's is described in Meeuwis (2016). A brief selection of contemporaneous testimonies to the vastness of Bangala's geographical coverage include:

“the state officers and agents who in their communications with the natives from the Coast to the Nile speak a Pidgin-Congo (which they call “Bangala”)” (Grenfell 1903)

“[I] learned the so-called Bangala language but in it, as spoken in the Azandé country, it appears to be freely sprinkled with Ki-Swahili, Kibangi-Irébu, and a little Arabic. It is spoken right through the Congo, being the commercial language. In every village of the Azandé will be found one or two natives who speak it, and in the Belgian posts one hears little else.” (Reynolds 1904:243, about his life and work in the Uele in the 1890s)

“In 1897 we spoke [the language] throughout the Uele, up to the Nile, told me Chaltin” (De Boeck 1911:239, my translation from Flemish)

“‘Bangala’ ... is understood, with here and there some minor adjustments, by the blacks who, between Leopoldville and Redjaf-Lado, live near the navigable rivers or caravan trails” (Prémontrés 1901:3, my translation from Flemish)

“le ‘Bangala’ est très souvent parlé par les soldats de la force publique, et, en effet, c’est plus ou moins parlé de l’Atlantique au Lac Tanganyika et des régions du Haut Kassai au Nil” (Stapleton 1903c:e-f)

### 1.3. Lingala after Bangala

- <18> Before 1901, no language by the name of “Lingala” appears in any of the more than hundred books written by pioneer explorers, accounts, diaries, travelogues, language and dialect lists, booklets containing useful phrases, military campaign documents with language lists, missionary correspondences and notes, etc. “Lingala” is not mentioned once in any of these historical sources, although they do mention scores of languages, including the smallest ones and all mentioned to them by the Congolese they met on their travels. Had the linguistic category Lingala been in existence, they could not have missed it. Its first appearance in a historical source is in 1901 (see Meeuwis 2019 for details). Lingala, instead, is the result of the structural and lexical expansion of the Bobangi-pidgin Bangala, an expansion that both happened “organically”, i.e. under the influence of local languages, and that was actively steered by missionary prescriptivism.
- <19> In the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a number of missionaries of various confessions and denominations working in the Congo Free State set out, independently of one another, to thoroughly and actively intervene into the grammar and lexicon of the pidgin. At least three groups of missionaries must be mentioned in this respect: the Catholic Missionaries of Scheut (*Congregatio Immaculati Cordis Mariae*) working in the Nouvelle-Anvers - Lisala area in northwestern Congo; the Catholic Premonstratensian Fathers, working in and around the town of Buta in the Uele region; and the Protestant Baptist Missionary Society, operating mission stations along almost the entire Congo river. The main “executives” of these active “corrections” of the pidgin were, for the Scheutists Egide De Boeck (1875-1944), for the Premonstratensians Léon Derikx (1860-1933), and for the Baptists Walter H. Stapleton (1864-1906) (after his death appearing with co-authors William Millman and Frank Longland).
- <20> The first written productions in which E. De Boeck enacted his language-engineering reform of the pidgin include De Boeck (1901/2; 1902/3; 1903; 1904a, b; see Meeuwis 2001a for a

complete overview). De Boeck called the product of his language work a “Congolese Esperanto,” which he placed in contrast with “the real languages of the Congo” (1914:1, my translation from the Flemish). It was the result of his objective to “*imposer des mots nouveaux, donc aussi des formes grammaticales*”<sup>5</sup> in order to “*former, peu à peu, un moyen de l’instruction, une langue plus correcte*” (De Boeck 1940b:124). The first corpus-planning productions by Derikx are Prémontrés (1901) and Derikx (1904; 1909). He identified his work as aiming to arrive at a “purified and improved ... a cleaner language” (cited by Bauwens 1913: 158, my translation from Flemish). The productions by Stapleton and colleagues are Stapleton (1903a, b, c), Stapleton & Millman (1911a, b), and Stapleton & Longland (1914), in which he explicated his intention to “shaping the Bangala” and “introduce into this lingua franca those grammatical forms of expression which would make it such [i.e. an effective common language]” (Stapleton 1903b:f-g).

<21> These language engineers’ motivation for embarking on such large-scale “corrections” of the pidgin were the negative perception of its structures and lexicon. They found of the language that it had “*aucune règle grammaticale*” and that “*apprendre à lire et à écrire ce ‘Bangala’, tel qu’il se parle, ... on tenterait chose aussi ridicule qu’impossible*” (De Boeck 1904a:3). They despised it for its “*énormités linguistiques*” (De Boeck 1940b:125). They sneered “that this speech form is deficient is beyond doubt... this gibberish” (Derikx 1904:x, my translation from Flemish). And they dismissed it as “a miserable patois of Kilolo and Kibangi” (Stapleton 1892:226), “a grammarless jargon traversing practically every rule of Bantu word and sentence construction” (Stapleton 1903b:c), “a jargon beneath contempt” (Stapleton 1904:n.p.), “a mongrel language” (Whitehead 1904:n.p.), “*Volapuk commercial*” (Buls 1899: 161), and “a grammarless jargon, a sort of Bantu-Pidgin-English, a bad mixture of the worst of every Congo dialect, strung together with flagrant disregard of the most elementary rules of syntax” (Longland 1911:76).

<22> It is De Boeck who from around the turn of the century also suggested to change the language name “Bangala” to “Lingala”. For this, De Boeck found inspiration in local languages in which the prefix *li-* was used for language names (a prefix that, incidentally, Lingala nowadays does not use for referring to language names). The Premonstratensians in their first publication (1901) still called the language “Bangala”, and only from their 1904 book onwards yielded to the name “Lingala”, explicitly referring to and accepting De Boeck’s suggestion. The Baptists, as can be judged from Stapleton’s book titles until 1914, longer remained reluctant to adopt the new name. In fact, not only the Baptists but all Protestant (English, American or Scandinavian) missions were hesitant: the first general meeting of the Protestant missions in the Congo at which some participants admitted to naming the language “Lingala” instead of “Bangala” was the sixth meeting, held in October 1911 (CMC 1911: 72ff). In a retrospective article of 1943, the Baptist Malcom Guthrie (1903-1972) regretted the “confusion” to which De Boeck’s renaming had led. He was convinced that the name “Lingala” should have been restricted to De Boeck’s (and others’) “corrected”, written variety only, not to how the pidgin actually remained spoken, for which the name “Bangala” should have been retained.

“Lingala ... has probably been put forward as a reaction against Bangala... A considerable literature has been produced in this dialect, but except in those places where it has been imposed by European influence it seems likely to remain of academic interest... [T]he lingua franca that is actually in use all along that central section of the River Congo ... serves simply as the means of intercourse between the members of a large number of tribes.

<sup>5</sup> In order to do as much justice as possible to the original sources, I leave French and (most) German citations untranslated. Citations from Flemish, Danish and other less accessible languages are translated.

Confusion has arisen because the name Lingala has been given by Europeans to this language also.” (Guthrie 1943:118)

- <23> Guthrie admitted that when he arrived in the Congo in the 1930s, the Catholic missionaries had already produced so many prescriptive publications using the new language name for both the created and the real language form, that it was difficult to change it back (1943:118).
- <24> Incidentally, a small number of Belgians, too, long regretted De Boeck’s generalization of his new language name to cover both the corrected, literary variety and the actually spoken one. A case in point was the specialist of colonial education Oswald Liesenborghs, who until the early 1940s refused to refer to the spoken variety by anything else than “Bangala” (1939; 1941/42). In the long run, however, everyone yielded.
- <25> To be sure, Bangala after 1901 did not only undergo this type of engineered structural expansion “from above”, but – and even more significantly – natural, organic expansion “from below” as well. The lingua franca Bangala is said to have acquired its first native speakers in the late 1890s and early 1900s,<sup>6</sup> especially in new proto-urban centers such as Nouvelle-Anvers, Leopoldville, and others (Stapleton 1903b:g; Courboin 1908:viii). This nativization amplified in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and continued well beyond (Hulstaert 1939; Barney 1934; Carrington 1954; L.B. De Boeck 1949; 1952; 1953; De Rop 1953; Mufwene 1989, Mufwene 2003). Organic expansion/extension of the structure and lexicon of the pidgin took place in these processes of becoming a community’s main language. Also, as the pidgin by 1900 had already spread throughout a vast territory, it also continued to undergo expanding influence from all the local languages. This adstrate influence was contingently different in each locale. Leopoldville was particularly important in this respect, shaping Bangala into most of Lingala as we know it today. These two post-1900 factors, i.e. nativization and continuing post-pidgin adstrate influence led to organic expansions of the pidgin’s structure and lexicon that were relatively unrelated to the missionaries’ expansion-from-above efforts. It is important to stress that the focus of my attention in this contribution is *not* on any of the structurally expanding/extending developments of the language after 1900, be they from above or from below. It is on the grammatical features of Bangala as it was spoken as a pidgin before 1900.
- <26> To very briefly mention the effects of the corrective efforts from above, it can be summarized that the Premonstratensians’ work died out soon after it was launched (Meeuwis 2006:129). The Baptists’ also subsided after 1914 and was only taken up again in the early 1930s by Malcolm Guthrie (Guthrie 1935 and later editions), whose take on language was in general more descriptive but whose Lingala oeuvre cannot systematically be called descriptive only. Corpus-planning and guided ‘standardization’ was certainly also part of his plans with Lingala, and left its marks in the way Congolese having grown up in Protestant circles learned to write the language. The Scheutists’ attempts at language reform, finally, were the most effective of the three, especially influencing actual speech in the Nouvelle-Anvers and Lisala area, as well as high-register liturgical language and written productions everywhere (whence common identifications as “a book language”, “school Lingala”, “the missionary language”, “Catholic Lingala” and others, see e.g. Liesenborghs 1941/42: 93-95). But the impact of their prescriptions on the actually spoken language in the homes and streets of Leopoldville, and in the regions influenced by the capital, have been minor.

