Compendium of Survey Reports

Volume 1:
Bira-Huku Group of Bantu

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Summer Institute of Linguistics
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Volume I

### Introduction

Language map of eastern Zaire

   *Douglas W. Boone*

   *Gert de Wit*

   *Gert de Wit*

   *Alida de Wit-Hasselaar*

   *Alida de Wit-Hasselaar*

   *Alida de Wit-Hasselaar*

## Volume II

   *Douglas W. Boone*

2. Lombi survey report (1994)  
   *Douglas W. Boone*

   *Douglas W. Boone*

   *Douglas W. Boone and Kenneth S. Sawka*

## Volume III

   *Gert de Wit*

   *Douglas W. Boone*

   *Gert de Wit and Alida de Wit-Hasselaar*

EZG Survey Department standard interview schedules

EZG Survey Department standard elicitation wordlist
INTRODUCTION

This compendium contains the reports of the sociolinguistic surveys conducted by members of the survey department of the Eastern Zaire Group of the Summer Institute of Linguistics between April 1993 and April 1995.

The purpose of this compendium is:
1. to report how the concept of Rapid Appraisal surveys as proposed by Ted Bergman (1991) and developed by Jürg Stalder (1993) has been put into practice in eastern Zaire,
2. to offer reading material and case studies for survey courses,
3. to give new survey teams in Africa examples and possibly ideas which they could adapt to their own situation, and
4. to give those who are thinking about working with SIL a picture of the current needs and challenges in eastern Zaire.

Participants

The Eastern Zaire Group (EZG) survey department, based in Bunia, is young and when it started its work in April 1993, there was only one experienced surveyor, Douglas Boone, while the other members were either new in Africa (Alie de Wit-Hasselaar and myself) or on an extended furlough (Dave and Karen Bradley). In 1992, Douglas and the Bradleys had done an internship with the SIL survey department in Cameroon under the leadership of Jürg Stalder, where they became acquainted with a new approach of doing surveys called Rapid Appraisal.

Back in Zaire, Douglas wanted to conduct our surveys as Rapid Appraisals too, so when Alie and I came on board in April 1993, we started to follow this model and adapted it to suit the situation in Zaire. Before saying what Rapid Appraisal surveys are, I will first introduce the other people who worked in our department between 1993 and 1995.

From May 1993 until February 1994, Andreas Neudorf served as a short-term member, joined by his fiancee Susanne Deutschmann for the first two months of 1994. On several surveys, we received help from outside the survey department: Ken Sawka (working in the Mayogo project) joined Douglas on the Bangba survey and Ken Olson (from the Congo and Western Zaire Group) went with Douglas on the Bwa survey. From June till October 1994, a small group developed a bilingualism test for Zaire Swahili (a Sentence Repetition Test). For this project, Cleertje Friek-Kappers, Bagamba Araali, Nganga Batassem and Muhogera Ngabo-Y'eka were temporarily added to the survey department, while Douglas helped them as statistical consultant. Bagamba still works with the department and as of March 1995, Dave and Karen Bradley have joined us again. Together with Bagamba they are concentrating on administering Swahili bilingualism testing.

Acknowledgements

We give praise to our Lord and Sender, who has enabled us to do these surveys by giving us good health, security and often very encouraging contacts with the people in the places where we have travelled.

Ted Bergman, the International Language Assessment Coordinator, while not a member of the EZG survey team, is a valued facilitator of our work. We are deeply indebted to him for his advice, personal consulting and
training, his visit to Zaire in May 1994 to see and evaluate our work and for his financial help.

Although the EZG survey department as such started in 1993, survey activity by SIL members has been going on since 1977. Their insights and reports have greatly benefited our work in the last two years.

Rapid Appraisal

To give an idea of what Rapid Appraisal surveys are, I quote Jürg Stalder (1993:3):

Rapid Appraisal surveys are first inquiries which aim at gaining an overall view in a short time. Target languages are above all the 'possible translation needs', i.e. languages where, because of lack of information, the Bible translation needs have not yet been determined. But they are also a good tool for reevaluating language situations which were surveyed years before and therefore need a confirmation of their translation status. Rapid Appraisal surveys should provide the basis for strategic planning on the international and branch levels. Although in most cases it may not be possible to conclude whether or not a language definitely ought to have a language team assigned to it, in each case the language should be given a preliminary assessment to the effect that development need is probable or unlikely. None should be left in the 'possible' category although there may be exceptions.

