

**Epenthetic *l* on vocalic affixes in some Inner Congo Basin languages:  
common innovation or contact-induced feature?**

André MOTINGEA Mangulu  
Faculté des Lettres & Sciences Humaines  
Université Pédagogique Nationale, DR Congo

**Abstract**

In the Congo Inner Basin one finds a synchronical epenthesis of L occurring between the perfect marker *-o-* or an infix and a root with vocalic initial : Lonkundo *ǎ-o-L-ét-a* > *ǎoléta* ‘he called’, *ǎ-o-L-a-komb-a* > *ǎolakomba* ‘he shut them’ (De Rop 1958: 45, 40), Yasanyama *á-ma o-L-úni-a lokolo* > *ám’olúnya lokolo* ‘he broke his leg’ (Motingea 2019: 269).

In my comparative study of the neighbour Bantu languages located between the Congo River and the Ubangi one, I have noticed that their class system has been reduced because of the loss of unvoiced stops (Motingea 1996: 87), locative prefixes have develop to prepositions.

That state of affair has even been mentionned by Guthrie (1967: 74) in his Topogram 9, so that the epenthesis phenomenon may simply be considered as a natural analogical strategy to any lost segment.

My present talk is dealing with an other kind of epenthesis which must be postulated diachronically and concerns only later vocalic prefixes in some isolate languages : L+{o- e-} < \*ko- (cl.15, 17), \*ke- (cl.7), \*ye- (cl.24) > {lo-/ndo- le-/nde-}. The perpose is to check if that “diachronic” epenthesis constitutes a common innovation or a contact-induced feature.

