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MODERNIZATION IN SANGO

In the study of language reform Sango has a unique place. It is the only pidgin that is a constitutionally recognized national language. Other pidgins, such as Pisin (or Neo-Melanesian) of Papua-New Guinea, are recognized with governmental approval and are used in at least some ways; but there is no other "nationalized" indigenous pidgin. Pisin, for example, is based on English. Most of the creoles fall into the same category.

1. THE HISTORY OF SANGO

The privileged position of Sango is due to its having been derived from a local language. What this was is still not exactly clear. There are three mutually intelligible dialects, all of which could have contributed to the development of the pidgin: Sango, Yakoma, and Ngbandi.

A history of the emergence of Sango as a pidginized lingua franca in the Ubangi basin, with Zaire on the left bank and the Central African Republic (CAR) on the right, has not yet been written. By about 1910 the grammar had arrived at its present state. It is reasonable to suppose that pidginization took place with the arrival of masses of service personnel, most of them Africans, at the very beginning of the colonial period. The Sango-Ngbandi-Yakoma people provided, sometimes willingly and sometimes unwillingly, canoes and canoers for the transportation of material and personnel up the Ubangi River (Samarin 1982).

Sango is quite clearly an African language, not an Afro-European one. Swahili, of course, is also an African language, but it is highly debatable whether Swahili, except for some local forms, is a pidgin. There might, however, be more agreement that Swahili is pidginized in comparison with vernacular forms, but that is a different matter (see Samarin 1971).

Another factor that separates Sango from other languages of the same type is that it has not yet been fully creolized. Although there are several thousand people who have learned Sango as their first language, some of whom later learned French or another African vernacular, it is still for most people a second language, one that is learned after the acquisition of linguistic competence (in the strictest sense of the term) in the home language—a local vernacular.
In the Central African Republic it is known by practically everyone except the very young and very old in the rural areas. There are large numbers of speakers in the adjoining areas of the Cameroun and Chad. (In the latter country the use of Sango in any fashion was decreed illegal for a time during the incumbency of President Tombalbaye in 1964.)

The constitutional recognition of Sango dates back to the very beginning of the independent state of the Central African Republic (1960). The official language (langue officielle), however, is French, as in other former French colonies.

Nothing is known about the constitutional recognition of Sango. Kalck’s history of the CAR (1970) says nothing at all about this topic. One suspects that its inclusion in the constitution was the result of some kind of political compromise worked out with French advisors. Perhaps Barthélémy Boganda, the first president, saw in Sango a symbol of his concept of the CAR being the “berceau des Bantous.” Soon after independence, under President Dacko, who succeeded Boganda after the latter’s death, the «Commission de la Langue Sango» was established (about which more is said below).

In the colonial period Sango was “developed” by Christian missionaries, the Catholics arriving in the 1890s and the Protestants in the 1920s. The first grammars and dictionaries were those of Calloc’h (1911) and Tisserant (1950). The first catechism and missal were published for Catholics in 1930; the New Testament was translated into Sango by Protestants and published by the British and Foreign Bible Society (1936). The actual use of Sango has always been more advanced among the Protestants than among Catholics: there was more schooling and more literacy; and there were more publications. All published literature had been religious in nature, but when Samarin in 1956 founded the monthly periodical «Trompette Évangélique» he hoped that it would serve practical needs.

Under the French administration Sango had no status whatsoever. In fact, it could not be used in education except for religious needs. Nonetheless, it is said that administrators were rewarded for acquiring some competence in the language. Éboué, a Martiniquais who eventually became Governor-General of French Equatorial Africa, seems to have acquired great facility in the language. Éboué, a Martiniquais who eventually became Governor-General of French Equatorial Africa, seems to have acquired great facility in the language and published some linguistic notes (1918). In the colonial period