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<sup>6</sup> By this I do not wish to imply that nativization is a strictly necessary ingredient, let alone a bioprogrammatic prerequisite, for the transition from pidgin to creole (Sankoff & Laberge 1973). Also, I consider the transition from pidgin to creole to be gradational rather than sudden (cf. the notion of “trans-creolization”) and accept that not all creoles require prior pidginization (Thomason & Kaufman 1988; Arends 1992; DeGraff 1999; Velupillai 2015:172).



#### 1.4. Present-day relevance

- <27> The relevance of a grammatical description of the pidgin as spoken before 1900 is twofold. First of all, despite the expansions from above and below after 1900, what throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century became “Lingala” as we know it today (see Meeuwis 2010; 2013; in press), still reflects many features of Bangala as it was spoken before 1900. In the conclusions, I will point some of these features out.
- <28> Secondly, the above-described geographical diffusion of Bangala into eastern and north-eastern Congo up until the Nile, a diffusion that was complete before 1900, remained largely unchanged throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Courboin 1908; Czekanowski 1924:114; Elge 1926; Van Mol 1927; Barney 1934; Guthrie 1935:205ff; Carrington 1954). In these eastern and northeastern regions, the language name never changed to “Lingala” – it is today still known there as “Bangala”. And the language form, too, has moved much less far away from pre-1900 Bangala than has been the case for Lingala in the west (Abdel-Rahman El-Rasheed 1984; Edema 1994; Nassenstein 2019; Meeuwis 2019). This is due to the fact that in the east and northeast the local languages were mostly of non-Bantu stock and also typologically much more diverse amongst themselves than was the case in the west. Due to their mutual diversity, they could much less ‘reinforce’ one another in influencing and expanding Bangala’s lexicon and grammar. Present-day northeastern Bangala, correctly classified by Maho as distinct from Lingala under the code C30A (Maho 2009, while Lingala is C30B), looks in fact even more like pre-1900 Bangala than Lingala does. Our understanding of present-day northeastern Bangala will therefore greatly benefit from a comparison with pre-1900 Bangala.

#### 1.5. “Pidginization”?

- <29> Reviews in the domain of contact linguistics have brought to the fore that on purely formal-linguistic grounds no strict distinction between pidgins/creoles on the one hand and other types of contact-induced language change on the other can be maintained (DeGraff 1999:11; Mufwene 2003:196-197; Ansalado & Matthews 2007; Michaelis et al. 2013; Webb 2013:317; Migge 2017). Not only is the boundary between these “cumbrous rubrics” (Wansbrough 1996:250) blurry; the only usefully differentiating factor seems to be the socio-historical setting of the emergence of pidgins/creoles. This includes the sudden need of “groups of people [who] are in close and repeated contact, and need to communicate with each other but have no language in common” (Velupillai 2015:15). But it also includes stereotypical European imaginings of a specific “creole ethnicity”, and is based on “a set of sociohistorically rooted dogmas with foundations in (neo-)colonial power relations” (DeGraff 2005:576; see also Mufwene 2018:40-42). The relevance of colonial power relations for understanding the context of emergence of pidgins/creoles has also been stressed by Mair, who identifies them as having typically appeared in “the margins of Empire” (Mair 2010: 441), and early on by Loreto Todd, who poignantly stated that “the more we study ... pidgins and Creoles, the more they speak to us of the suffering inflicted on one branch of humanity by another” (Todd 1984:251). As described above, the sociohistorical context in which Bangala emerged in the earliest years of Belgian imperialism in Central Africa, was marked exactly by such pronounced patterns of oppressive inequality between European colonial occupiers (and their troops) and the Congolese populations, even if Bangala’s lexifier is not a European but an African language (Bobangi).
- <30> Many of the linguistic features of pre-1900 Bangala, as my description below will show, are reminiscent of what in the scholarly literature is identified as “pidginization”. These features include: the loss of the meaning-distinctive tone (i.a., McWhorter 1998:793; Velupillai 2015: 295ff for pidginization in general); the scarcity of function words (i.a., Lumsden 1999:142ff);

word category indeterminacy, generalization, polysemy, multifunctionality (i.a., Mühlhäusler 1997:159-160; Lumsden 1999:142ff; Parkvall & Bakker 2013:34); more than average use of circumlocution (Holm 1988:73); mixing, calquing, and relexification (Velupillai 2015); inflection reduction in both the noun and the verb system with a degrammaticalization away from morphological syntheticity towards syntactic analyticization (Markey 1982; Meijer & Muysken 1977; McWhorter 1998:792-795; Lumsden 1999:142ff; Velupillai 2015:30; Haspelmath & Michaelis 2017); generalization of imperative and infinitive verb forms (Versteegh 2014); and others. When reviewing the linguistic make-up of pre-1900 Bangala, one is indeed more than superficially reminded of descriptions of what of tradition have been categorized as “pidgins” and “creoles” worldwide.

<31> For the reasons given in the two preceding paragraphs, and despite the imprecision of pidgins /creoles as a distinct category, I nevertheless choose to retain the term “pidgin(ization)” to refer to the linguistic simplification processes that led to pre-1900 Bangala, and use it loosely interchangeable with “restructuring” (Neumann-Holzschuh & Schneider 2000). I retain its use (i) because of the recognizable colonial-imperial sociohistorical setting of Bangala’s emergence, and (ii) because I find it useful as a hands-on label of convenience, allowing for practical recognizability with linguistic descriptions in the pidgin and creole literature.

<32> Finally, it is for my purposes useful to maintain a linguistic distinction between “pidgin(ization)” on the one hand and “creol(ization)” on the other. For the former I preserve the idea of restriction/reduction in grammar and lexicon due to the lingua franca’s limited function as means of occasional communication (Holms 1989:7; Wansbrough 1996; Velupillai 2015). For “creolization”, I do not use one of the many understandings this term has received in anthropology, history and cultural studies (see for instance Palmié 2006), but I maintain the linguistic notion of complexification/expansion/extension in grammar and lexicon due to the intensification of the social functions of the lingua franca and its becoming the main, regularly employed means of communication for a or more communities (Holms 1989:7; Wansbrough 1996; Velupillai 2015), with nativization as a possible but not necessary condition (Singler 1988).

## 2. The sources and the data: Methodological restrictions

<33> The data on which my description of pre-1900 Bangala is based are obtained from the following two broad source types: firstly, pioneer travelers’, prospectors’, traders’ and explorers’ accounts, diaries, expedition reports, military campaign records (see also Fabian 1986a:18), missionaries’ correspondence and notes, and secondly practical language guides containing word lists, including booklets with so-called “useful phrases” (*phrases usuelles*), all documenting the relevant time frame. As for the first type, over the last twenty years I read through as many of these records of the relevant period as possible (see also Jones 2018), culling and collecting all possible cases of direct speech, however brief. As for the second broad type, these are mostly slim publications, often in “polyglotta” table form, produced by Europeans in order to allow successors to quickly learn words, phrases, short conversations in a handful of languages, among which Bangala (“Lingala”, as mentioned, appears nowhere in any of these pre-1901 sources). They had no linguistic-analytic pretense, but are of the most practical quick-learning kind, reflecting the lingua franca as actually spoken rather than how to correct it.<sup>7</sup>

<34> The following source-critical restrictions were applied:

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<sup>7</sup> In the 1980s, Johannes Fabian (1985; 1986a, b; 1991) made fascinating analyses of the colonial and intercultural-colonialist contexts in which these ‘guides’ were produced.