For Cameroon, Stalder estimates that an average Rapid Appraisal survey in a language with no more than 3 dialects will take about a month: one week preparation, one week out on the trip and two weeks to write up the report and to send information to the Ethnologue and to various agencies and organizations. (Stalder 1993:4)

By their nature, Rapid Appraisal surveys do not include extensive formal testing. Issues like dialect intelligibility and bilingualism are addressed during interviews and by observation. The outcome of this may indicate that a further and more formal survey is needed. Areas which a Rapid Appraisal survey is supposed to cover include:

1. the external and internal linguistic situation, identification as a language or a dialect, classification within the language family, description of the speech varieties within the language;
2. bilingualism issues, the role and level of comprehension of neighbouring and/or related languages and those of the language of wider communication;
3. language use;
4. language attitudes;
5. evaluation of translation need as expressed by the local churches;
6. inquiries in view of a potential translation project;
7. inquiries in view of a potential literacy program;
8. inquiries about other missions, organisations and/or general information. (Stalder 1993:2-3)

The first Rapid Appraisal survey in the history of our survey department concerned the Bila language in May 1993. Since then, seven surveys of this kind have been done in Nyali, Vanuma, Bangba, Lombi, Bira, Ndaka/Mbo/Beeke
and Bangubang. Once a survey team was asked to do a dialect intelligibility survey among the Tembo and once a team went out to investigate the linguistic situation of the Bwa bloc languages (Bwa and Pagibete). This compendium contains the reports of all these surveys. Due to the development of our style and expertise and to the different specific goals of the surveys, there is diversity among the reports.

**Emphases**

Using Stalder’s eight-point list above of what a Rapid Appraisal survey is supposed to cover as a yardstick, these survey reports show that usually most areas were addressed. In addition, most of our reports have a section on geography and population and on the history of the language group. These areas may have a bearing on the choice of a reference dialect of a language. Table 1 below summarizes the details. The surveys are listed in chronological order. The scores should be read as follows: 0 points if the issue was not addressed, 1 point if it was partially addressed, 2 points for being adequately addressed and 2+ if extra attention was given.

| Area to be addressed      | V | B | N | a | a | L | N | a | T | B | y | n | n | o | B | d | n | T | e | i | a | u | g | m | B | a | g | B | m | l | m | b | b | r | k | u | w | b |
| linguistics               | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2+| 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2+| 2+| 2+| 1 | 2 |
| bilingualism              | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2+| 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2+| 2+| 2 | 1 | 2 |
| language use              | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| language attitudes        | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| translation need          | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| translation project       | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| literacy project          | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| missions/general          | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| geography and pop.        | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| history                   | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |

**Table 1: Evaluation of EZG surveys 1993 – 1995**

**Characteristics of Rapid Appraisal surveys in eastern Zaire**

In eastern Zaire, SIL works under the sponsorship of protestant churches. This means that contact with one of the main churches in the language area needs to be established and that a survey team cannot start its research unless it is authorized to do so by a church. Once out on the trip, this relationship with the church is a great help for the survey team: pastors, elders and other church members facilitate group and individual interviews, they introduce the team members to local government officials and they arrange food and places to stay. Because of the absence of hotels and the cultural inappropriateness of putting up a tent and cooking one’s own food, survey teams in eastern Zaire are dependent on the hospitality of the peoples they visit. Usually a respected local church member (often a pastor) joins the team.
The Zairean government does not actively impose a language policy and local government officials are often sympathetic to our work. In schools in eastern Zaire, the first two years of primary school are taught in Swahili or Bangala. After that, French is the only language of instruction. In 1964, a conference of Catholic bishops in Zaire decided to use the following languages in the churches: Lingala, Tshiluba, Zaire Swahili, Kikongo, Bangala, Kiyombe, Kisanga and Chibemba. Unless there is strong local level support from Catholic clergymen, it is unlikely that translated Scripture in the languages reported on in this compendium will be used in Catholic church services.

Apart from the close cooperation with the Protestant churches, there is another important characteristic of surveys in eastern Zaire: they often take (much) more time than a 'standard' Rapid Appraisal survey. There are several reasons for this and the most important have to do with travel difficulties and travel expenses. On most roads in eastern Zaire a reasonable average for a four-wheel drive vehicle is 10-15 km per hour. We are increasingly dependent on the air services of MAF and Africa Inland Mission. The Bangubangu survey team used bicycles to get around in the area, and travel within the Tembo area was done mostly on foot. Surveys also become more and more expensive. While the travel expenses for the first six surveys averaged about $500 per survey, the last four surveys were almost $1,500 each. Because it is often difficult and expensive to revisit a language area, we tend to spend more time out on the trip and also back home analyzing the (linguistic) data and writing the reports. Future surveys, in Maniema and Shaba and in the greater Kisangani area, will be at least as costly and will face even more transportation challenges.

