

Lucy Lloyd's !Xun notebooks

INTRODUCTION

- *Description/documentation → data collection*
- *Extinct varieties → impossible*
- *Old archives:*
 - *no audio recording (only written)*
 - *partial documentation*
 - *carried out with outdated methods*

Lucy Lloyd's !Xun notebooks

INTRODUCTION

- ***What exactly remains of the language in those archived data?***
- ***How should those data be processed?***
- ***How can they be rescued and made available to language description and documentation in keeping with modern standards?***



WORKING ON THE NOTEBOOKS

a) Transcription / phonology

b) Syntax

c) Language use

WORKING ON THE NOTEBOOKS

a. Transcription / phonology

Lloyd's transcription is purely phonetic: no phonological analysis.

It is thus :

- sometimes inaccurate (some phonological contrasts are not identified)
- inconsistent:
 - many different transcriptions are used for each lexical item
 - tones are not consistently transcribed

WORKING ON THE NOTEBOOKS

a. Transcription / phonology

ex1: 'to sit':

|nǎ

|ní

|nǎ

|nǎ

|niǎ

|nǎ

|nì

ex2: 'sinew'

tssǎ

ssó

ssó

s'ǎ

WORKING ON THE NOTEBOOKS

a. Transcription / phonology

twofold method :

- A systematic internal statistical comparison between all the occurrences of each lexical item, to identify the most frequently used transcription;
 - A systematic comparison of every item with its cognate forms in modern dialects.
- + Adoption of a standard orthography (based on Güldemann's (1998) recommendation for South African Khoisan, close to the one developed for Jul'hoan by Dickens)

WORKING ON THE NOTEBOOKS

a. Transcription / phonology

Systematic internal statistical comparison:

ex1: 'to sit' |nǎ̃ ~ |nǎ̃ ~ |nǎ̃ ~ |nǎ̃ ~ |niǎ̃ ~ |nǎ̃ ~ |nǎ̃

Common elements:

- nasalized dental click [n|]
- nasalized vowel [ǎ̃]

Inconsistently noted elements: (temporarily ruled out)

- tone marks (´ ; `)
- brevity (˘)
- final velar nasal (ɳ)

1st step towards standardization: *n/in*

- nasal dental click = *n/* (instead of Lloyd's /n)
- nasalized vowels = *Vn* (instead of Lloyd's V + ~)

WORKING ON THE NOTEBOOKS

a. Transcription / phonology

2nd step : Comparison with modern dialects

Ovamboland !Xun: ***n/ĩŋ*** = [n/ĩ̃]

Ekoka !Xun: ***n/ĩ̃***

Ju|'hoan: ***n/áŋg*** = [n/ĩ̃]

➔ Dental click [n|] + syllabic nasal [ŋ]

(+ possibly an underlying vowel [a] reduced to schwa)

➔ The velar nasal [ŋ̃] that was ruled out during the 1st step should be kept.

NB: a syllabic velar nasal can be easily confused with a weakly articulated nasal vowel.

Final standardization: *n/ang* (instead of *n/in*)

WORKING ON THE NOTEBOOKS

a. Transcription / phonology

Limits:

- Internal statistical comparison does not apply to less frequently used words
- Comparison with modern dialects is dangerous: risk of imposing on Lloyd's data an analysis that is only valid for modern dialects, and thus erasing possible dialectal differences

WORKING ON THE NOTEBOOKS

a. Transcription / phonology

Ex: cluster *Plain click + h*,
phonetic realization : $\eta\text{CLICK}h$ (ex: $| + h = [\eta|h]$)
(aka delayed aspirated click)

Dickens' Ju|'hoan orthography: orth. |'h

- Not clearly identified by Lloyd.
- However, systematic correspondance:

$|V_1hV_2$ (Lloyd) \rightarrow |'h V_1V_2 (modern dialects)

.	<i>Lloyd</i>	<i>E-!Xun</i>	<i>Ju 'hoan</i>	<i>standardized form</i>
'mouse'	$\underset{\cdot}{u}$ hí	/'hùī	?	'hui or uhi ?
'ear'	$\underset{\cdot}{u}$ hì	/'húí	/'húí	'hui or uhi ?
'real'	$\underset{\cdot}{u}$ há	/'hòàn	/'hòàn	'hua or uha ?

WORKING ON THE NOTEBOOKS

a. Transcription / phonology

Precautionary principle :

The transliteration changes must be minimal and consistent:

- Interpretation and new transcriptions: only when evidenced or suggested by the transcription itself, and a thorough but cautious comparison with the modern dialects (take as many dialects as possible, “keep an open mind”)
- Otherwise: original phonetic/phonological analysis showed by the transcription should be kept (only changed towards modern orthography), despite possible correspondences with modern dialects.

WORKING ON THE NOTEBOOKS

b. Syntax

Discourse usually extremely simple.

Possible cause: simplification of the language by the informants in the interest of clear understanding (L.Lloyd did not master the language)

- very simple clauses
- few cases of subordination (compared to modern dialects)
- very simple clause coordination and parataxis instead

WORKING ON THE NOTEBOOKS

b. Syntax

ex: (one sentence, with Lloyd's translation)

1 *n/e cuu-a kx'aa /'hua,*

IMP lie-VAL ground mere

'Lie upon the mere ground!

2 *ta ma e !!hi,*

and you.SG be hare

for thou art a hare,

3 *ta na e /Xue,*

IMP lie-VAL ground mere

and I am |Xue,

4 *ta e !Xun (...)*

IMP lie-VAL ground mere

and am a Bushman (...)'

WORKING ON THE NOTEBOOKS

b. Language use

The data are most of the time elicited.

Even the data which are not entirely elicited (narratives) are not really examples of natural speech :

- The informants are thousands of km away from their home → not natural social environment.
- They speak a somehow simplified language → artificial
- They probably have to stop after every sentence, and repeat it many times, to allow Lloyd to do the transcription.

WORKING ON THE NOTEBOOKS

Conclusion

- extensive and varied data: willingness to document more than just the language
- impressively good quality considering the time they were collected (1880's); Lucy Lloyd had an excellent ear.
- The main problems have (partial) solutions:
 - inconsistent transcription → can be improved
 - internal statistical comparison
 - comparison with modern dialects
 - simple syntax
 - documentation of language uses is limited, but possible to a certain extent.