1. In keeping with my introductory notes above, the data all come from the period and region in which the language in question, whether still called “*la langue commerciale*” and the like or “Bangala”, was in its pidgin stage, avoiding data evidencing the later linguistic extension/expansion (from below or guided from above). In this respect, the publication dates of the sources should not lead to confusion: the books were sometimes published years after the period of which they are witnesses. It is the witnessed period, i.e. from 1881 to roughly 1900/1905, which was key to my selection.
2. Evidently, the publications in the language-corrective, corpus-planning tradition after 1901 such as De Boeck’s, Stapleton’s, and others, were expressly eschewed. In the same vain, no Bible and other religious text productions or school materials, were used either, as these are texts in which the early missionaries implemented and hoped to spread their corrections of the pidgin.
3. Preference was given to quotations of Congolese speaking to the whites, of the type “Then the natives said ‘xyz’”, as well as quotations from Congolese using the language among each other. Only in second instance, i.e. as confirmation of the data of the first type, were European authors’ reports of their own speech allowed into the data set. This was done in order to avoid what were merely the European traveler’s individual mistakes of learning (original) Bobangi. Although such learning-mistake processes are part of the initial phases of pidginization, I decided not to include them in the data set in order to eliminate idiosyncrasies and ensure a description of the general, common features of the pidgin. In this respect, it must be mentioned that almost all selected authors had a clear and explicit awareness of the distinction between Bobangi on the one hand and the Bobangi-pidgin Bangala on the other. Authors such as Wtterwulghe and Lemaire, for instance, organized their booklets across contrastive columns between Bobangi and its pidgin (whether they called it “Broken Bobangi”, “Bangala”, “*la langue commerciale*” or any other).
4. Also, in order to avoid not only deficient language *learning* on behalf of the traveler, but also possible instances of his deficient *hearing/noting* of how the Congolese spoke the lingua franca, and also in order to ensure that the data represent the stable pidgin, rather than ad hoc, jargon-type language solutions,<sup>8</sup> *recurrence* was my quintessential guiding principle in identifying a feature. By this I understand (i) recurrence across authors and sources, (ii) recurrence across quoted speakers and across speech occasions, and (iii) recurrence across regions. The criterion of feature recurrence throughout the sources has been of utmost importance in avoiding coincidence, adhocisms, contingency, local specificity, individuality, and sheer error.
5. The criterion of recurrence also entails that my description does not cover the regional differences that certainly marked the pidgin: it is limited to *its core features*, shared across the entire area of diffusion. This makes my enumeration of Bangala’s features shorter than what could be attained by a regionally maximalist option, but it also renders it more reliable.

<35> This is, in chronological order and with the full bibliographical information included in the references at the end of this article, the list of the sources from which the linguistic data were culled. These are not all the historical sources that were *scrutinized*, but only those in which I found linguistic data adequate and representative according to the above-mentioned five criteria.

Jeannest (1883)	Morrison & Pauwels (1895) <sup>9</sup>	Reynolds (1904)
Johnston (1884)	Maistre (1895)	Madan (1905) <sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> See Mühlhäusler (1997:128) and Velupillai (2015:15-20) for the distinction, although gradational, between the ad hoc volatility of jargons and the stability and conventionality of pidgins.

<sup>9</sup> No date of publication appears in the book, but in his article on the emergence of Sango (1982a:36), William Samarin convincingly reconstructed that it was produced between 1895 and 1897.

<sup>10</sup> This book contains an English vocabulary and expression list with empty columns next to it, in which the European traveler could record the equivalent words in the African languages s/he met on her/his

Kund (1885)	Jespersen (1898ff) <sup>11</sup>	Johnston (1908a)
Cambier (1888-1889)	Thonner (1898)	Johnston (1908b)
Coquilhat (1888)	Wtterwulge (1899)	Courboin (1908)
Ward (1890)	Bentley (1900a)	Ward (1910)
Glave (1893)	Bentley (1900b)	Weeks (1913)
Lemaire (1894)	Prémontrés (1901)	Czekanowski (1924)
De Wilde (1894)	Johnston (1902)	Jespersen (1930)

### 3. The linguistic features of Bangala before Lingala

#### 3.1. Preliminary notes

- <36> What follows is primarily a *description* of the linguistic features of the language. Occasionally, *explanations* in terms of the possible origins of a feature will also be adduced, but there is no pretense to achieve this systematically.
- <37> The example vignettes are organized as follows: the first line contains the phrase or word as it originally appears in the source, maintaining the original spelling and other particularities; the word that I specifically wish to discuss is underlined in this first line. The second line offers my own glosses. The third line contains, in quotation marks, the original translation as offered by the author, if necessary followed by a clarification from me between square brackets. This fourth line also identifies the source.
- <38> All the information on original Bobangi, to which I compare its pidginized variety, is drawn from the following sources, which I will not repeat except when specifically needed: MacBeath (1940); Meeussen (1956); Roelandt (1988); Sims (1886; 1888-1889); Whitehead (1899; 1940s; 1949a, b); Motingea (2010).

#### 3.2. Loss of the meaning-distinguishing function of tone

- <39> The evidence shows that the language did not make use of tone distinctions at a tonemic, i.e. meaning-distinguishing, level, neither in the lexicon nor in the grammar. It did fulfill such meaning-distinctive roles in original Bobangi. This functional load of tone was lost during pidginization. (After 1900, during the phases of expansion/extension, Lingala regained meaning-distinguishing tone under the influence of adstrates; but these post-1900 processes of regain lie outside the scope of my contribution.)
- <40> Loss or reduction of the functional load of tone has often been mentioned in pidginization studies worldwide, not only when tone languages meet with non-tone languages, but also in contexts of contact between tone languages (i.a., McWhorter 1998:795ff).

#### 3.3. Phonology

- <41> To be noticed is the de-prenasalization of word-initial unvoiced consonants. For instance, in Bobangi, the word for ‘goat’ was *ntaba*, while in the pidgin this became *taba*.

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way, for personal use. Madan himself does not provide any African language data. The owner of the copy that I consulted, found in the library of Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda, noted down Bangala words and phrases in this column, explicitly writing “Bangala” on top. Thus, the data that I use are from this anonymous and unknown owner of the copy, not Madan’s.

<sup>11</sup> I write “1898 and following years” because this reference covers the unpublished archives of Knud Jespersen (1873-1941), a Danish officer who worked in the western Congo Free State and in the Belgian Congo after 1908. These archives include Jespersen’s diary he kept during his 33 years in the Congo (1898-1931), as well as correspondence he wrote from there and wordlists he compiled in the region. His archives are kept at *Det Danske Udvandrerarkiv* (‘The Danish Emigration Archive’) in Aalborg, Denmark.

- (1) Ṭa moko, banto moko, na lisasi moko  
goat one person one with bullet one  
“En Ged og en Mand med een Patron” [Danish: ‘One goat and one man with one bullet’] (Jespersen 1930:19)
- (2) ṭaba  
goat  
“chèvre” (Maistre 1895:289)
- (3) na ṣimma  
at behind  
“après” (Morrisson & Pauwels 1895:12)
- (4) pembe  
white  
“blanc” (Morrisson & Pauwels 1895:13)
- (5) kingu  
neck  
“cou” (Morrisson & Pauwels 1895:15)
- (6) kombo  
name  
“nom” (Morrisson & Pauwels 1895:24)

### 3.4. Lexicon

#### 3.4.1. Non-Bobangi lexical input

<42> As mentioned in the Introduction, the main lexifier was Bobangi, which is borne out both by the sociohistorical data documenting the pidgin’s emergence and by modern lexical comparisons. The vast majority of the vocabulary of pre-1900 Bangala is Bobangi.<sup>12</sup> Below is an overview of examples of lexical input from the other languages that partook in the pidginization process. My study being mainly an overview of the *grammatical* features of the pidgin, my discussion below does not pretend to be a systematic study of this non-Bobangi lexical input.

##### 3.4.1.1. From Swahili, and through Swahili from Arabic

<43> Many of the workers/soldiers composing the troops with which the white officers and missionaries penetrated the region of the western section of the Congo river, had been hired in Zanzibar and on the East African coast (i.a. Samarin 1989a). They were native speakers or had second-language mastery of Swahili. A considerable number of white officers also had some knowledge of Swahili. Therefore, many Swahili words co-constituted the pidginization of Bobangi in the period under investigation (see also Weeks 1913:48 for a contemporaneous testimony of this). Examples, all appearing amply in the pre-1900 Bangala data and none of which is original to Bobangi or any other language of the western region, are *kati* ‘inside’, *fimbo* ‘whip’, *kiti* ‘chair’, *mandefu* ‘beard’, *kamata* ‘grab’, *kufa* ‘die’, *lala* ‘sleep, lie’, *kuta* ‘meet’.

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<sup>12</sup> Several authors have statistically calculated that this is still the case for Lingala (i.a. Knappert 1958; Hulstaert 1959; 1989; De Rop 1960:18; Bokula 1983).

- <44> *Sanduku* ‘trunk’ (see e.g. example 13) appears amply in pre-1900 Bangala. In Swahili, it was a loanword from Arabic *sundūq* (same meaning). Likewise, *munduki* ‘gun’ (see e.g. example 52) also appears in the pre-1900 Bangala data. It was an adaptation of the Swahili *bunduki* ‘gun’, which itself had its origin in Arabic *bundūq* ‘hazelnut’, ‘bullet’.
- <45> *Mingi* ‘many’, ‘a lot’ (see e.g. examples 52, 62, 69) was another input from Swahili origin. It was not present in any of the languages of western Congo. It was present in Kikongo-Kituba (“Kikongo ya Leta”), the pidgin that had emerged a bit earlier in the southwestern Congo out of Kikongo varieties and that also influenced Bobangi’s pidginization through the Bakongo helpers recruited to complete the East and West African troops (see above). The word *mingi* therefore might have entered the Bobangi pidgin as a Swahili word indirectly, i.e. via Kikongo-Kituba, as it may have been introduced directly, i.e. as Swahili input from the East African and Zanzibari workers/soldiers involved. Most probably, both sources reinforced one another.