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1 In none of the personal correspondence of Monseigneur Augouard, under whom missionaries were sent to Haut Congo, and other available documents at the Paris headquarters of the Congrégation de Saint-Esprit, has Samarin yet found any reference to the study of Sango during the first critical years at Mission Ste. Famille near what is now Bangui. This, of course, does not mean that they were not using Sango, for one of these earliest missionaries was young Père Calloc’h, who was soon to publish something on the language. In the personal correspondence of these missionaries, still in the possession of their families or at the mission headquarters, one might find references to their linguistic endeavors.
there was no newspaper; «Bangui Presse», in mimeographed form, provided inhabitants of the capital with announcements and advertisements—all in French. Its only acknowledgement of Sango was the heading «Bangui La So» ("Bangui today").

2. THE EXTERNAL DEVELOPMENT

Before discussing the modernization of Sango, we need to say more about its development, because anything done in the future will involve the adoption, modification, or rejection of what has already been done, whether the reformers of the future be linguistically naive or linguistically trained.

The written forms of Catholic and Protestant Sango differ in several important ways. Orthographically, they represent different local norms and use different spelling conventions. Thus,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>Protestant</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>molengué</td>
<td>melèngué</td>
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<tr>
<td>londo</td>
<td>loundou</td>
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<tr>
<td>ounda</td>
<td>hounda</td>
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<td>è</td>
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<td>kojoni</td>
<td>kodjoni</td>
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<tr>
<td>loungoula</td>
<td>lounguela</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mokonji</td>
<td>makounzi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

child          | arise           |
ask            | we              |
first          | remove          |
chief          |

Syntactically, the former is closer to spoken Sango than the other. In the development of vocabulary they also differ, with the Catholics having borrowed more from the source languages and the Protestants from French. A comparison of the same Biblical text (Matthew 8.1-13) reveals 4 French words in the Catholic version (prêtre, lieutenant, juif, païen) and 12 in the Protestant: Seigneur, sacrificateur, offrande, commandé, capitaine, boy (originally English) 'servant', même, est, ouest, table royaume, l'heure. The spoken language of Protestants, however, is not drastically different from that of the general population. It is more accurate to say that there is a Protestant religious register. We have observed Central Africans switching from this register to the colloquial variety after coming out of church.

Missionary work on Sango was pre-linguistic. That is, no one had been trained in modern linguistics. A linguistic perspective was introduced in 1952 when Samarin prepared a set of lessons («Learning Sango») based on the techniques of descriptive linguistics, writing the language phonemically and, for the first time, writing tone. In his set of primers to teach illiterates to read

2 A new Catholic translation is being prepared, and it will differ in several ways from the early one.
in Sango, «Guingo Legue ti Diko Mbeti na Yanga ti Sango» ("Learning to read in the Sango language") he experimented with a reform by delaying the use of accent marks for marking such things as vowel differences (tèné instead of téné 'speak, say; word') until the last primer. In the «Trompette Évangélique» accent marks were not used at all until other editors assumed direction in 1960. A complete grammar of Sango, based on samples of spoken Sango from many parts of the Central African Republic, became available in 1963 (Samarin 1967, 1970), and a dictionary based on the same corpus was also duplicated in 1965 (Taber). These works seem to have had no effect on the study or use of Sango in any sector, secular or religious, perhaps because written in English and scarcely available—if at all—in Central Africa.

A study of orthographical problems specific to the passage from oral to written means of linguistic expression has been recently published on Sango (Diki-Kidiri 1977), whereas a more comprehensive Sango-French dictionary and a French-Sango lexicon has been printed (see References). Whether or not this scholarly work as a whole will influence the present teaching of Sango in the CAR is still to be seen (cf. Bouquiaux et al.).

It is clear from the preceding discussion that the availability of linguistic experts and scientific studies is not sufficient, no matter how necessary one might consider them to be, in language development and reform. What is more important is the existence, on the one hand, of a mechanism for effecting plans and policies and, on the other hand, of models that can be imitated. Whereas both of these existed in the religious communities, seen as social networks and social organizations, we are concerned here with the evolution of Sango on a national scale.