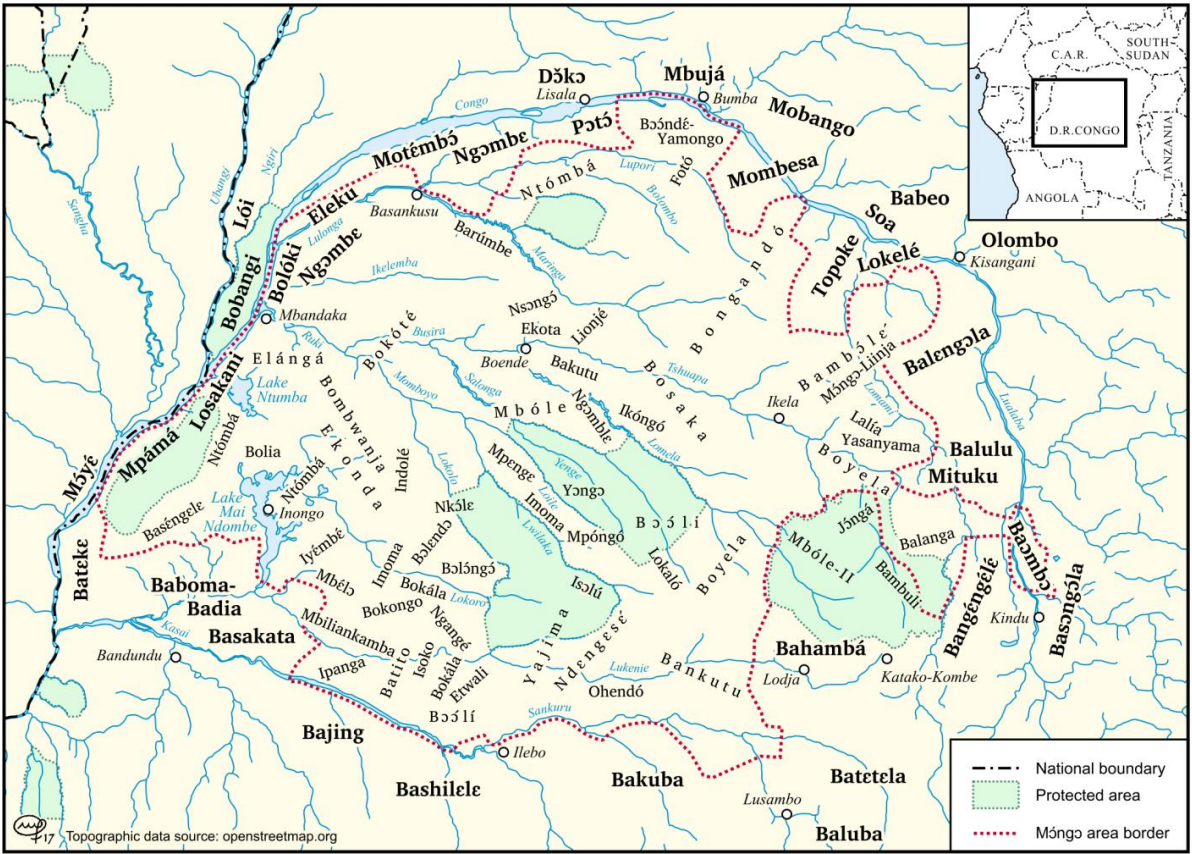
**1. Introduction**

In the Inner Congo Basin one finds a synchronical epenthesis of L occurring between the perfect marker *-o-* or an infix and a root with vocalic initial : Lonkundo *ǎ-o-L-ét-a* > *ǎoléta* ‘he called’, *ǎ-o-L-a-komb-a* > *ǎolakomba* ‘he shut them’ (De Rop 1958: 45, 40), Yasanyama *á-ma o-L-úni-a lokolo* > *ám’olúnya lokolo* ‘he broke his leg’ (Motingea 2019: 269).

In my comparative study of the neighbour Bantu languages located between the Congo River and the Ubangi one, I have noticed that their class system has been reduced because of the loss of unvoiced stops (Motingea 1996: 87), locative prefixes have develop to prepositions.

That state of affair has even been mentionned by Guthrie (1967: 74) in his Topogram 9, so that the epenthesis phenomenon may simply be considered as a natural analogical strategy to any lost segment.

My present talk is dealing with an other kind of epenthesis which must be postulated diachronically and concerns only later vocalic prefixes in some isolate languages : L+{o- e-} < \*ko- (cl.15, 17), \*ke- (cl.7), \*ye- (cl.24) > {lo-/ndo- le-/nde-} : Likula C31c *ló mbundze* ‘en forêt’, Zamba *mambonzi mândo lo-za* ‘les chèvres sont en train de manger’, Tetela-Hamba *ló ngéló* ‘in the village’, *le osongo* ‘toward the white man’; Lokaló *le-fele* ‘wall’, Tswá *lé ~ ndé ngoda* ‘in the field’, etc. The perpose is to check if that diachronic epenthesis constitutes a common innovation or a large feature due to earlier contacts with non Bantu speakers.



Map redrawn at Motingea’s request by Monika Feinen (Institut für Afrikanistik und Ägyptologie, University of Cologne) on the basis of Hulstaert (1984).

## 2. Consonants lenition and loss in the Inner Congo Basin languages

### 2.1 \*l loss

In the conclusion to his article on the Bakutu dialects Hulstaert (1974: 44–45) has drawn attention to the fact that in the phonetic domain one notices an affinity with the Ekota and the Eléku, both minority riparian tribes of the lower Tshuapa, in the falling of the **l** consonant, a phenomenon that is not found in this degree elsewhere in the Môngo domain; and that for this particular detail there is a special resemblance to the Mbuja and the Ngõmbe.

Note however that \*l loss is largely attested even outside the Inner Congo Basin, namely in Swahili/Sabaki dialects (Nurse & Hinnenbusch 1993: 98–106).

Many other peculiar phonetic differences in Lokutu in comparison to other Môngo dialects were as well mentioned by Hulstaert (1974: 7–10). As for **l**, he was able to write elsewhere the following (Hulstaert 1999: 56) :

« ... il y a le fait tout exceptionnel de la présence de **l**, là où tous les autres dialectes ont **b** (présent ou caduc ...). Le cas de *éb / él* connaître, savoir, des Bakutu, est d'autant plus étrange que par ailleurs ils tendent à omettre **l** et conserver **b**... »

### 2.2 Consonant erosion and locative prefixes

Proto-Bantu locative prefixes, including that of the class 15 infinitive, have been reduced to a simple vowel because of the change from \*k to Ø, see map "Topogram 9" (Guthrie 1967: 82) and the sporadic weakening of \*p in the area (Motingea 1996: 55–56). Nowadays they are used only as prepositions (Grégoire 2003: 539).