### 3.4.1.2. From Kikongo, and through Kikongo from Portuguese and English

- <46> As mentioned, on their way upstream before reaching the Bobangi area the European officers and campaign leaders recruited “Bakongo”, i.e. speakers of varieties of the Kikongo language cluster, to complement the East Africans and West Africans with whom they had come to the Congo. Some of the whites also learned some Kikongo-Kituba themselves (Mufwene 2013; 2009; Samarin 1989a; 2013). Present-day Lingala contains a considerable number of words from Kikongo or Kikongo-Kituba,<sup>13</sup> but of importance is to establish which ones date back to the pidginization phase before 1900, and which ones are from a later date, especially from after 1940 when the demographic influx of Bakongo into Leopoldville increased exponentially (see Luyckfasseel & Meeuwis 2018). I attested in the pre-1900 sources the following Kikongo or Kikongo-Kituba words: *mingi* ‘many’ (from Swahili, but possibly through Kikongo-Kituba), *sibula* ‘open’, *mbote* ‘good, greeting’, *mbisi* ‘fish’ (Kund 1885:387 writes *mbissi*; the Swahili word *samaki* was also often used in the pidgin), *Nzambi* ‘God’.
- <47> Also attested in the historical data are a number of words of Portuguese origin. There was no direct contact between native speakers of Portuguese and contributors to the emergence of the Bobangi pidgin. But some of the contributors were West Africans with knowledge of Portuguese-based pidgins and creoles (Samarin 1986; 1989a). In addition, Portuguese words had already entered Kikongo since the 15<sup>th</sup>-century contacts between Portuguese and the Kongo Kingdom. Examples in pre-1900 Bangala are *sapato* ‘shoe’, *kuruze* ‘cross’, and *mesa* ‘table’, the introduction of the latter possibly having been reinforced by the contact with Swahili-speakers.
- <48> *Mbeto* (sometimes *mbetu*) ‘bed’, for which I can find no other etymon than the Flemish *‘bed’* or the English ‘bed’, also appears in the data. It might have come with English- or Flemish-speaking missionaries directly, but it might also have reached the Bobangi pidgin indirectly, i.e. via Kikongo-Kituba and/or via English-based West African pidgins spoken by the West African troops.

### 3.4.1.3. From West African languages and pidgins

- <49> Widely attested in the pre-1900 Bangala data (and still present in today’s Lingala) is *potopoto* ‘mud’. The word is foreign to Bobangi or any other original language of the region; in Bobangi for instance the equivalent is *libelé*. Holm (1988:88; 2000:121) mentions the presence of *potopoto* ‘mud’ in Carribean creoles such as Papiamentu and Jamaican Creole, and traces it back to the West African languages Twi, Yoruba, and Baule. Westermann (1905:415)

<sup>13</sup> Samarin (2013) rightly invokes the fact that Kikongo-Kituba, Bangala, and Sango formed a “sequential chain” of vehicular languages in the late 19th Century.

gives *poto* ‘muddy’ for Ewe. It is fair to hypothesize that it was brought into the Bobangi pidgin by the West African workers/soldiers.

<49> Widely attested in the pre-1900 Bangala data (and still present in today’s Lingala) is *potopoto* ‘mud’. The word is foreign to Bobangi or any other original language of the region; in Bobangi for instance the equivalent is *libelé*. Holm (1988:88; 2000:121) mentions the presence of *potopoto* ‘mud’ in Carribean creoles such as Papiamentu and Jamaican Creole, and traces it back to the West African languages Twi, Yoruba, and Baule. Westermann (1905: 415) gives *poto* ‘muddy’ for Ewe. It is fair to hypothesize that it was brought into the Bobangi pidgin by the West African workers/soldiers.

### 3.4.2. Categorical broadening

<50> With this title, I bring together all types of polysemization, heterosemization, homonimization, category shift, multifunctionalization, etc. of a part of speech. This process has been widely attested in pidginization (Lumsden 1999; Velupillai 2015, among many others). The five cases discussed below are illustrations rather than an exhaustive list.

#### 3.4.2.1. na

<51> In original Bobangi the word *na* served as the coordinating conjunction ‘and’ and as a preposition with the (limited) range of meanings ‘with’ and ‘by means of’. In the pidgin it was broadened (i) to cover these but also many other prepositional meanings, namely ‘with’, ‘by means of’, ‘by’, ‘to’, ‘from’, ‘in’, ‘on’, ‘at’, ‘through’, ‘along’; but also (ii) to be additionally used as the connective, which it was not in Bobangi (see below for information on the morphological invariance of the connective in the pidgin; here, I discuss only its generalization across word categories). Wtterwulghe observed about Bangala: “*Le mot na est universel et au moyen de ce mot il faut pouvoir rendre toutes les pensées*” (Wtterwulghe 1899: 27).

<52> The following are examples of the broadened semantics of *na* as a preposition:

(7) masanga na Putu  
 alcohol from Europe  
 “Vin fra Europa” [Danish: ‘wine from Europe’] (Jespersen 1930:85)

(8) n’gai abéli na m’pembe  
 1SG be\_sick at tooth  
 “Ik heb tandpijn” [Flemish: ‘I have tootache’] (Prémontrés 1901:36)

(9) yo appessi na n’geï gombé maboko mibali  
 2SG give to 1SG cloth arms two  
 “vous me donnez deux brasses d’étoffe” (Wtterwulghe 1899:29)

(10) gei aké na Niangara  
 1SG go to Niangara  
 “Je vais à Niangara” (Wtterwulghe 1899:26)

(11) banga atzasi na Dungu  
 3PL be to 1SG  
 “Ils sont à Dungu” (Wtterwulghe 1899:26)

(12) geï aléli yé na n'zila  
 1SG drink 3SG on road  
 “je le boirai en chemin” (Morrisson & Pauwels 1895:63)

(13) Kutia biloko oyo na sanduku  
 put thing DEM in trunk  
 “Mettez cet objet dans la caisse” (Wtterwulghe 1899:27)

<53> These are some examples of its new use in the pidgin as a *connective*. In original Bobangi, the connective was not *na*, but a class-variable unbound morpheme (for most classes this was an unbound morpheme homophonous with the noun prefix).

(14) monoko na ndako  
 mouth CONN house  
 “Thür” [German: ‘door’] (Thonner 1898:90)

In Bobangi, the connective in this phrase would have been *mo*.

(15) niama na djoko  
 meat CONN elephant  
 “Elefantkød” [Danish: ‘elephant meat’] (Jespersen 1930:115)

(16) May na ndimbo na ye kukanga te  
 water CONN rubber CONN it close NEG  
 “Son latex ne coagule pas” (Courboin 1908:65-66)

(17) molangi na massanga  
 bottle CONN alcohol  
 “bouteille de vin” (Morrisson & Pauwels 1895:63)

(18) mukongo na maboko  
 back CONN hand  
 “Handrücken” [German: ‘back of hand’] (Czekanowski 1924:636)

<54> In Bobangi, the connective (not *na* but a class-variable morpheme) served to form pronoun possessives, the language lacking a separate paradigm for these. In the pidgin, the categorial generalization of *na* also reached this part of the grammar, as exemplified below. Alice Werner also observed this for pre-1900 Bangala when writing that “‘Bangala’ has frankly given up the possessive adjective. The emphatic or ‘self-standing’ form of the personal pronoun is preceded by *na*, so that ‘my’ is literally ‘with me,’ and so on” (Werner 1905:64).

(19) deko na jo  
 sibling CONN 2SG  
 “din Broder” [Danish: ‘your brother’] (Jespersen 1930:42)

In Bobangi, *ndeko o yo*.



- (20) ndeko na ngay Boyo  
 sibling CONN 1SG Boyo  
 “Mon frère Boio” (Courboin 1908:33)
- (21) Mundele, kutala mikanda na ngai  
 white\_man look documents CONN 1SG  
 “Blanc, voici mes papiers” (Courboin 1908:33)
- (22) mama na n’gei  
mother CONN 1SG  
 “ma mère” (Morrisson & Pauwels 1895:50)
- (23) mbuka na biso  
 village CONN 1PL  
 “our village” (Johnston 1902:954)
- (24) na jé  
 CONN 3SG  
 “le sien” (Morrisson & Pauwels 1895:29)

<55> Generalization and multifunctionalization of words, and their resulting category indeterminacy, is a largely attested feature of pidginization worldwide, regardless of the adstrates, i.e. a feature of internally motivated development. Thomason & Kaufman (1988) and other scholars of contact linguistics rightly argue that language change does not necessarily presuppose a binary opposition between internally motivated changes and external influence, as both can reinforce one another in what they called “multiple causation” (1988:57-64) and others “synergy” (Van Coetsem 1988:41). Against this background, for the categorial broadening of *na*, it is worth mentioning that at least two of the languages that were spoken by the West African workers/soldiers participating in Bobangi’s pidginization process, namely Krio (Sierra Leone Creole English) and Igbo, have *na* as a general locative preposition. Incidentally, they have also contributed the word to a range of Caribbean pidgins and creoles (Holm 1988:73, 90, 207; Buschor 1999; Lumsden 1999:151). There is no reason to ignore the role these West African languages have played in co-shaping the usage and meaning range of *na* in the Bobangi pidgin.