If Sango is to become a national language in fact, not merely in theory, there must be effective language planning. The first goal must be standardization. A uniform orthography poses no major technical problems. More troublesome would be the adoption of a uniform spelling that represents the standard usage, whether that be measured by the number of speakers or the influence that a certain class of speakers might have. At the present time, even linguists, such as the authors of this paper, have not yet agreed on what are the most common or the most prestigious forms for many words\(^3\). Since the

\(^3\) The diversity in Sango is due to several factors. There are differences that are consistent with the phonological structures of the vernaculars: e.g. the realization of the phoneme /z/ might be [z, ʒ, ʒ], depending on the native language of the speaker. Variations like pìkɔ̃, pɛkɔ̃, pɔkɔ̃ 'back' appear randomly. Variations in the lexicon can in some cases be correlated with local usage, but other variations seem to be due to a tendency toward "hypercorrection" (Samarin 1966). One can speak of regional varieties but mostly because the ethnic languages are distributed geographically. There are no dialects in the usual sense of the word. One might, however, talk about rural and urban varieties. The spelling used in this paper is the result of a compromise between the two authors.
Committee on the Sango Language was the natural agency for engineering language reform. We shall present here a brief history of its activities.

Although Sango has been the national language of the CAR since 1960, it was only in June 1963 that the MESAN (the country's one political party: Mouvement d'Évolution Sociale d'Étude du Sango), holding a Congress at Berberati, announced some concrete measures for its study at government level. On January 15, 1965, the presidential decree No. 65/022 set up a National Committee for the Study of Sango (CNES: Commission Nationale sur l'Étude du Sango), whose immediate task was to provide the language with an official orthography, and then to compile a dictionary using that orthography in order to codify the spelling of each Sango word. Unfortunately this committee was conceived as an assembly of representatives so that little room was allowed for technical work to succeed. This was its composition:

1. The chairman of the CNES was the Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sports. But he could be—and regularly was—represented by a «Representative of the Government» who naturally chaired every CNES meeting. In the year 1965 the chairman was Antonio Franck (who was to become a minister later on), and in 1968, Philippe Kette, then Chief of Cabinet of the Minister of Education.
2. A Secretary General, who was always Jean-Marie Kobozo.
3. A representative of the workers' national trade-union (UCGT).
5. A representative of the Protestant churches.
8. A representative of the radio and press.

It is specified that the CNES could call on anybody whose skill it might need. That was how Diki-Kidiri, from 1966 and Luc Bouquiaux, from 1967, happened to collaborate with the CNES on various occasions until its dispersion in September 1968. Although it has never been officially abolished, its members were not replaced when, for some reason or another, they were unable to execute their responsibilities in the committee. Nevertheless a phonemic practical alphabet was presented to the government in 1968 for approval. This was the first and last achievement of the CNES. The Minister of Education then asked Luc Bouquiaux, Jean-Marie Kobozo and Diki-Kidiri to keep on working on the dictionary project till a new committee could be set up.

A new and much more powerful impetus came when the «Institut Pédagogique National» (IPN) was created by decree 74/077 on February 2, 1974.
with the mission of re-organizing the whole educational system. Special orders were given for the introduction of Sango into schools both as a subject and as a medium whenever suitable. The CNES alphabet was given to the IPN as the "official" alphabet to be used for Sango, although no official approval has ever been issued.

This orthography is also used in the publication «Linga» (Banda for 'wooden drum'), which is supposed to appear every two months. It is edited by Léandre Gon in the Département de l'Alphabétisation fonctionnelle et de l'Éducation permanente of the Institut Pédagogique National (B.P. 921, Bangui). However, it is reported that there is considerable lack of consistency in the way words are spelled in this newspaper.