Apart from \*e- established by Meeussen (1967: 97–98) and Grégoire (1975: 176 [1980]) – to be retraced in fact as \*ye<sup>-1</sup>, if one refers to prefix forms in Lega (Botne 2003: 432) – as well as ya<sup>-2</sup> retraced by Ziervogel (1971), Ziervogel & Mabuza (1976) and Gauton (2000), as well as \*ma-, which Amidu (1997: 118, 2007: 45) had just consigned to a new class 25 by baptizing it ma<sub>2</sub>- to make it distinct from ma<sub>1</sub>- of class 6, many current languages however have locative prepositions which have no clear link with the Proto-Bantu locatives (Grégoire 2003: 539). These are, for example, locative characteristics in Beo-Ngelema C45 (Gérard 1924: 18–19), apart from *ka* (general): *hu* 'in', *ta* 'near', *na* 'to'.

- |     |   |                          |
|-----|---|--------------------------|
| (1) | <i>ka ngbale huanja ~ hu ngbale hu-anja</i> | 'in a beautiful house'   |
|     | <i>ka ngbale t-anja ~ ta ngbale t-anja</i>  | 'near a beautiful house' |
|     | <i>ka ngbale n-anja ~ na ngbale n-anja</i>  | 'to a beautiful house'   |

Stops *b/p*, *g/k* are supposed to have been fricatives *v/φ*, *γ/χ*, as in C50 group of Bantu languages (Motingea 2012) and north-western Bantu languages (Guthrie 1953: 66, 69). Consonant lenition

---

<sup>1</sup> See Welmers (1973).

<sup>2</sup> Even considered as locative of cl. 16, this kind of locative has a direct reflex in Lega D25 (Botne 2003: 432) and in Kikongo H16 (Van Bulck 1952: 877) : *ga mōngo ga-kadila nzo* 'sur la montagne se trouve une case'. It is reflected as *ka-* in Lokaló-Ngõmbe (Motingea 1997: 362, 399), and Ikóngó, a dialect of Lõmela basin (Hulstaert 2007: 294, 296) and in Lebaate C44 (Motingea 2005: 162).

and erosion : \*g > w > Ø, \*k > χ > Ø and \*l > y > Ø, recall both Proto-Sabaki (Nurse & Hinnenbusch (1993: 99–106) and A20 group of languages in Cameroon (Guthrie 1953: 22)<sup>3</sup>.

### 3. Locatives of type IV

Table 1 : Epenthetic *l* on locatives and infinitive

PB	ICB	Category	Pygmées
*χo-	> o-	Infinitive cl.15	L-o > lo-
*χo-	> o-	LOC cl.17	L-o > lo-
*χe-	> e-	LOC cl.23	L-e > le-
*pa	> a	LOC cl.16	L-a > la-
*γa <sup>4</sup>	> a-	LOC cl.24	L-a > la-

#### 3.1 Locative *lo*

The locative *lo* is used as a preposition in both East and West of the domain with a more general sense of ‘in, at, on, in the current of, against, for ...’.

Tetela-Sambálá (Hagedonrens 1975: 178, Motingea & Ohaki 2017: 156) :

- (2) a. *ló lóodú* ‘in the house’  
*ló ókonda* ‘in the forest’  
*ákácóká ló lóbengo* ‘She went to the market.’  
*ló mbóká* ‘on the road’  
*l’éhéle* ‘against the wall’  
*ndé ló lókombé* ‘To live on his drum.’  
*mvó ló demba dyá nkókó* ‘To die because/body of the hen.’

Likula C36g (Zelenge 2010: 192–193):

- b. *ló mbóka* ‘in the village’  
*ló mbuwa* ‘on the road’  
*keké ló Mosángé* ‘Go to Mosange !’  
*toúta ló ndáko* ‘We have come from home.’  
*in-ga-ke=t’ó ~ ló Bɔngɔ* ‘I am going to Bongo.’

In the West, where *lo* is restricted to a very few languages, it is however used as an infinitive prefix.

