

WORDS FROM CONGOLESE MUSIC INTRODUCED INTO LINGALA SPOKEN IN KINSHASA

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ABSTRACT

There are words from Congolese music sung in Lingala that are introduced into the Kinshasa spoken Lingala. Some may be considered as loanwords and others may not be considered as loanwords as they are words from Lingala showing meaning change. The word "mbila" is an illustration.

Keywords: *Loanwords, Lingala, meaning, change, music.*

RÉSUMÉ

Il existe des mots chantés de la musique congolaise qui sont introduit dans le Lingala parlé à Kinshasa. Quelques-uns de ces mots peuvent être considérés comme des emprunts et les autres ne le peuvent pas comme ils proviennent de Lingala indiquant ainsi le changement. Le mot « mbila » en est une illustration.

Mots clés : *Emprunt, Lingala, changement, musique.*

0. INTRODUCTION

Lingala language as stated Guthrie, Malcolm and Carrington, John F. (1988): In its basic vocabulary, Lingala has many borrowings from various other languages, such as: Zande, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and English. In addition, Lingala language spoken in Kinshasa, the Capital city of Democratic Republic of Congo includes different words sung in the Congolese music.

Those words had been used by the Congolese musicians before being adapted by the Kinshasa speech community.

In this work, the researcher is interested in identifying some words and try to find out whether there are loanwords, in case they are from other languages or the same Lingala words with meaning change.

Concerning the methodology, this study had recourse to qualitative method. The technique of sociolinguistic interview was applied. The researcher selected randomly twenty Kinshasa residents in the district of Mont-Amba. The twenty informants provided the needed information on the seven selected words.

Apart from the sociolinguistic interview, observation was also employed. The researcher took time to listen to different Lingala songs where the seven selected words were sung by the Congolese musicians.

I. ON LINGALA AND CONGOLESE MUSIC

1.1. On Lingala

The origin of Lingala as stated by Nsimambote (2021) is still debatable in the literature: Two groups of linguists distinguished according to their views concerning the origin of Lingala.

The first one postulated that Lingala is from Bobangi, a language that has historically functioned as a trade language along the Congo River. With Belgian colonization of this area in the 19th century, Bobangi spread into other areas. The colonial administration needed a common language for missionary and administrative purposes fit their purpose and it was Bangala. Catholic missionaries attempted to standardize it by expanding its vocabulary. In this process of creolization, the language was renamed Lingala.

The second one is the group of linguists who support that Lingala did not originate from Bobangi solely. It is a contact of different dialects of people living by the Congo. Among them, Bobangi, Limbunza, Lokonda, Lingombe, Motembo, Mangala, Mbunza and others. These dialects were mixed to produce a pidgin called Lingala. Its process of creolization was facilitated by missionaries. Gutherie (1943), Everbroeck (1985), and Nzombengene (2013).

Lingala, one of the four national languages, meaning the language of Bangala from Equateur, is spoken in Kinshasa, in Mai-Ndombe district, in the entire Equateur province, Tshuapa, Mongala, Nord et Sud Ubangi, Bas-Uélé and Haut-Uélé provinces. Being spoken in Kinshasa, the DRC Capital, Lingala is considered as the language of the Congolese music and of the army.

Lingala is spoken by around 27,8% of Congolese population, Kinshasa speakers including. Apart from DRC, Lingala language is spoken at Congo Brazzaville and Central African Republic.

There are two varieties of Lingala: the Standard and the spoken one.

The Standard Lingala is the literary variety of the language used in formal contexts, such as in education, religious practices, and the print and electronic media (Nsimambote Zola R. 2021:54).

The spoken Lingala is the variety that is used in informal everyday situation. It has a full morphological noun prefix system, but the agreement system is more lax than in standard Lingala. In addition, there are differences between Spoken Lingala of Kinshasa and the one of Brazzaville. Both varieties have a

significant number of borrowings from French and other Bantu languages (Meeuwis, 1993) quoted by Nsimambote Zola (2021:54).