#### 3.4.2.2. *ye*

<56> In Bobangi, *ye* was the substitutive for the third person singular with animate referents only, inanimate referents having a different substitutive for each noun class. In the pidgin, *ye* was generalized to also cover inanimate referents, and for all noun classes.

- (25) akangi je na n’gombe  
 close 3SG with cloth  
 “Doe er een doekje om” [Flemish: ‘enclose it (the wound) in a cloth’]  
 (Prémontrés 1901:36)

The substitutive *je* here refers to a wound. In accordance with Flemish spelling, these authors used the grapheme <j> for the palatal approximant.

- (26) alambi kawa kutia yé na molangi;  
 cook coffee place 3SG in bottle  
 geï aléli yé na n'zila  
 1SG drink 3SG in road  
 “Faites du café et mettez-le dans la bouteille; je le boirai en chemin”  
 (Morrisson & Pauwels 1895:63)

The substitutive *yé* twice with inanimate referent (the coffee).

- (27) Kutala moy na ye pilamoko na ye pilamoko ngula.  
 look belly CONN 3SG alike with 3SG alike red\_powder  
 May na ndimbo na ye kukanga te.  
 water CONN rubber CONN 3SG coagulate NEG  
 Bisu kulamba ye na may na moto  
 1PL cook 3SG in water CONN fire  
 “regarde, l’intérieur est comme la poudre rouge. Son latex ne coagule pas.  
 Nous le coagulerons avec de l’eau bouillante” (Courboin 1908:65-66)

Substitutive *ye* used three times with an inanimate referent.

- (28) Mundele ngay atali ye na djela.  
 white\_man 1SG see 3SG in road  
 Ngay alobi: oyo lalonza na mundele na ngay  
 1SG say: this watch CONN white\_man CONN 1SG  
 “Blanc, je l’ai trouvé dans le chemin. Je me suis dit: voilà la montre de mon  
 maître, aujourd’hui je vais aller la lui donner” (Courboin 1908:60)

Substitutive *ye* used with inanimate referent (the watch).

### 3.4.2.3. mosusu

<57> In Bobangi *-sisu* only belonged to the category of adjectives, i.e. the class-variable adjective for ‘other’. In the pidgin, *mosusu* was (i) petrified with the class 3 prefix *mo-* (sometimes written as *mu-*) (a feature also observed for Bangala by Werner in 1905:63), (ii) categorially broadened to also function as an adverb (‘again’), and (iii) categorially broadened to also function as the noun for ‘more’.

- (29) Aye mosussu  
 have come again  
 “De er her” [Danish: ‘They have come back’] (Jespersen 1930:96)

- (30) mussusu  
 more  
 “encore” (Morrisson & Pauwels 1895:17)

### 3.4.2.4. be

<58> In Bobangi *be* was an intensifying adverb only, meaning ‘very’, and was not capable of being used as a quantifying determiner to a noun. During pidginization, its use was broadened to include this latter function as well.

- (31) batu be  
 persons many  
 “plenty of people” (Bentley 1900, vol. I:169)

### 3.4.2.5. Noun-to-verb and verb-to-noun multifunctionalization

- <59> In the pidgin, a number of parts of speech that in Bobangi were only nouns, came to function, in unchanged, underived form, as verbs as well, and vice-versa. Mühlhausler (1997:159-160) and Parkvall & Bakker (2013:34) have mentioned this type of categorial broadening as one of the typical strategies to maximally exploit a limited lexicon.
- <60> Examples are: *lokuta*, which in Bobangi was only a noun (‘falsehood’) and which in the pidgin also appears as the verb for ‘to lie’ (e.g., Jespersen 1898ff:22; Wtterwulghé 1899:27); *moibi*, originally only ‘thief’ and in the pidgin both ‘thief’ and ‘to steal’ (e.g., Johnston 1884:463; Morrisson & Pauwels 1895:31; Jespersen 1898ff:27); the infinitive *kokenda*, used not only for ‘to go’ but also ‘a trip’ (Jespersen 1898ff:25); the infinitive *kosala*, used not only for ‘to work’ but also for the noun ‘work’ (Morrisson & Pauwels 1895:30); the noun *mbangu* ‘speed’ used also for the verb ‘to run’ (Lemaire 1897:15). All these instances of cross-category multifunctionalization made Wtterwulghé remark “*La plupart des substantifs se traduisent de la même façon que les verbes*” (1899:27).

### 3.4.3. Semantic broadening

- <61> The Bobangi-pidgin made use of only one copula, namely *-zal-* (variably written as *-jal-*, *-tzal-*, and others). This copula did not come from Bobangi, which distinguished between a copula for identification, namely *-nga*, and one for location, namely *-lik-*. It instead came from the adstrates Liboko (Cambier 1891:87) and Boloki (Motingea 2002:321-322), which both had *-zal-* for locational and comitative ‘to be’ (and other copulas for identificational ‘to be’). During the formation of the pidgin, only *-zal-* (not the other copulas) were taken over from these adstrates, and its semantics was broadened to cover all semantic subtypes (locational, identificational, etc.). Examples of this can be found in vignettes 11, 53, 55, and 65.
- <62> In a smaller lexicon, each noun covers a wider range of meanings and uses. Two Bangala examples are: *kombo*, which in Bobangi only meant ‘a person’s nickname’, and which in Bangala was used to refer to nicknames but also to anthroponyms, toponyms, hydronyms and all other types of proper names. This can be seen in example 6. Other examples are available in Wtterwulghé (1899:29) and Czekanowski (1924:640). The word *pembe*, which did not come from Bobangi but from Kikongo varieties, where it only denoted ‘white’ (e.g. Koelle 1854 [1963]; Guinness 1882; Craven & Barfield 1883; Visseq 1889), in Bangala was generalized to denote ‘white’ as well as the nouns ‘tooth’, ‘elephant tusk’, ‘bone’, ‘fishbone’, etc. Examples can be found in 4, 8, and 36.

### 3.4.4. Allomorph reduction

In Bobangi, the stem of the adnominal proximative demonstrative (‘this’) was *-yo* for determining class 1 nouns, and *-ye* for all other classes. In Bangala, *oyo* was generalized for all classes.<sup>14</sup>

- (32) biloko oyo  
 thing DEM  
 “cet objet” (Wtterwulghé 1899:27)

<sup>14</sup> To repeat, all the information I provide on Bobangi, to which I compare the Bobangi pidgin, is drawn from MacBeath (1940); Meeussen (1956); Roelandt (1988); Sims (1886; 1888-1889); Whitehead (1899; 1940s; 1949a, b); Motingea (2010).

In Bobangi: *eloko eye*.

- (33) n'boka oyo  
village DEM  
“ce village” (Wtterwulghe 1899:29)

In Bobangi: *mboka eye*.

On the generalization of the demonstrative's agreement prefix *o-*, see below, the section on agreement reduction in the noun phrase.

### 3.4.5. Transparent periphrasis to compensate for lexicon reduction

<63> Circumlocution and periphrasis to express meanings for which the lexifier language or the adstrates have simplex lexemes, are well-attested strategies pidgins deploy to compensate for the reduction in the lexicon (e.g., Holm 1988:73; Sebba 1997:116; Parkvall & Bakker 2013:34). Semantic transparency is often the mark of such circumlocutions and periphrases. These are some examples in the data.

- (34) makasi te  
hard not  
“doux” (Morrisson & Pauwels 1895:16)

- (35) makasi assiri  
strong finish  
“fatigué” (Morrisson & Pauwels 1895:18)

- (36) pembe na samaki  
white CONN fish  
“Gräte” [German: ‘fishbone’] (Czekanowski 1924:636)

- (37) kutambula na mayi  
stride/walk in water  
“schwimmen” [German: ‘to swim’] (Czekanowski 1924:642)

- (38) biloko na majani  
thing for hairs  
“kam” [Flemish: ‘comb’] (Prémontrés 1901:17)

- (39) mbutu assili  
night be finished  
“matin” (Wtterwulghe 1899:9)

- (40) moni akufi  
daylight has died  
“soir” (Wtterwulghe 1899:9)

### 3.5. Noun morphology and the noun phrase

#### 3.5.1. Nouns: inflection (pluralization) reduction

<64> In Bangala, most nouns from the lexifier Bobangi or from other adstrates were petrified in their singular or their plural form, one form (in some cases the original singular, in others the plural) serving for both grammatical numbers. In other words, the Bantu procedure of noun pluralization through class shift within prefix-marked class pairs was lost.