Moreover, no study of the problems of orthography in Sango as a whole was then available. Despite all these shortcomings, the IPN's efforts for teaching Sango in primary schools revealed its usefulness. In 1975 Sango was taught in 47 experimental classrooms in Bangui. The language was also used for the teaching of such subjects as reading, writing, language learning, history, geography, physical education, and the natural sciences (see the table below). In 1977 this teaching was extended to more than 120 schools throughout the country. The following table shows how subjects were taught in Sango (S), in French (F) or both (SF) according to the IPN program for 1976-1980:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
<th>4th</th>
<th>5th</th>
<th>6th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standards: “cours d'introduction, élémentaire, moyen”</td>
<td>CI1</td>
<td>CI2</td>
<td>CE1</td>
<td>CE2</td>
<td>CM1</td>
<td>CM2</td>
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<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>— Oral and written communication</td>
<td>F</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>— Description of the language's system</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sango</td>
<td>— Oral and written communication</td>
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<td>— Description of the language's system</td>
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<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 A brief report is the article «Introduction du sango dans l'enseignement primaire» that deals with the use of Sango both in «enseignement primaire» and «écoles normales». This was prepared by the Département de la Recherche et de l'Animation Pédagogique de l'Institut Pédagogique National de Bangui (Cellule «Langues d'enseignement») and was published in «Recherche, Pédagogie et Culture», No. 34 (Mars-Avril, 1978), pp. 32-34. The bibliography lists five works published in Bangui that relate to the use of Sango.
Mathematics  SF  SF  F  F  F  F
Civics  S  S  S  S  S  S
History  —  —  —  S  S  S
Geography  —  —  —  SF  SF  SF
Sciences
  — Elementary  S  S  —  —
  — Advanced introductory level  —  —  S  S  SF  SF
Drawing and singing  S  S  S  S  SF  SF
Sports and physical education  S  S  S  S  SF  SF

It is obvious from this table that children can start learning the description of French (i.e. grammatical and logical analysis) in French as early as their 3rd year of schooling, whereas they will have to wait till the 5th year to do the same thing in Sango, i.e. learning to analyse the structure of Sango in Sango. This is simply because there has not been any grammatical terminology in Sango. This situation obviously reveals the necessity of coining new words (for if there is any poverty in Sango, it is in the readily available lexical stock). We should mention that the IPN team has already started creating a lexicon for mathematics.

3. INTERNAL FACTORS IN LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Although the history of language planning is specific to the history of the CAR, it is not unique, nor will it be unique, in the history of language planning on a worldwide scale. That is, Central African language planners can be informed by successful and unsuccessful attempts at language development over the past couple of centuries. What is unique to the case of Sango is the nature of the language itself. Here are found the internal factors that constrain the language in adapting itself to use in a modern age. If the language is handicapped internally, no set of external factors, however benign they might be, can achieve for it a secure and sanguine future.

Sango is by nature, and as compared with languages with a more normal history, a handicapped creature. To meet the immediate needs of people

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5 On the basis of his own work on Sango, Bouquiaux (1978:28) has come to a similar conclusion. He writes: "Dans sa fonction de langue véhiculaire, le sango est une langue pauvre, d'une grande simplicité, employant un vocabulaire restreint et faisant appel à un grand nombre de périphrases s'il est nécessaire de préciser un tant soit peu sa pensée. Un lexique de 800 termes témoigne d'une bonne connaissance du sango. C'est le bagage moyen d'un bon locuteur banguissois. En dehors de Bangui, des enquêtes faites dans des villages montrent que ce vocabulaire ne dépasse pas 300 termes et la connaissance du sango est loin d'y être aussi générale." He cites as examples the fact that there are no words for knee, heart, and brain.
who had to communicate with each other in the Ubangian basin the language had to shed most of what had been developed in adaptation to a great variety of long-standing language functions. As a pidgin, Sango has been a reduced language for reduced functions. It succeeded, of course; otherwise, it would have disappeared. It has an adequate grammar that appears to have been stable from the earliest time for which we have any information. Its lexicon was adapted by incorporating words from the languages of the new speakers: Banda, Lingala, Gbaya, and French, and possibly Swahili. These have become part of the stable core vocabulary. Contrary to popular views—held by some linguists who should know better—Sango's vocabulary is not a mish-mash of other languages. About 80% of its most frequently used words are from the source languages. Although it has a reduced lexicon, comprising of about 1500 of the most common morpheme types (according to Samarin's estimation), it is still adequate for the referential needs of traditional— that is, non-European—existence.