But Guthrie (1998) divided the Lingala language into several variations which are: Standard Lingala, Spoken Lingala, Kinshasa Lingala and Brazzaville Lingala. Whereas, Bokamba (2009) distinguished six varieties of Lingala: Standard Lingala or literary, Kinshasa Lingala, spoken Lingala, Brazzaville Lingala, Mangala a variety spoken in Uele district, at the north and north-west part of Province Oriental (former configuration), and indoubil /slang (the language used by Kinshasa young men and other urban centers). In addition, Bokamba sees the Indoubil as a “highly code-mixed Lingala”.

Nzoimbengene in *Le Lingala au Congo-Kinshasa: Profil sociolinguistique*, distinguished first the Lingala of Kinshasa which is the most prestigious and influential one throughout the entire area of expansion of the language and thus counting as its “central” variant. And qualified the Lingala spoken in Kinshasa as the common language contrary to the thought of Kukanda who stands that what could be common is the Lingala described in grammar and used in education that is the Standard Lingala.

1.2. On Congolese music

Bob W. White (2002:664) wrote, Congolese popular music has a long history, and its success in other parts of Africa can only be understood through a close reading of its evolution over time. A central element in this history is the story of Kinshasa, formerly Leopoldville, the one that came to be known elsewhere in Africa in large part because of its music.

In addition, Manda Tchewwa (1996:252) has observed, Kinshasa’s urban identity is tied up in the music and in many ways the two come of age together: “...La chanson de Kinshasa porte en elle tous les germes de l’urbanité et de la citadinité”. After bolingo (love) and motema (“feeling” or “heart”), the most frequently occurring word in Congolese popular song lyrics is most likely “Kinshasa”, whose multiple identities reflect the combinatory playfulness of the city’s predominantly Lingala-speaking population: “Kiniville”, “Kin Plaisir” (Kinshasa the Pleasurable), “Kin la Joie” (Kinshasa the Joyful), “Kin la Belle” (Kinshasa the Beautiful) and following the economic and political crisis of the early 1990s “Kinshasa la Poubelle” (Kinshasa the Garbage Can). For people from Kinshasa (les Kinois), this city is the cradle of modern Congolese music.

When speaking about Congolese music, we refer to three primary sources of musical inspiration: Western music (this includes church music as well as European romantic ballads and ballroom traditions), Traditional music (different types of African folklore and ritual-inspired performance), and Afro-Cuban music (Bob W. White 2002:665).

II. SOCIOLINGUISTIC SITUATION OF DRC

The Democratic Republic of Congo has 450 different ethnical groups which represent 250 languages among which 4 have the status of national languages: Kikongo, Ciluba, Lingala and Kiswahili.

2.1. Kikongo

The Kikongo, which is spoken today by approximately 12% of the Congolese population, is the language of Ne-Kongo, also called Monokutuba, Kikongo ya Leta, or Ikeleve, Kikongo, national language which allows communication among tribes living Kwilu province, Kwango province and Kongo Central province.

2.2. Ciluba

Ciluba language is spoken in the two Kasai provinces (former configuration), at Kikwit, Kanyama territory in Katanga and in large urban centers of the latter province particularly in Lubumbashi, Likasi, Kolwezi, Bukama and Kamina were a good number speakers of Kasai origin reside. (Celta 2010:57). It is spoken by approximately 16,4% of the Congolese population.

2.3. Kiswahili

Kiswahili is the first National vehicular language of DRC according to the high number of its speakers. Kiswahili language is from the mixture of Bantu languages and Arabic ones. It was introduced in the East part of DRC by the Arabic occupation of 1850-1900, it is spoken by 43,6% of Congolese population, in the following provinces: Haut Katanga, Lualaba, Tanganika, haut Lomami, Maniema, South Kivu, North Kivu, Tshopo and Ituri.

2.4. Lingala

Spoken by around 27,8 % of the Congolese population, Lingala one of the four national languages, meaning the language of Bangala from Equateur, is spoken in Kinshasa, in Mai-Ndombe district, in the entire Equateur province, Tshuapa, Mongala, Nord et Sud Ubangi, Bas-Uélé and Haut-Uélé provinces. Being spoken in Kinshasa, the DRC Capital, lingala is considered as the language of the Congolese music and of the army.