- (41) mondele mibale  
white two  
“deux blancs” (Cambier 1888-1889:108)

In Bobangi: *mondele* ‘white person’, *mindele* ‘white persons’.

- (42) n’gai akati puta na mabokko na n’gai  
1SG cut wound in arm CONN 1SG  
“Ik heb in mijne hand gesneden” [Flemish: ‘I cut my hand’] (Prémontrés 1901:36)

In Bobangi: *loboko* ‘hand’, *maboko* ‘hands’. Bangala’s use of *maboko* for the singular is also documented in: Maistre (1895:289); Jespersen (1898ff:15); Prémontrés (1901:7); Czekanowski (1924:636). Hulstaert (1939:87) wrote that in the pidgin nouns were “*le tout indistinctement: maboko = bras, et cela au pluriel pour un seul membre! D’autres exemples foisonnent.*”

- (43) makolo  
leg  
“jambe” (Maistre 1895:289)

In Bobangi: *lokolo* ‘leg’, *makolo* ‘legs’.

- (44) matoko  
mat  
“matte” [Danish: ‘mat’, singular] (Jespersen 1898:22)

In Bobangi: *lotoko* ‘mat’, *matoko* ‘mats’.

- (45) biloko moke  
thing small  
“kleines Ding” [German: ‘small thing’] (Czekanowski 1924:638)

In Bobangi: *eloko* ‘thing’, *biloko* ‘things’. Bangala’s use of *biloko* for the singular is also documented in: Jespersen (1898:28); Wtterwulghe (1899:27); Prémontrés 1901:7; Czekanowski (1924:634), among others.

- (46) mikolo  
day  
“dag” [Danish: ‘day’, singular] (Jespersen 1898:16)

In Bobangi: *mokolo* ‘day’, *mikolo* ‘days’. Same singular use attested in Johnston (1884:449); Wtterwulghe (1899:25).

### 3.5.2. Noun phrase: agreement reduction

<65> Whereas in Bobangi, as typical of Bantu languages, all modifiers in the noun phrase, such as the connective, adjectives, numerals, etc., were subject to prefix-marked class agreement with the head noun, in the pidgin this agreement system was lost. The modifiers were petrified in one particular class (not necessarily the same for each), and used in that form for all head nouns regardless of class, i.e. as morphologically invariant lexemes.

#### 3.5.2.1. Connective

<66> As mentioned above, original Bobangi had a morphologically variable connective, agreeing in class with the head noun (for most classes this was an unbound morpheme homophonous with the noun prefix). In the pidgin, *na*, came to serve as the only, and invariant, connective.

(47) masanga    na        Putu  
alcohol        CONN    Europe  
“Vin fra Europa” [Danish: ‘wine of Europe’] (Jespersen 1930:85)

In Bobangi the connective for *masanga* would be *ma*.

(48) monoko    na        ndako  
mouth        CONN    house  
“Thür” [German: ‘door’] (Thonner 1898:90)

In Bobangi, the connective for *monoko* would be *mo*.

(49) niama     na        djoko  
meat        CONN    elephant  
“Elefantkød” [Danish: ‘elephant meat’] (Jespersen 1930:115)

In Bobangi, the connective for *niama* would be *e*.

(50) deko        na        jo  
sibling      CONN    2SG  
“din Broder” [Danish: ‘your brother’] (Jespersen 1930:42)

In Bobangi, the connective for *ndeko* would be *o*.

(51) Mundele,    kutala    mikanda    na        ngai  
white\_man    look      documents    CONN    1SG  
“Blanc, voici mes papiers” (Courboin 1908:33)

In Bobangi, the connective for *mikanda* would be *mi*.

#### 3.5.2.2. Adjectives

<67> Adjectives in Bobangi consisted of bound stems preceded by a variable prefix marking agreement with the head noun. In Bangala, the adjectives were petrified in one class (not always the same) and used in that invariant form for all head noun classes (and, *a fortiori*, indistinctively for both singular and plural).

- (52) munduki makasi mingi  
 gun strong very  
 “Bøssen meget kraftig” [Danish: ‘very strong gun’] (Jespersen 1930:17)

In Bobangi: *mokasi*.

- (53) yo adjali mondele malamu  
 2SG be white\_person good  
 “Tu étais un bon blanc” (Courboin 1908:33)

In Bobangi: *molamu*.

- (54) bango mususu malamu mususu mabi  
 3PL other good other bad  
 “Les uns sont bons, les autres mauvais” (Courboin 1908:36)

In Bobangi: *basusu balamu, basusu babe*.

<68> The same agreement reduction applied to adjectives in predicative position.

- (55) n’zila atzasi malamu  
 road be good  
 “La route est bonne” (Wtterwulghe 1899:28)

In Bobangi: *elamu*.

### 3.5.2.3. Numerals

Numerals, too, were class-inflected in Bobangi, but were used in invariant form in the pidgin.

- (56) Ta moko banto moko na lisasi moko  
 goat one person one with bullet one  
 “En Ged o gen Mand med een Patron” [Danish: ‘One goat and one man with one bullet’] (Jespersen 1930:19)

In Bobangi: *ntaba yoko, moto moko, na lisasi lioko*.

- (57) biéli mibari  
 months two  
 “deux mois” (Lemaire 1897:41)

In Bobangi: *biyeli bibale*.

- (58) libira moko  
 oil\_palm one  
 “Un seul palmier” (Coquilhat 1888:351)

In Bobangi: *libila lioko*.

### 3.5.2.4. Quantifiers

<69> The Bobangi quantifier *-nso* ('all') and the Swahili quantifier *-ingi* ('many'), both originally inflected in concordance with the class of the head noun by means of agreement prefixes, were petrified to *yoso* (alternatively, *yuzo*) and *mingi*.

(59) na mikoro yuzo  
in days all  
"tous les jours" (Wtterwulghe 1899:25)

In Bobangi: *mikolo minso*. See also Czekanowski (1924:637) for similar examples.

(60) bino yuzo  
2PL all  
"vous tous" (Wtterwulghe 1899:23)

In Bobangi: *bino banso*. See also Morrisson & Pauwels (1895) for similar examples.

(61) banto yuzo  
3PL all  
"tous les hommes" (Morrisson & Pauwels 1895:20)

In Bobangi: *bato banso*.

(62) kubuma bantu mingi  
kill people many  
"tue beaucoup de gens" (Courboin 1908:81)

In Swahili: *wengi*. See also Czekanowski (1924:645) and Johnston (1902:955) for illustrations of *mingi* for all classes.

### 3.5.2.5. Demonstratives

<70> Above, in the section on Allomorph reduction, I explained that the stem of the proximal demonstrative was generalized to *-yo* for all classes, replacing the Bobangi stem *-ye* for all other classes than class 1. In addition, the prefix *o-*, originally for demonstratives determining class 1 nouns only, was generalized to determine all noun classes. This can be seen in examples 32 and 33.

## 3.6. Verbs and the verb phrase

### 3.6.1. Reduction in subject agreement marking

<71> In the domain of person inflection on verbs, Meijer & Muysken (1977), Holm (1988), McWhorter (1998), Lumsden (1999), and Versteegh (2014) have mentioned the typical generalization of the use of the infinitive and/or the form of the third person singular for all subjects, regardless of their grammatical person and number. In the Bobangi pidgin, too, this type of person inflection reduction took place: only the infinitive and the 3SG animate subject prefix *a-* were retained and were used for all grammatical persons, numbers, (in)animacy types, and classes.

<72> Illustrations of this already appear in examples offered above in other contexts, for example in examples 8 (where instead of *a-*, Bobangi would have the subject prefix *na-*), 9 (in Bobangi: *o-*), 10 (*na-*), 11 (*ba-*), 12 (*na-*), 27 (*lo-* on *kulamba*), 28 (*na-*).



<73> Other examples are:

- (63) io apéssi mitako boni?  
2sg give brassrod how\_many  
“Hoeveel krijg ik?” [Flemish: ‘How many brass rods will you give?’]  
(Prémontrés 1901:35)

In Bobangi: *o-*.

- (64) aoki malamu?  
understand good  
“Vous avez compris?” (Jespersen 1898:180)

In Bobangi: *o-*.

- (65) bisu atzasi na kati-kati na n’zila  
1PL are in center CONN road  
“Nous sommes au milieu de l’étape” (Morrisson & Pauwels 1895:63)

In Bobangi: *lo-*.

- (66) Mundele, bisu ake  
white\_man 1PL go  
“Blanc, nous partons” (Courboin 1908:30)

In Bobangi: *lo-*.

- (67) bino aleli  
2PL weep  
“You weep” (Johnston 1902:955)

In Bobangi: *bo-*.

- (68) Sopo ni yo alubi nini  
belly CONN 2SG say what  
“What does your belly tell you?” (Reynolds 1904:243)

In Bobangi: *e-*.