By typological comparison with other African languages, Sango fits in with a widespread group (from the Ubangian languages in the center of Africa to the Mandingo languages in the west) which has a relatively unproductive derivational system whereas compounding techniques are extensively used; semantic shifts also enlarge the scope of word usage. These processes are normal in all natural languages and could, of course, help Sango in adapting to greater and greater needs. The essential feature of Sango's handicap is that its basic vocabulary is limited in view of the large range of functions it will probably be called upon to fulfill. It must therefore borrow extensively, at least at the start. This summary having been given, let us now look at what has occurred in Sango in its normal evolution and what might be engineered through systematic, thoughtful effort. The following treatment will permit one to make a more intelligent prognosis of lexical reform.

3.1. Extension of semantic field

Without any outside influence, the meaning of scores of words has been extended to new realities. So kgbë, whose first meaning is 'leaf', has been used for 'sheet' in kgbë ti mbëti 'a sheet of paper'. In the following pages we shall indicate extended meanings by putting an asterisk (*) before them (e.g. *2, 'wheel' below).

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{gbàzá} 1. circle, hoop; *2. wheel
  \item \textit{bôngô} 1. kind of bark used in ancient times to make cloth; *2. cloth made out of that bark; *3. (any) cloth, tissue, dress
\end{itemize}

\footnote{This topic is treated also in Bouquiaux (1978:28) where he says the following: "Tel qu'il se présente aujourd'hui, le dictionnaire sango comporte 6000 entrées. Pour arriver à ce nombre, il a donc fallu procéder à un enrichissement conscient en faisant appel à diverses techniques".}
mandako 1. canoe racing; *2. competition; *3. competitive examination.
This technique can be used to enrich the language as may be seen from the following words:

kamâ 1. left or right side of a canoe; *2. side (of a geometrical figure); *3. (political) party
kekere 1. to leave one's mark by contact, to mark; *2. to sign
lê wêre 1. (play + game) to play; *2. to play a part (in drama)
gbâzâ 1. circle, hoop, wheel; *2. cycle (in electricity and electronics)

We could translate quite easily 'the frequency is ten kilocycles' as follows:
sêlôrâ ni ayeke gbâzâ sâki bâlê-iko.

3.2. Coining new words with existing derivational rules

a) Sango shows a tonal derivation in about twenty verbs which produce derived nouns by elevation of the tonal register of at least the last syllable in disyllabic verbs:

mâ to listen (var. mê) > mâ (var. mê) ear
tene to speak > têne speech, word
vuru to be clear-colored, white > vurû clear, white

One could use this means to produce new words as follows:

tô to fetch up some liquid > *tô a certain quantity of liquid fetched up and used as the basis to measure the capacity of any container.
sungba to burst > *sungbâ a burst, a splinter.

b) Verbal derivation uses ten devices with eight suffixes (-rV, -ka, -nga, -si, -na, -ngbi, -ma, -ngô) and two different types of morphemic repetition.

We cannot deal with all of them here. We shall give only one example per derivation and show how their use can be extended to create new words.
[1] For an action repeated several times in a brief period:
- rV: leke to arrange > lekere to repair (little by little)
- ka: tiri to fight > tirika to struggle (fight out)

[2] Repetition for an action which is made intensive:
fa to show > fafa to show off, to exhibit.
pête to press > pepête to oppress, to suppress.

[3] For an action which is repeated within long and regular periods, or in some methodical way:
- nga: la to sleep, to lay down > langa to dwell (sleep regularly).