III. LINGUISTIC ASPECTS OF LINGALA

As a Bantu language, the Standard Lingala has seven vowels which are:/i, e, ε, a, o, ɔ, u, / whereas spoken one has five vowels:/i, e, a, o, u/.

Table 1. Lingala vowels

Place/manner	Front	Central	Back
Close	i		u
Close mid	e		o
Mid	ɛ		ɔ
Open		A	

The Lingala spoken in Kinshasa has five vowels, it lacks the vowels / ɛ/ and / ɔ/. Nsimambote Zola R. (op.cit). /w/ and /j/ are semi-vowels they are labiovelar.

The Lingala language has twenty consonants: /p, t, k, b, d, g, gb, mb, nd, ng, f, s, v, z, ʒ, nz, m, n, ŋ, l /.

Table 2. Lingala consonants

		Bilabial	Labiodental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Labiovelar
Stop	voiceless	p		t		k	
	Voiced plain	b		d		g	gb
	Voiced Prenasalized	mb		nd		ng	
Fricative	Voiceless		f	s			
	Voiced plain		v	z	ʒ		
	voiced prenasalized			nz			
Nasals		m		n	ŋ		
Lateral				l			
Semivowels		w			j		

Guthrie, Malcolm and Carrington, John F (1988), asserted that the Lingala language has 35 letters and digraphs.

Table 3. *Lingala alphabet*

N°	Letters		Variants	Example
1	a	A	à â a ^v	nyama, matàta; sâmbòle
2	b	B		bísò
3	c	C		ciluba
4	d	D		madésu
5	e	E	é ê ë	komeka, mésa, kobênga
6	ɛ	Ɛ	é ε é	lélò, léki
7	f	F		lifúta
8	g	G		kogánga
9	gb	Gb		gbagba
10	h	H		bohlu
11	i	I	í î ï	wápi, tí, zíko
12	k	K		kokoma
13	l	L		kolóla
14	m	M		kokóma
15	mb	Mb		kolámba, mbwá, mbelí
16	mp	Mp		límpa
17	n	N		líno
18	nd	Nd		ndeko
19	ng	Ng		ndéngé
20	nk	Nk		nkámá
21	ns	Ns		nsómi
22	nt	Nt		ntaba
23	ny	Ny		nyama
24	nz	Nz		nzala
25	o	O	ó ô õ	moto, sòngólò, sékò
26	ɔ	Ɔ	ɔ ɔ ɔ	soso
27	p	P		penepene
28	r	R		malaríya
29	s	S		kopésa
30	t	T		tatá
31	u	U	U	butù
32	v	V		kovánda
33	w	W		awa
34	y	Y		koyéba
35	z	Z		kozala

Note : The accents indicate the tones as follows :

- No accent, the low tone e.g. Solo (smell)
- Acute accent for the high tone e.g. Soló (musical note)
- Circumflex for descending tone e.g. Sólò (the truth)
- Caron for ascending tone. e.g. Sólò (eggplant)

Apart from what Guthrie wrote about tone, Nsimambote (2021: 56-57) argued that, Lingala has two tones: high and low. They are used to distinguish between otherwise identical pairs of words and to mark grammatical functions. High tone is represented with an acute accent, while the low tone is unmarked. However, the tone is not always marked in writing.

Her below are examples showing lexical contrastive tone and grammatical one.

a. Lexical contrastive tone

- Moto "fire" vs motò "head"
- mbongo "money" vs mbòngo "fish"
- kombo "name" vs kòmbò "brush"
- mabele "breasts" vs mabélé "earth"
- Ekolo "country" vs ekòlò "basket"
- molobi "locutor" vs molòbi "fisherman"
- matanga "mourning" vs matàngá "drop"
- mbala "time" vs mbàlà "potato"

b. grammatical distinctive

- Babinaka "they usually dance" vs babínáká "they danced"
- Nateka "may I sell" vs natéká "I have sold"
- Tosalaka "we usually work" vs tosáláká "we worked"
- Atangaka "he usually study" vs atàngáká "he studied"
- Nalámba "may I cook" vs nalámbá "I cooked"

IV. ANALYSIS OF WORDS FROM CONGOLESE MUSIC IN KINSHASA SPOKEN LINGALA

In this section, the seven selected words are discussed. The opinions from the twenty interviewees were also taken into account.