<74> Examples of the use of the infinitive for any grammatical person or number are:

- (69) Nagai kolina kopeza yo mingi  
1SG want give 2SG lot  
“Je veux te donner beaucoup” (Morrisson & Pauwels 1895:66)
- (70) Je kumela likaga, je kulea, je banto  
3SG drink tobacco 3SG eat 3SG person  
“Han ryger Tobak, Han spiser, Han er et Menneske”  
[Danish: ‘He smokes tobacco, he eats, he is human’] (Jespersen 1930:76)

In accordance with Danish spelling, this author used the grapheme <j> for the palatal approximant.

(71) Bolokoloko kulea bisu  
 Bolokoloko eat 1PL  
 “Topokerne aeder os” [Danish: ‘The Topoke eat us’] (Jespersen 1930:66)

(72) Benu kuieba te kuruka  
 2PL know NEG paddle  
 “You people don’t know how to paddle” (Ward 1890:292)

Congolese on the bank calling out to whites and their troops on the river.

(73) Mundele, ngay kusala malamumu  
 white\_man 1SG work good  
 “Blanc, moi je travaille bien” (Courboin 1908:31)

(74) Mundele, yo kuyeba ngay te  
 white\_man 2SG know 1SG NEG  
 “Blanc, tu ne me connais pas” (Courboin 1908:33)

### 3.6.2. Loss of pro-drop rule

<75> Bobangi, as most other Bantu languages, observed the pro-drop rule, meaning that personal pronouns in subject position were not expressed unless needed for contrast or emphasis. In the pidgin, this rule was lost: subject pronouns were always expressed. This is obviously related to the previous point: if the infinitive form or the third person singular is used for any subject regardless of its person or number, the verb form itself offers no sufficient information for subject referent identification. Also, the European adstrates, French, English, Flemish, and others, do not have a pro-drop rule. Again, internally motivated change and external influence reinforced one another.

<76> The examples offered above in the section on Reduction in subject agreement marking illustrate this point. See for instance the explicit expression of *io* (*yo*), *ngai* (*ngay*), *bisu*, *benu* etc. in subject position in those examples, which would not have been necessary in Bobangi.

### 3.6.3. Reduction in TAM distinctions

<77> Whereas Bobangi’s verbal system made use of at least 15 distinct TAM forms (i.a. Motingea 2010: 44-51), Bangala restricted the paradigm to two. To compensate, time, aspect, and mood/modality were rendered by means of self-standing adverbials or by means of circumlocution. The two TAM forms that did remain were Bobangi’s infinitive and its “aorist” (MacBeath 1940:21) or “*passé récent*” (Motingea 2010:45), marked by the high-toned final *-í* (template: subject marker + base + *-í*). The infinitive and the *-í* form were used for all time, aspect, and mood/modality meanings. Morrisson & Pauwels observed: “*les indigènes comprennent parfaitement le blanc qui parle à l’infinitif et lui répondent également à l’infinitif*” (1895:4). The missionary D. Christy Davies reported in 1921 that “in the early days [i.e., before 1900] there was but one form of the verb (indicative present) used for all moods and tenses” (Davies 1921:103). Stapleton wrote: “The Present Tense has long been the subject of derision as a fine example of the ungrammatical forms current in ‘Bangala’” (1903b:25). Below I discuss four of the Bobangi TAM forms that were lost in the pidgin and replaced by the infinitive or the *-í* form.

### 3.6.3.1. Loss of the imperative forms

<78> Whereas Bobangi had several types of imperative forms for expressing a range of command and direct request types, in the pidgin these meanings were expressed by means of the infinitive or the *-í* form (interchangeably).

Admittedly, in the sociocultural context of pronounced racial inequality, most examples of commands come from the speech of whites, which as I explained in the section on methodology above did not constitute my primary data (see above). However, examples were also found in the Congolese speech, as in 75.

(75) Mundele kupese ngay pata misatu  
white\_man give 1SG coin five  
“Blanc, donne-moi cinq pièces d’argent” (Courboin 1908:31)

(76) Kutia biloko oyo na sanduku  
place thing DEM in trunk  
“Mettez cet objet dans la caisse” Wtterwulghé 1899:27)

(77) Akangi je na n’gombe  
place thing with cloth  
“Doe er een doekje om” [Flemish: ‘Enclose it in a cloth’] (Prémontrés 1901:36)

In accordance with Flemish spelling, these authors used the grapheme <j> for the palatal approximant.

(78) Attiki n’geï  
leave 1SG  
“Laissez-moi tranquille” (Morrisson & Pauwels 1895:66)

(79) Aladi  
sleep  
“Couchez-vous” (Lemaire 1897:13)

(80) Koubianga Tonio  
call Tonio  
“Call Tonio” (Lemaire 1897:39)

(81) Akati sopo  
cut belly  
“Open your belly” (Reynolds 1904:243)

### 3.6.3.2. Loss of the habitual forms

<79> The pidgin also used the infinitive or the *-í* form to express structural truths, general validity statements, habits, and others, for which Bobangi instead had several dedicated habitual forms.

(82) Bisu kuola niama  
1PL eat animal  
“We eat the meat” (Glave 1893:103)

- (83) De           smaa   Gavtyve   asali   supo   na    susu    na    bisu  
 [Danish: the   small   thieves]   make   soup   from   chicken   CONN   1PL  
 “De smaa Gavtyve laver Suppe paa vore Høns!” [Danish: ‘The small thieves make  
 soup of our chickens!’] (Jespersen 1930:67)

### 3.6.3.3. Loss of the future forms

<80> Bobangi had several TAM forms dedicated to different futurity meanings. In Bangala, all these meanings were covered by the infinitive or the *-í* form.

- (84) Yo   kubuma   ye    te,    Makula?  
 2SG   kill           3SG   NEG   Makula (Glave’s nickname among the Congolese)  
 “Won’t you kill it [the hippo], Makula?” (Glave 1893:148)

- (85) Mundele,       mwana   oyo   ake   na   yo  
 white\_person   child   DEM   go   with   2SG  
 “Blanc, cet enfant ira avec toi” (Courboin 1908:29)

- (86) Soko   yo   kulinga,   ngay   kusala   mampa  
 if    2SG   want    1SG   make   bread  
 na   butu,   yo   kulia   ye   lobi  
 in   night   2SG   eat    3SG   tomorrow  
 “Si tu veux je te ferai du pain ce soir, tu le mangeras demain” (Courboin 1908:35)

- (87) Geï   kutambula   lero    té  
 1SG   walk           today   NEG  
 “Je ne marcherai pas aujourd’hui” (Wtterwulghe 1899:28)

- (88) geï   aléli   yé    na   n’zila  
 1SG   drink   3SG   on   road  
 “Je le boirai en chemin” (Wtterwulghe 1899:29)

- (89) io   apéssi   mitako   boni?  
 2SG   give   brassrod   how\_many  
 “Hoeveel krijg ik?” [Flemish: ‘How many brass rods will you give?’]  
 (Prémontrés 1901:35)

### 3.6.3.4. Loss of the past forms

<81> All past meanings for which Bobangi had a wide range of different forms, were also rendered by means of the infinitive or the *-í* form.

- (90) yo   adjali   mondele       malamu  
 2SG   be       white\_person   good  
 “Tu étais un bon blanc” (Courboin 1908:33)

### 3.6.4. Loss of verb root extensions

<82> Apart from Courboin (Courboin 1908:21) mentioning a causative, for which he provides only one example, the data show no productive use of verb root extensions. All notions of applica-

tive, causative, passive, reciprocal etc. were rendered by means of circumlocution, not in the synthetic morphology of the verb.

### 3.6.5. Analyticization

- <83> The pidgin was heavily marked by “analyticization”,<sup>15</sup> also called “debonding” or “deinflectionalization” (Norde 2011:484-486): an analytic syntax of unbound morphemes was preferred to a synthetic morphology of bound morphemes. This type of degrammaticalization, in fact, is one of the typicalities of pidginization observed in comparative creole studies (the first wide-ranging one being Kay & Sankoff 1974). It is also observed in Kikongo-Kituba, for which Samarin adduces a reinforcement between the influence of the West African languages and the “*inherent human strategy to simplify under duress*” (2013:180), a reinforcement which one could also hypothesize for the Bobangi pidgin. Either way, a multifactorial explanation will always be closer to the truth than any monocausal one.
- <84> In fact, reduction of person inflection (see above), loss of the pro-dop rule (see above) and reduction in TAM inflection (see above), are clear cases of analyticization. Another case is the loss of the use of bound morphemes to mark pronominal direct and indirect objects. Bobangi made use of a rich paradigm of such bound object morphemes, i.e. preradical affixes agreeing in class and person. Instead, in pre-1900 Bangala, pronominal direct and indirect objects were expressed by means of stand-alone, unbound pronouns in the verb phrase (which is still the case in Lingala today.)