Libinza C321 (Van Leynseele 1976/1977) :

- (3) a. *Nkumba akokí loéna...* ‘Tortoise is able to see ...’  
Nkumba a-kok-í lo-én-a  
Tortoise S3SG-can-FV 15-see-FV

Zámbe C322 (Motingea 1996: 107) :

- b. *éndenge éya lókpété* ‘the way of cutting’  
*mái má lonyá* ‘water to drink’

<sup>3</sup> As for Bantu in general, see Hyman (2003: 42).

<sup>4</sup> Retention from Benoue-Congo (De Wolf 1971: 84): « ... autonomous SC. [single class] with locative connotations in PBC. This applies to the items bush/forest, place, sky, world, evening, morning. »

Olombo-Yangambi C54 (Chelo 1973: 56, 84):

- c. *lo-tób-o*<sup>5</sup> 'to make a hole'  
*lo-táng-o* 'to read'  
*lo-ét-o* 'to surpass'

### Locative \*ko- > (l)o as copula

Locative copularization, that is the shift Locative to Existential process well known in many eastern Bantu languages<sup>6</sup> is also found in some languages of the Inner Central Congo Basin, mainly in riparian languages.

Mpundza C30 (1996: 222):

- (4) a. *na-o bva* 'I am seated.'  
*bá-o bína* 'They are dancing.'  
*a-o moto motáné* 'He is a white man.'  
*muni mó-o munéne* 'The meat is big.'

Likátá C30 (Motingea 1990: 65):

- b. *a-lo na lítimbó liwí* 'he has / is with a bow.'  
*to-lo bilengé* 'we are young.'

Mabale C30 (Tanghe 1929: 575):

- c. *Nkumba alo walo ?*  
Nkumba a-lo wa-lo  
tortoise S3SG-LOC:COP 16-LOC:INTER  
'Where is Tortoise?'

Libinza C30 (Van Leynseele 1976/77: A5) :

- d. *bálo na nsái* 'They are happy.'  
bá-lo na nsái  
S2-COP COM joy

Ebango C441 (Motingea 1995: 42)

- e. *wawá a-lõ á ngando* 'Daddy is in camp.'  
*moté mó-lõ molai* 'The tree is high.'  
*etabe é-lõ esúngu* 'The banana is big.'  
*nama í-lõ njiké* 'Animals are numerous.'

In relation to the grammaticalisation of locative lo as a copula, note that Motingea (1996: 153) has estimated that *-lo* would be a fusion of copula *\*-le* with a locative element *o*.

Lokaló-Ngombé C50 has a copula *-o* beside the regular form *-le* (Motingea 1997: 394).

- (5) a. *aó cwe la wáli yâkamí* 'He is my wife's parent.'  
a-ó cwe la w-áli yó-akamí  
S3SG-COP parent COM 1-wife 1-POSS.1SG  
  
*ba-ó cwe l'áli ákamí* 'They are my wives parents.'

<sup>5</sup> A peculiar Finale Vowel *-o* is also found in Jõfe with *-CV* roots in Perfect (Hulstaert 1986: 245) : *a-f-o* 'He gave.', *a-y-o* 'He has come.'

<sup>6</sup> See for example Schadeberg 1992: 29.

b.	<i>eliwa ele ndé boloo</i>		‘The pond is bitter.’
	e-liwa e-le ndé boloo		
	7-pond 7-COP FOC bitterness		

### Locative as TA marker

Leaving aside the most classic case of copularization, studies have shown that a prototypical preposition can have a variety of uses, ranging from a locative marker, passing by a time marker, to a figurative marker (Jarad 2015: 243). Grammaticalization of locative adverbs as ‘delimiters’ and markers of perfective (telic; anterior) aspectual nuances is well known cross-linguistically (Bybee *et al.* 1994: 87).

Nurse (2008: 256) has considered the Mituku D13 future TA marker as having the form *-lo-*.

According to data from Stappers (1973), the real underlining structure is <sup>o</sup>-IV- similar to that of we have with locatives ; but here we are facing in reality both with a regular epenthetic *l*<sup>7</sup> and a verb derived from \*-ya (AUX) + o- (cl.15) construction<sup>8</sup>. The vowel in -IV- harmonise with the vowel of the verbal prefix ; furthermore, the use of that TA is facultative.