4.1. Mario sung by Lwambo Makiadi Franco with Ok Jazz

Mario is an educated handsome young man with five diplomas living the University of Kinshasa. During the International fair of Kinshasa, he met a mistress of a rich man who fold in love of him. She asked Mario his address and then followed him to the Campus for love affairs but Mario refused because he had a fiancé. But in front of money, Mario didn't resist he accepted and went living with the mistress at her place.

Being in charge of the mistress, Mario behaved as a real husband with all the power and made more damages once the husband of the mistress came home. He became unsupportable and the mistress worried about that.

When Franco Lwambo Makiadi hears the new, as an artist he sung it by complaining about Mario attitude and blamed him in the song. The title of the song is “Mario”. Through the song, Mario appears as a homeless man supported by a woman. That is why the fanatics of Ok Jazz meaning Franco band started using Mario qualifying all men supported by women up to now in Lingala spoken in Kinshasa.

For example, how the mistress was wondering (the song)

- Lelo makambu lobi makambo Mario eh eh. Meaning *today problems, tomorrow problems I am tired Mario*
- Na koki kozala Mario te. Meaning I can't be supported by a woman.

Notice:

- For Franco: Mario (n) is a proper name of a person; whereas
- In Kinshasa Lingala: Mario (adj) is a homeless man
- Phonologically: Mario is pronounced like.

The word “Mario” would be from Spanish or Portuguese language. The way it is introduced into Lingala shows that it is a loanword. Its original meaning from Spanish or Portuguese is not kept. It has adopted a new meaning as discussed above.

4.2. Mayumbu: sung by Werrason in “Kala yi bwing” with Wenge Musica

Mayumbu is a Kikongo word meaning the place that settled a village while moving to another place. Mayumbu is characterized by the bush, grown up trees such as palm trees, mango trees and so on.

But Werrason in the song “Kala yi bwing” used Mayumbu meaning Kikwit (a city in Kwilu Province). By that fact, all Wenge music consumers especially those from Bandundu Province (Kwilu) stated calling Kikwit Mayumbu and then the word spreads in Kinshasa speech community.

Notice:

- Originally, Mayumbu (n) meaning the place where settled a village while moving for another place.
- For Werrason, Mayumbu (n) meaning Kikwit.
- Phonologically: It sounds like.
- “Mayumbu” is an instance of Kikongo word in Lingala. It is a loanword from Kikongo into Lingala.

4.3. Ngomba: sung by Emeneya Kester with Victoria Eleison

Ngomba is a Lingala word meaning the higher place, the mountain. Emeneya seeing that the University of Kinshasa is located at a higher place (ngomba), in his song “Ngomba” called it Ngomba meaning the place of

acquiring higher education or the place of higher studies. Always his fanatics followed him by calling the University of Kinshasa "Ngomba".

Example: (an extract of the song)

Ngomba eh ngomba na komata, na yebe te oh, oh Nzambe ayebi oh oh.
Meaning *the University, I am going, I do not know if I will succeed, but God himself knows.*

Notice:

Etymologically: Ngomba (n) meaning higher place or mountain in Lingala

For Emeneya : Ngomba (n) meaning the University of Kinshasa.

In Kinshasa speech community "Ngomba" is used for the two meanings, the higher place and the University of Kinshasa according to the context.

Phonologically: It sounds like.

With the word "Ngomba", there is no borrowing. "Ngomba" is not a loanword, but it has changed the meaning in Kinshasa musicians' register.

4.4. Ya Mado: sung by Fabregas

Ya is the prefix meaning Elder, it is short form of Yaya (elder) a Lingala word. But Mado is the abbreviated form of the name Madeleine, a female name of a person.

The concerned Ya Mado meaning "Elder Mado" sung by Fabregas in his song is a real Mado a lady calling Mado with a big buttocks, while dancing, she moves her buttocks which attracted and well looking by the audience (some).