Table 2 gives an overview of the time spent on the various surveys. It is interesting that apart from the short surveys during the first months of the department, the 'eastern Zaire' ratio (preparation : on the trip : reportwriting) comes close to the standard one for Rapid Appraisal surveys as mentioned above (1 : 1 : 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>preparation</th>
<th>on the trip</th>
<th>reportwriting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bila</td>
<td>2 weeks</td>
<td>1 week</td>
<td>4 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanuma</td>
<td>2 weeks</td>
<td>1 week</td>
<td>4 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyali</td>
<td>2 weeks</td>
<td>1,5 weeks</td>
<td>4 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangba</td>
<td>3 weeks</td>
<td>1,5 weeks</td>
<td>6 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lombi</td>
<td>2 weeks</td>
<td>2 weeks</td>
<td>6 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bira</td>
<td>3 weeks</td>
<td>2 weeks</td>
<td>5 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ndaka/Mbo/B.</td>
<td>3 weeks</td>
<td>3 weeks</td>
<td>8 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tembo</td>
<td>3 weeks</td>
<td>3 weeks</td>
<td>8 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangubangu</td>
<td>4 weeks</td>
<td>5 weeks</td>
<td>10 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bwa</td>
<td>4 weeks</td>
<td>6 weeks</td>
<td>12 weeks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Time investment per survey

Outcomes in terms of translation need status

As far as the outcome of these surveys is concerned, only three languages were classified as having an 'unlikely need'. These are: Nyali, Vanuma and
Eastern Zaire Group Survey Compendium

Introduction

Bira. A major consideration for the Bira and Nyali communities was, that they have become so mixed with other people groups, that the use of Scriptures in Nyali or Bira in the church would not be feasible. Plans do exist, however, for formal Swahili bilingualism testing among the Nyali, while this is being done this year among the Bira and the Bila. For the Bila language, negotiations are under way to make an allocation possible. Ndaka/Mbo and Lombi await bilingualism testing in Swahili too, while the same may be done for Bangba in Lingala or Bangala.

Bangubangu received a high allocation priority but allocation is put on hold until more language and support teams become available for the greater Bukavu area. Bwa's high allocation priority was confirmed during the last linguistic survey. The Tembo dialect intelligibility survey helped the existing SIL-team to decide upon the speech variety to be used for translation.

Benefits

In closing, the work of the survey department over the last two years has benefited the Eastern Zaire Group and larger SIL entities in the following ways.

Firstly, it has provided a better picture of the linguistic situation in the Bas- and Haut-Uele and in the Ituri Subregions of Haut-Zaïre, in parts of Nord and Sud Kivu, and in southern Maniema. See the Language Map of Eastern Zaïre which follows this introduction. Probable or definite translation needs were identified in most of the languages surveyed and for each language group an assessment was made of possible language project success. The information gathered also gives a good idea of where the next survey priorities are. Linguistically, the Bwa bloc findings were particularly interesting, while they also gave support for separate Bwa and Pagibate projects (the latter being recently undertaken by the Congo and Western Zaïre Group). The lexical findings in the languages of the Bira-Huku Group (D.30) show that it would be better to split the Group in two: a Komo Group with Komo, Bhele, Kaiku, Bila, Bira and Kwamba (also known as Humu) and a Budu Group with Budu, Ndaka, Mbo, Nyali and Vanuma. Because we have wordlists for all these languages, we have decided to put them in this compendium.

Secondly, meeting heterogeneous language communities like the Nyali and the Bira gave the impetus to develop a reliable method for testing the level of bilingualism in Zaïre Swahili. Zaïre Swahili is a diverse and unstandardized language. The Bible translation used in virtually all Protestant churches in eastern Zaïre is an attempt to promote some kind of standard Swahili. When people from different ethnic groups worship together in the same church, using this Swahili Bible is the most convenient solution. But it does leave the question of how well this translation is understood. Preliminary results from the bilingualism surveys of this year indicate that only the young adults with secondary education have reached an adequate level of comprehension in Zaïre Swahili. In the area covered by our surveys this group constitutes less than 10% of the total population.

Thirdly, it has given a better understanding of the environment in which we work, in particular of the literacy situation and of the general level of Christianity in eastern Zaïre. In places where we looked closely at the
literacy rate, we found that outside the main centres only about 20% of the young adult women and about 35% of the young adult men can read and write in Swahili. We assume that the same is true for the areas where Lingala or Bangala is the language of wider communication. Church affiliation is also much lower than expected: often the total number of practising Christians (Catholics and Protestants) is below 50% and usually the Protestants constitute a small minority of the whole population of a language group.

This compendium contains three volumes. The first has a language map of eastern Zaire and the reports on Bila, Bira, Nyali, Vanuma and Ndaka/Mbo/Beeke, as well as the wordlists of the Bira-Huku Group. In the second volume, the Bangba and Lombi reports are put together, supplemented by two reports related to findings during the Bangba survey: Mayogo-Madimadoko, and an experiment in dialect intelligibility testing. The third volume includes the Bangubangu, Bwa and Tembo reports, as well as the department's standard interview schedules and elicitation wordlist.

Gert de Wit

References