[4] For a synchronic action involving several units either as result of the action or as subjects:
- ngbi: kâ to break > kângbi to divide, to separate.
[5] For an action made intensive because it involves several actors:
-na: *langa* to dwell
   > *langana* to sleep in different places designed for several people; to lie anywhere anyhow.

[6] Making a gerund:
-nga: *sâra* to do, to make
   > *sârângo* (fact of) making or doing.

[7] Other types of derivation less semantically conditioned:
(a) Repetition with LHL tones:
   *ne* to be heavy
   > *nenê* heavy, weight
(b) *-st: mā* to listen
   > *māsi* to listen while hidden, i.e. to spy.
(c) *-ma: bgo* exquisite (food)
   > *bgo*ma* to become or to be exquisite.

It should be noticed that the last suffix -ma is added to adjectives only in order to produce derived verbs. These derivational morphemes do not affect all the verbs in the language. Some of them are found with few verbs, others concern all the verbs of the language. It is the task of language planners to see how far the use of each suffix can be extended, and to define the meaning and use of the derived words, for example, from *dô* ‘to pull’ we could derive:

* *dôka* to pull something heavy, to train (= to pull intensively with repeated action)
* *dôngbi* to establish a proportion between several things, to pull several things together, or to bring one thing to the level of another one for comparison
* *dôdô* 1. an adjective qualifying something which is ‘pulled forth’, ‘progressed’, to be compared with a stable basis; 2. a proportion
* *dôsi* to pull silently, in a hidden way, secretly (as for a puppet show).

3.3. **Coining new words with existing rules of composition**

Compound words are made up according to a few relevant syntactic models, ten of which have been investigated elsewhere (Diki-Kidiri 1977). We shall run over them here for the sake of a synthetic view before lingering on some examples. In the following list, Cd stands for a complete noun, Ct a noun complement, Qd a qualified noun, Qr a qualifier, Ad apposed (i.e. a noun which receives an apposition), An apposition (i.e. the noun which is added to another as an apposition), Co-1 first element of a coordination, Co-2 second element of a coordination, Crd compared (i.e. a word which is compared to another), Crn comparison (i.e. a word to which another one is compared), V verb, O object, C circumstantial complement. For the sake of clarity we have written some compound words with a period (e.g. *yângâ da* ‘door’), but Diki-Kidiri (1977) has suggested writing them together in a normalized orthography (thus, *yângâ da*).
Several of the models above can be used in hypercomposition such as: watokua 'commissioner' /wa.(to.kua)/ where model [8] is included in model [2]; wagbenyōgbiā 'lord's minister' /wa.(gbe.(nyō.gbïâ))/ where model [2] has been used three times. This model is in fact the most productive of all, although some new words have been recently coined on other models, such as [5]: kōli-wāli 'a homosexual', wāli-kōli 'a lesbian' (collected in 1974 in Bangui by Diki-Kidiri).

Obviously one can create a great quantity of new compound words using these models and different morpheme-types, whether well-known or not.

a) Using well-known morpheme-types:

kua.sīnga /work | telecommunication/ = a program on TV or radio [2]
wag.ɡō.sīnga /owner | voice telecommunication/ = announcer, speaker (on TV or radio) [2]

Nzāpâ-Babâ /God | Father/ = God the Father [5]

b) Using elaborated morpheme-types from Sango, Yakoma or Ngbandi (which are dialects of one language):

pa to say > pā a saying, a word (see tonal derivation, paragraph 3.2a)
li to do > li a deed (mostly used in Yakoma and Ngbandi).

We can then coin on model [2] using the above derived nominals:
*pāli /word | deed/ (a word of a deed) the saying of a deed.