In Kinshasa spoken Lingala, apart for calling the real Ya Mado, it is used for identifying all wives or ladies having or with big buttocks.

Notice:

Etymologically: "Yam Mado" is a proper noun of a person (lady)

In Kinshasa Lingala: "Ya Mado" is used as an adjective meaning big buttocks.

Phonologically: It sounds like.

"Mado" is not from Lingala

4.5. Mbila: sung by Bozi Boziana Grand Père with Choc Star

Etymologically, Mbila (n) is a Lingala word meaning a "palm tree's nut". Bozi Boziana Grand Père in his song "Lubwaku" used mbila meaning "Policeman".

Mbila meaning palm tree's nut and policeman are both used in Lingala spoken in Kinshasa, but depending on the context.

Notice:

Originally: Mbila (n) meaning palm tree's nut

For Bozi: Mbila meaning policeman

In Kinshasa Lingala: "Mbila" is used as policeman and palm tree's nut depending on the context.

Phonologically: It sounds like.

The Lingala word "Mbila" is much heard in the youth Lingala spoken in Kinshasa. It is not a loanword as it belongs to Kinshasa youth register, too.

4.6. Lubwaku: sung by Bozi Boziana Grand Père

Lubwaku originated Lingala language meaning a ravine: a deep narrow valley with steep sides. "Lubwaku" used by Bozi in his song entitled Lubwaku, represents the prison or jail, because being in the prison is like being in a deep narrow valley, which is a painful place, no way to go out by himself. He wrote this song while being in the jail himself.

Kinshasa inhabitants adopted the word in their speech community expressing the jail or prison.

The same Bozi used "Ndako ya Molili" as synonym of "Lubwaku" meaning the prison.

"Lubwaku" has the similar state as "Mbila".

4.7. Nord: sung by Papa Wemba with Viva la musica

Nord (n) is French word meaning the direction that is at the top of a map of the world, above the Equator. It means the North. But Papa Wemba in his song used "Nord" to represent Europe.

For the sake of being fanatic of Wemba, Kinshasa used Nord in their daily speech community meaning Europe.

The word "Nord" is a good example of a loanword. Its French meaning related to the cardinal point is not applied once it is used by musicians in Kinshasa.

To sum up the discussion concerning the seven words, a synthetic table specifying the words, their original meanings, the meanings they have in the Kinshasa spoken Lingala and the status of the word in Lingala is attached as appendix.

CONCLUSION

The current paper selected seven words heard in the Congolese music sung in Lingala. Opinions from twenty interviewees helped to determine whether they were loanwords or simply Lingala words used in different registers such as musicians one. Out of the seven selected words that are introduced into Lingala songs, three of them, “Mbila”, “Ngomba” and “Lubwaku” are from Lingala. They are not loanwords in the Lingala spoken in Kinshasa as they have altered their meanings in both youth and musician’s registers.

1. Mbila → Police officers (soldiers)
2. Ngomba → University of Kinshasa
3. Lubwaku → Prison

This study is interesting as it illustrates meaning change in intralingual system. As a matter of fact, the word stock of a language can change meaning in registers (Malekani 2023).

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APPENDIX

N°	Word	Origin & meaning	Kinshasa Lingala meaning	Status of the word in Lingala
1	<i>Mario</i>	Proper name of a person	Housless man	Loanword
2	<i>Mayumbu</i>	Kikongo word : place that settled a village while moving to a new place	Kikwit (a city in Kwilu province)	Loanword
3	<i>Ngomba</i>	Lingala word: Higher place, mountain	1. University of Kinshasa 2. Higher place, mountain	Not loanword. The word has altered meaning in a register
4	<i>Ya Mado</i>	Name of a person (F)	1 Lady with big buttocks 2 Person's name (F)	Loanword: Loanblend
5	<i>Mbila</i>	Lingala word: palm tree's nut.	1 Police officer 2 Palm tree's nut	Not loanword. The meaning has changed in a register
6	<i>Lubwaku</i>	Lingala word: A ravine, a deep narrow valley	1 Prison/ Jail 2 a ravine	Not a loanword. The meaning has changed
7	<i>Nord</i>	French word: the direction that is at the top of the map	Europe	Loanword