

AFRICAN BASIC
GRAMMAR - REVIEW AND
PERSPECTIVES AFTER 12
YEARS
HELSINKI 2019

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SIL
International /
Nigeria

OVERVIEW

1. Origin and purpose: Discover Your Language
2. Typological parameters
3. Shell-books for write-ups
4. Ready-made lectures
5. Impact and assessment
6. Next steps

1. ORIGIN AND PURPOSE

participatory methods

- ‡ Decouvre ta langue (Cameroun) for discourse
- ‡ Discover your language (DR Congo) Conni Kutsch-Lojenga:
Participatory orthography development:

Kutsch Lojenga, Constance 1996. "Participatory research in linguistics." in: Notes on Linguistics 73: 13-27.

- ‡ Mozambican teachers
- ‡ Adult education methods:

Vella, Jane June 2002. Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach: The Power of Dialogue in Educating Adults. Jossey-Bass

1.1 ORIGIN AND PURPOSE

Felt and expressed need

Mozambique: 15 undocumented languages

Nigeria: 300 undocumented languages

Nilosaharan
206

Niger-Congo
1,543



Afroasiatic
376

Khoesan 28

1.2 ORIGIN AND PURPOSE

African Basic Grammar (ABG) =

- a collection of linguistic tools for research, promotion and standardization of African languages
- African - 2,153 languages in 4 phyla
- Basic – initial stage
- Grammar – module for language development

1.3 ORIGIN AND PURPOSE

Migration ← Lack of education ←
Language conundrum ← Mother tongue (non-)
development

Grammar
in context



1.4 ORIGIN AND PURPOSE

- i From Bantu to Nilosaharan and Afroasiatic and beyond
- i Mozambique, Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau:
Typology

2. TYPOLOGICAL PARAMETERS

(HEINE & VOSSEN 1981)

1. nominal classification: Gender or noun class
2. case marking on the noun
3. verbal derivation
4. constituent order

2.1 PARAMETER NOUN CLASSIFICATION ILLUSTRATED

i Emakuwa / central Macua (Niger-Congo, Bantu P.31)

1 MU- mutthu “pessoa”

3 M(U)- mwiti “árvore”

5 NI- niino “dente”

9 E- epuri “cabrito”

2 A- atthu “pessoas”

4 MI- miti “árvores”

6 MA- maino “dentes”

10 I- ipuri “cabritos”

2.2 PARAMETER VERBAL EXTENSION ILLUSTRATED

i Emakuwa / central
Macua (Niger-Congo,
... Bantu P.31)

INF-V(-APPL)(-CAUS)
(-PASS)(-REC)

- a) Ovara - grasp
- b) Ovariwa - be grasped
- c) Ovariha - make grasp
- d) Ovarihiwa - be made to grasp
- e) Ovarela - secure
- f) Ovareliwa - be secured
- g) Ovarana - grasp each other
- h) Ovarelana - secure each other
- i) Ovarihana - cause to secure
each other

2.3 AFRICAN LANGUAGE TYPES

(ADAPTED FROM HEINE & VOSSEN 1981)

	Noun classification	Case marking	Verbal derivation	Example language „families“
1 NCV	+	+	+	Kordofanian
2 NC	+	+	-	
3 NV	+	-	+	Bantu
4 N	+	-	-	Kwa
5 CV	-	+	+	Nilotic
6 V	-	-	+	Adamawa-Ubangi
7 C	-	+	-	Chadic
8 nil	-	-	-	Southern Khoesan

3. SHELL-BOOKS FOR WRITE-UPS

Grammar sketch

- ¡ Available
- ¡ Affordable
- ¡ Completed
- ¡ Booklet, pamphlet
- ¡ Stakeholders

Reference grammar

- ¡ Coherent
- ¡ Full paradigms
- ¡ Detailed
- ¡ Full book
- ¡ Academic readership

3.1 SHELL-BOOKS FOR WRITE-UPS

- i A readymade, linguistically informed collection of terms, definitions and examples
- i Readymade « formatted, table of contents, examples numbered, sample text (North wind and Sun) included
- i Linguistically informed = all relevant features included: Noun classes, all parts of speech (no adjectives), agreement, extensive verbal morphology, e.g. tense-aspect prefixes, verbal derivations: *finite* list for Bantu
- i Terms and definitions = Portuguese grammar for 8th grade

A Sentence is a prayer!

Oração = clause, sentence, prayer

Frase = clause or phrase

Sintagma = phrase

3.2 SHELL-BOOKS FOR WRITE-UPS: CONTENT

- i preface: who, when and where – about people
- i Introduction to the language situation: sociolinguistic profile (location, number of speakers, official status, indication of EGIDS level)
- i overview of the orthographic system(s), alphabet chart
- i text body: main sections with every part of speech
 - § brief and informal definitions
 - § ready-made illustrations
 - § allowing speakers without formal training to grasp the basic ideas needed for language development activities (lexicography, translation, writing, standardization).

3.3 SHELL-BOOKS FOR WRITE-UPS: CONTENT CTD.

- i small sample text: North Wind and Sun (IPA booklet)
- i list of publications ABOUT the language in question in the national language
- i list of publications IN the target language

4. READY-MADE LECTURES

A 2-weeks participatory workshop for speakers of not so researched languages:

- i 1.5 days of probing into clients' needs: where are speakers / MTTs in their project? user story: "I, as a speaker, would love to x so I could y."
- i Bring together (official) orthography + grammar + speakers' knowledge
- i IDEAL teaching / learning:

Introduce / Define / Expand / Apply / Lesson learned

Kröger, O. 2008. Bridging the gap: Bantu grammar workshops as a means to support community-based language development, in: *Anuário Internacional de Comunicação Lusófona 2008*: 157-180.