From kamâ ‘side of a canoe’ and by extension ‘side of a geometrical figure’ (see paragraph 3.1), and using the Yakoma-Ngbandi version of the numerals, one can coin the following words on model [4]:

*kamâkɔ /side | one/ = unilateral
*kamâtâ /side | three/ = triangle
*kamâkũ /side | five/ = pentagon
*kamâkɔte /side | multiple/ = multilateral
*kâmâse /side|two/ = bilateral  
*kâmâsîô /side|four/ = quadrilateral  
*kâmâmenê /side|six/ = hexagon, etc...  
*kâmâzu /side|all/ = omnilateral.

With the introduction of Sango in schools we will have a way to judge the efficacy of neologisms, such as those presented above. Several similar creations coined in 1968 seem to have already been adopted by speakers of Sango, replacing formerly used French words, e.g., as émission, speaker, Saint-Esprit.

3.4. Borrowing from vernaculars

The first aim of such borrowings in terms of language planning should be to extend the number of the available morpheme-types. As all but a few of the vernaculars in the country are of the same linguistic family, there is little problem in integrating such loan-words as phonemic assimilation is secured. French loan-words are not appreciated as they used to be, and Diki-Kidiri (1976) has shown how they are being replaced by indigenous ones. This does not mean, however, that all French words are being eliminated; and we can assume, culture contact being what it is, that many of them will remain in Sango.

To illustrate the way a creative use of Sango resources can reduce the need for borrowing, let us look at excerpts from a small diglot manual that was published by the government at some time between 1962 and 1966: «Le coton centrafricain — un revenu certain.» (The original Sango translation was prepared by Samarin, but the present one deviates from it substantially and inconsistently.) In the Sango text the following French words occur, the suggested Sango alternatives being shown in parentheses: place (ndo), tourné (gbiânngbi), mais (ka), centimètre (nzina-meter < mètre), coton (tukià, tende), piquet (sî, gbangê), dimanche (lâyenga, dimâsi < dimanche), saleté (bi, bibilâ, siński pérê ‘bad grass’), manqué (tia, mangê < manqué), fleur (kôngô, ndôko), encore (ngà, mbéni), capsule (nikà, nzià), marché (galà), engrais (hingô ‘salt’; Diki-Kidiri suggests *tese ‘food of earth’ < Sango-Yakoma te ‘food’, itself from te ‘to eat’ + se ‘earth’; more commonly sesecutive).

The following text will be presented in two versions, on the left the one from the diglot manual, and on the right a corrected version showing a normalized orthography, an improved grammar (at least for the 10th sentence) and a better choice of lexical items.

1. Place so azo a sala yaka da mingui aho ndo ni, so ayeke nzoni pepe.  
2. A yeke mbanga ti mo ti tourné sesse ni nzoni.

4. Na nda ni, tonga na a sala dimanche 2 wala 3, coton ni a si guigui awe.

5. Mais saleté a yeke da nga.

6. Tonga na sesse ni ayeke nzoni, na mo de sesse ni nzoni, na mo lou na ta la ti loungo ni, keke ti coton ni a yeke sala ye nzoni a manqué pepe.

7. Fade so mo lingbi zia engrais da.

8. Tonga na mo sala ye kwe na legue ni nzoni, coton ni a commencé ti sala fleur.


10. Youngoula pepe capsules, manga ti youngoula tende na codro ti mo.

11. Lo gwe na marché ti ka coton ti lo.

We present here a somewhat literal translation of the Sango as well as the original French version.

1. Place where people make gardens a lot is not good.

2. You must cultivate the soil well.

3. First, you must make the string. Take a stick, pound on earth, the space is 60 centimeters.

4. At the end, when it makes 2 or 3 weeks, the cotton has already appeared.

5. But dirt is there also.

6. When the earth is good, and you cultivate the soil well, and you plant right on the day for planting, the wood of the cotton makes things well no missing.

Le planteur choisit un bon terrain.

Le cultivateur laboure son champ en enfonçant régulièrement sa houe de 10 centimètres dans le sol. Le paysan aura tracé des lignes avec des piquets espacés de 60 centimètres.