(91) pesa ngai lusaku  
 give 1SG greeting  
 “tender me homage” [citing Congolese talking to him] (Glave 1893:133)

(92) Yo kubuma ye te, Makula?  
 2SG kill 3SG NEG Makula (Glave’s nickname among the Congolese)  
 “Won’t you kill it [the hippo], Makula?” (Glave 1893:148)

(93) Geï appessi yo koko djumi soko  
 1SG give 2SG chicken ten if  
 yo appessi na n’geï gombé maboko mibali  
 2SG give to 1SG cloth hand two  
 “Je vous donnerai dix poules si vous me donnez deux brasses d’étoffe”  
 (Wtterwulghe 1899:29)

(94) djambi bwei kamata ye te  
 so\_that dog take 3SG NEG  
 “afin que le chien ne la prenne pas” [referring to the meat]  
 (Morrisson & Pauwels 1895:65)

(95) Mundele, yo kuyeba ngay te  
 white\_man 2SG know 1SG NEG  
 “Blanc, tu ne me connais pas” (Courboin 1908:33)

(96) Ngay alobi na ye kuko  
 white\_man say to 3SG cook

<sup>15</sup> For a critical assessment of the notion, see Haspelmath & Michaelis (2017).

adjali na yo sika sika te  
 be with you moment moment NEG  
 “[Blanc,] je lui [to my brother] avais dit que vous n’aviez pas encore de cuisinier”  
 (Courboin 1908:33)

- (97) Nagai kolina kopeza yo mingi  
 1SG want give 2SG lot  
 “Je veux te donner beaucoup” (Morrisson & Pauwels 1895:66)

### 3.6.6. Reduced negation syntax

- <85> Original Bobangi, as some other languages in the region, did not have a morphological, synthetic verbal paradigm to construct negation statements, but used complex syntactic-analytic procedures. To negate nouns, the noun was followed by *té*, a particle also used for the answer ‘no!’. But this *té* was not used to negate verbal phrases: instead, Bobangi had quite a range of constructions at its disposal, one of them being the split circumstructure *ndé o [verb] ká*, with or without support from ‘to be’ as an added auxiliary. In the pidgin, *te* was generalized as the only marker of negation, used not only for noun phrases but for all types of verb phrases as well.
- <86> This generalized use of *te* appears above in examples 16, 27, 72, 74, 84, 92, 94, 95, 96. It is also shown here:

- (98) Benu kuieba te kuruka  
 2PL know NEG paddle  
 “You people don’t know how to paddle” (Ward 1890:292)

Congolese on the bank calling out to whites and their troops on the river.

- (99) Gei kutambula lero té  
 1SG walk today NEG  
 “Je ne marcherai pas aujourd’hui” (Wtterwulghe 1899:28)

- (100) Kubetta monduke té, ngaj si’deko na jo  
 beat gun NEG 1SG be\_brother CONN 2SG  
 “Skyd ikke, jeg er jo din Broder” [Danish: ‘Don’t shoot, I am your brother’]  
 (Jespersen 1930:42)

## 4. Concluding remarks

- <87> The above describes the grammatical features of the pidgin, or “restructured variety” depending on one’s labelling preference (see 1.5), that from 1881 onwards emerged out of Bobangi and from the second half of the 1880s on was called “Bangala”. It describes this Bangala as it was spoken before 1900-1905, i.e. before its (both guided and organic) grammatical and lexical expansion and before, in the northwestern and western parts of its area of diffusion, it was renamed “Lingala”. There, the renaming was generally accepted and implemented by the late 1930s. In the northeast, where the language developed along different paths, it has remained known as “Bangala” until today. Also, the structures of present-day northeastern Bangala are much closer to pre-1900 Bangala than those of northwestern and western Lingala, for reasons spelled out above. More descriptive research on present-day northeastern Bangala and detailed comparisons with pre-1900 Bangala is needed.

- <88> My description of pre-1900 Bangala was based on the firm principle of *data recurrence* in the sources. No feature is mentioned if it was found only occasionally, so as to exclude ad-hocisms. This maximalization of reliability entails, admittedly, a rather restricted width of description: as I only covered those features for which I had absolute certainty, other, possibly equally interesting ones, were discarded. Also, in selecting the data, first preference was given to quotations from Congolese speaking the pidgin (either to whites or among them). Only in second instance, i.e. as confirmation of the data of the first type, was the Europeans' own speech allowed into the data set.
- <89> How does present-day Lingala relate to this historical, pre-1900 Bangala? The latter involved a heavy reduction/restriction of Bobangi's grammatical and lexical complexities comparable to pidginization processes generally documented in the contact linguistics literature. Later, after 1900 and throughout the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this pidgin underwent grammatical and lexical expansion. This consisted of a combination of (i) missionary-led prescriptive interventions ("from above") into the grammar and lexicon of the pidgin, which mainly had some impact on the speech habits in the northwest while elsewhere the effects were limited to the domains of book publication and liturgical language use; and (ii) organic expansion ("from below"), i.e. as the pidgin's functions as a lingua franca were amplified and it became the first and main language for communities, concomitantly its lexicon and structures expanded/extended. For this the influence of the many adstrates of the new speakers it acquired on its way, different in each locale, was important. Bobangi, confusingly for the history, was also one of these second-stage adstrates. In Leopoldville, this enriching adstrate influence mainly came from Kikongo varieties (especially after World War II), although other urban-immigrant languages played a role as well.
- <90> The post-1900 expansion of the pidgin's lexicon and grammar, be it from above or from below, was not all-effective. Quite a number of linguistic restructurings that marked pre-1900 Bangala remained unchanged. Examples are: the lexical contributions from languages such as Swahili and others (see section on Non-Bobangi lexical input); some, though not all, of the categorial and semantic broadenings (sections on Categorial and Semantic broadening); the restricted system of prefix-based agreement of modifiers in the noun phrase (section on Noun morphology and the noun phrase); and syntactic analyticization, e.g. the absence of bound object morphemes in the verb (section on Verbs and the verb phrase). All these still characterize Lingala today. On the other hand, the post-1900 expansion did result in vast lexical enlargement and in a considerable range of complexifications and extensions of the grammar, also eventually marking present-day Lingala (see Meeuwis 2010; forthcoming for descriptions). The regained subject marking for person and number (but not class) is one example, the regaining of grammatical and lexical tone, the highly developed repertoire of distinctive TAM forms are only two others. It has expressly not been my intention in this contribution to make the full comparison of present-day Lingala's grammar with that of pre-1900 Bangala – that can and will be the object of a future study.
- <91> My concluding statement in this respect is rather of a methodological nature. A number of comparative creolists have made the mistake of presupposing a linear continuity of Lingala's history, i.e. of comparing the grammatical features of today's Lingala with those of original Bobangi rather than with those of Bobangi's pidgin Bangala, and of concluding what Lingala would have *retained* from original Bobangi (i.a. McWhorter 1998; Roberts & Bresnan 2008; Holm 1988:559-561; 1989: 552-555). This comparison skips one crucial step in the history of the language, i.e. the restructuring of Bobangi to Bangala. The correct research procedure is, therefore, not so much or not only to measure what present-day Lingala would have retained from original Bobangi, but to respect the "hourglass" history, i.e. from original Bobangi, over a restricted pidgin of it called Bangala,

and only from there to Lingala. One has to compare present-day Lingala with the variety I described, establishing what it *gained* or *regained* after 1900.

- <92> Erroneous conclusions have been drawn on account of “passing over” the stage of Bobangi’s pidgin Bangala of 1880-1900, in other words on account of too directly comparing the much more complex tonology and (verbal) morphology of today’s Lingala with that of original Bobangi. Examples are McWhorter’s deduction, based on his conviction that “instructive is a *direct* comparison of Lingala with its lexifier” (1998:811, my emphasis), that “the creole prototype ... readily classifies these [Congoese Kiswahili, Lingala, Kituba] as semi-creoles” (1998:811); and Smith’s classification of Lingala as an “extended pidgin” (1995:357). Or, as in Motingea (2010), to altogether deny Lingala’s Bobangi origins, on the basis of the non-Bobangi elements the language acquired in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- <93> Identifying the sources of grammatical features of present-day Lingala is a much more complex and complicated enterprise than implied by suggestions for “direct” comparisons between Lingala and Bobangi. As the phase of expansion came after the restriction, some, in fact almost all, complex structures in present-day Lingala are *more recent* than the more simplex ones. The intuition, all too common in linguistic literature, that in language history more simple features are always “more recent”, is untenable and certainly jeopardizes an adequate understanding of Lingala’s development and origins. Because of that, when attempting to find the origins of a complex grammatical paradigm or feature present in today’s Lingala, the question must always be asked whether either (a) it was “never lost”, or (b) it was first lost and then regained after 1900. Bobangi elements in present-day Lingala can indeed date back to original Bobangi, but they may very well be of a later date, namely of the influence of Bobangi and highly related languages in the expansion process after 1900. I hope that my description of the grammatical features of Bangala before 1900, i.e. the phase between original Bobangi and eventual Lingala, enables us to come to more accurate language-historical distinctions.

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