LUSOCOM Federação Lusófona de Ciências da Comunicação

4.1 READY-MADE LECTURES: DISCOVER YOUR LANGUAGE IN BANTU

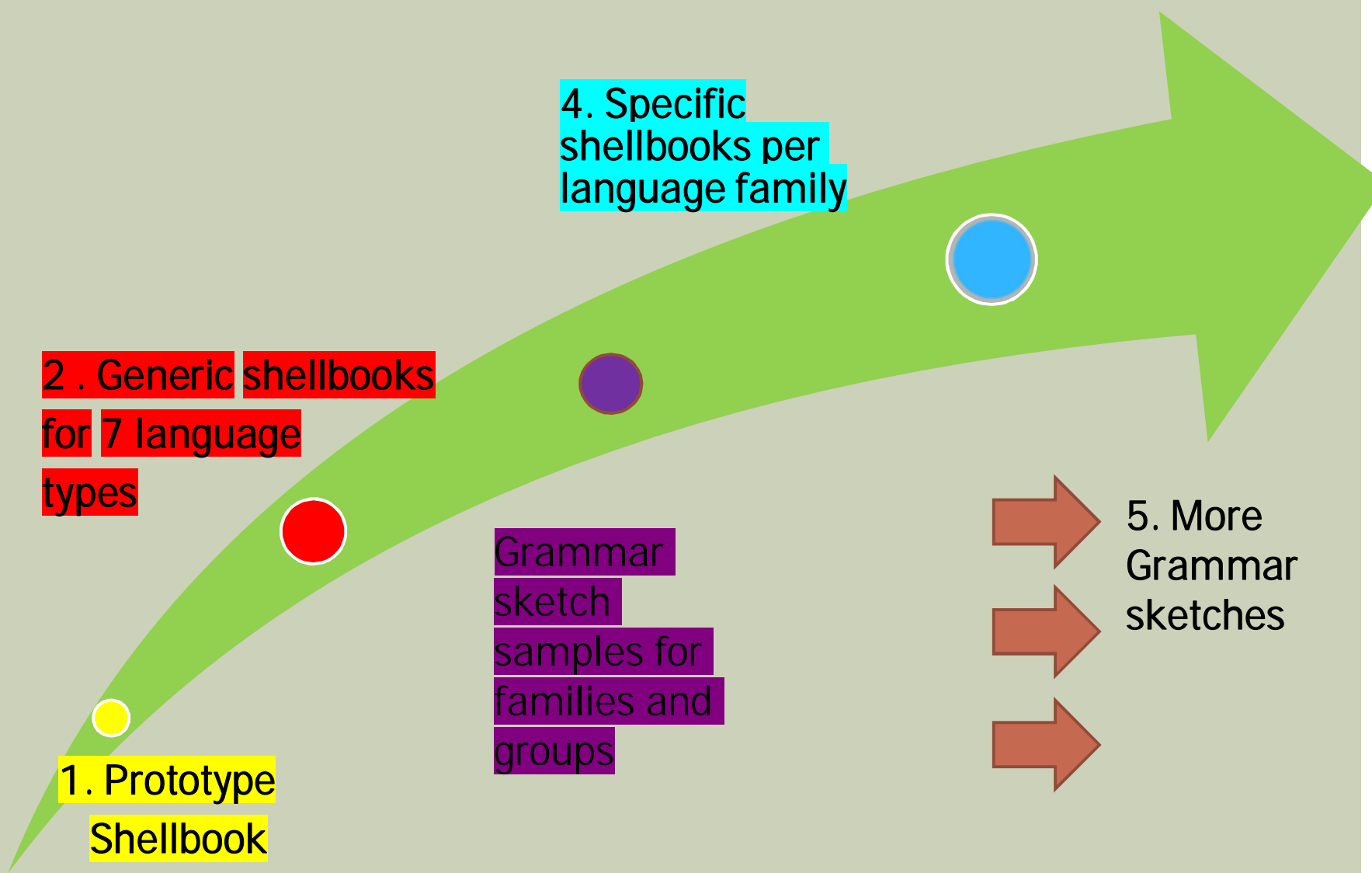
- i Noun – noun classes
- i Verb – subject marker – tense and aspect – object marker - negation - verbal extension
- i Variable words – adjectives – numerals – demonstratives – possessives – associative particles -
- i Invariable words – adverbs - conjunctions
- i Sample text: North Wind and Sun
- i Chart: Agreement / Concordance – singular prefixes – plural prefixes

4.2 READY-MADE LECTURES: THE DISCOVERY PACKAGE

- i Workshop lectures in Portuguese / English / French / Swahili
- i Grammar shellbooks digital
- i Samples of grammar sketches in a publication > series
Monografias Linguísticas Moçambicanas
- i Website *LIDEMO*
- i *Lots of unpublished sketches*
- i Paper on participatory methodology

5. IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT

- i Assessment of learning results
- i Distribution?
- i Availability?
- i Affordable?
- i Readable?
- i Reproducible?



1. Prototype Shellbook

2. Generic shellbooks for 7 language types

4. Specific shellbooks per language family

Grammar sketch samples for families and groups

5. More Grammar sketches

6 NEXT STEPS

(African Basic) Grammar is a dynamic process shared by many actors. It is unpredictable, highly relevant and integrated into overall (language) development, aimed at providing freedom for individuals to increase discover and unfold their potential

- Work group ABG
- Cooperation with Nigerian cultural association
- GoogleDoc to Web presence
- Continous publications
- And ???
- Your turn

AND ..

Kitos

Danke schön

Dank u well

Muito obrigado

Koxukureela

Shukren

Asante sana

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