Deux ou trois semaines plus tard, les graines ont levé et donné nais-sance à de jeunes cotonniers. Mais les herbes ont également poussé.

Le cultivateur a bien choisi son terrain, a bien travaillé le sol, a semé à la date voulue et a bien sarclé son champ.
7. Now you can put fertilizer there.

8. If you have done everything well in the right way, the cotton has begun to make flowers.

9. You must return to clean the belly of the cotton again.

10. Don't remove the capsules, in order to remove cotton in your village.

11. He goes to the market to sell his cotton.

4. REALIZATION OF REFORM

Implementing plans for the use of a modernized Sango will be the responsibility of some government agency such as the IPN. It requires the consistent support of civil servants in education and communication. Without this support, Sango has less chance in succeeding as a national language than Swahili in Tanzania. (In that country, we have heard, some civil servants obstruct the Swahili program while others only pay lip service to it.) But the updated Sango will have to be popularized by the pace-setters. People need models to imitate. In a literate society a popular literature can have a great influence. Perhaps Sango will be handicapped as long as there is no indigenous literature; if so, Sango's future will be less certain than that of Swahili, which itself, according to Whiteley (1969), was not supported by sufficient novels and poems, in spite of the number of newspapers. Something should, however, be said about the influence of «Radio Bangui» on popular Sango usage.

Although it has not been possible to gather satisfactory information on the first introduction of Sango on radio, it is certain that this language has not always been extensively used. Sango has acquired its present position on the air gradually.

In the early 1950s, the most popular musicians were Antoine Wendo and Paul Kamba from Zaire who sang in Lingala and played European guitars. No wonder that only solo guitarists could be found among the first generation of artists singing in Sango (e.g. Jean-Marc Lessoua, Jean Magale, Jean-Claude Eboma). The later emergence of orchestras seeking nationwide support (e.g. Mayele's «Centraficain Jazz», Bekpa's «Vibro-Succès», and Charlie Perrière's «Tropical Fiesta») was a powerful factor in spreading and standardizing Sango. It provided the language with its first nationwide oral literature.
At the same time, Sango came to be used more and more on radio programs: the news, announcements, political advice, entertainment, health and agricultural information, communiqués, sports, and so on. Sango was actually taught on the radio in 1969. By the end of that year every program was introduced in Sango as the following table of hours suggest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sango</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Every day from Monday to</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday:</td>
<td>5 h</td>
<td>3 h</td>
<td>0 h 30</td>
<td>8 h 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday:</td>
<td>3 h 05</td>
<td>4 h 15</td>
<td>1 h</td>
<td>8 h 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday:</td>
<td>10 h 21</td>
<td>5 h 51</td>
<td>0 h 15</td>
<td>11 h 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>18 h 26</td>
<td>13 h 06</td>
<td>1 h 45</td>
<td>28 h 17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the programs in English are news broadcasts, as well as most of the French ones. For instance, on Saturdays there are three hours and fifteen minutes out of four hours fifteen minutes for the news and only one hour for other kinds of programs. Programs in Sango are mostly limited to music, religious services, and sports reporting. The quality of the Sango spoken on the air has also improved.

One of the best announcers in Sango, Albert Wilibiropasi, has even written poetry. Here is one verse:

Mîlengé ti mbî, bâ mo zingo awa.
Mbî gônda mo mingi.
Hînga mo tens mbî yake bata mo lâkué,
Si mo lângô mosümâ ti nzöni.

My child, you’re awake.
I cherish you.
Be assured that I care for you always.
So have sweet dreams.

It is quite evident that the radio has influenced Sango considerably, especially where the radio is most used—that is, in all urban centres and in Bangui most of all. It is not so much that a word or expression, a saying or proverb, or a new sense of an old word is used on the radio but that innovations are used again and again. In other words, frequency of usage (which is tedious from another point of view) becomes part of the teaching process: it diffuses and establishes innovations.

June 12th, 1978
References