Mituku (Stappers 1973: 49) :

(6)	<i>tôbunda</i>	or	<i>tôlobunda</i>	‘We will seize.’
	<i>bêbunda</i>	or	<i>bêlébunda</i>	‘They will seize.’
	<i>tômóa</i>	or	<i>tôlomóa</i>	‘We will see.’
	<i>bêmóa</i>	or	<i>bêlemóa</i>	‘They will see.’

Ngiri languages (Motingea 1996: 155)

Litóká :

(7)	a.	<i>mwána alo umoa</i>	‘If/when the kid wakes up...’
		<i>alo émba</i>	‘If she sings...’

Eléku :

b.	<i>masuwa málo ya ndembe elé ?</i>	‘When will arrive the boat ?’
	ma-suwa má-lo ya ndembe e-lé	
	6-boat 6-FUT come time 9-INTER	

Finally, despite the well known semantic of prefix *lo-* : ‘long thin objects’ (Demuth 2000: 275, Denny & Creider 1986: 219), De Rop (1957: 5–6) and Hulstaert (1992: 191), considering the presence of the prefix *lo-* in many hydronyms far outside the area considered here, could deduce the hypothesis of the attribution of hydronyms to the *lo-* class at a period prior to the presence of the Móngõ in the Equatorial Basin. One can imagine that the main rivers have kept their old names, while others would have been given any name regardless of the narrow classification system, just as seems to have happened with other classes.

### 3.2 Locative le

#### As preposition

Tetela-Sambálá (Motingea & Ohaki 2017: 156) :

(8)	<i>amb’ófilá có lé ñvulé</i>	‘He has already gone to God.’
-----	------------------------------	-------------------------------

<sup>7</sup> See De Rop (1958: 45, 40).

<sup>8</sup> See Hadermann (1994).

a-mbá            ó-řil-á    có-á    lé    ñvulé  
 S3SG-PERF 15-finish go-FV LOC God

Tswá-Ingende I (Picavet 1947: 140) :

- (10) a. *lé l-iko li-á*                                    ‘above/at the top of’  
           *lé sé lé-á*                                        ‘below/in the bottom of’  
           *lé mbúsa lé-á*                                  ‘after/in behind of’

*ákaedá lé epoka ~ eni epoka ~ éiko epoka*  
*ákaedá lé epoka*                                    ‘He went into the forest.’

Tswá-Ingende II (Hulstert 1947: 140) :

- b. *lé l-iko li-á*                                        ‘above/at the top of’

Tswá-Lóndó-Bosanga (Motingea 2010: 218) :

- c. *njaoli lé bosala*                                  ‘I am going to work.’  
     N-a-ol-i    lé    bosala  
     S1SG-PROG-go-FV    LOC    work

Tswá-Isangi (Bola 2021) :

- d. *lé lyá*    ‘in the forest’  
     *lé byoba*                                         ‘in the food’  
     *lé řoté*    ‘on the tree’  
     *lé njelá*                                         ‘on the road’  
     *lé njá*    ‘in the native village’

Lokaló-Ngombé (Motingea 1997: 399) :

- e. *lé mók’enyí*                                      ‘by the way there’  
     *l’ânto á mpúndo*                                ‘towards insolent people’

This locative is found without epenthetic *l* in Likile-Olombo C54 (Carrington 1977: 77, 79) :

- (11) *é mingá*                                      ‘au champ’                                    *é felo*                                      ‘devant, avant/en face’  
       *é kái*    ‘au village’                                    *é mbúsa*                                    ‘(au) derrière, après’  
       *é mbéle*                                      ‘à la maison’

### As infinitive prefix

Some Ngiri languages (Motingea 1996: 107) have as infinitive/geround prefix *e-* (12).

- (12) *okokí na ensínga* (Balóbo)            ‘You may insult me.’  
       o-kok-í            na    e-N-sínga  
       S2SG-can-FV    COM    LOC:23-O1SG-insult-FV

*mpówá ya e-bima* (Mabale)            ‘The desire of getting out.’

### As an impersonal agreement prefix

Apart from actual use in impersonal construction, prefixes *\*ya-*, *\*ye-*, *\*yo-* are also used to express adverbial clauses as object relative clauses.

Mabale :

- (13) a. *eaikala nga*                                    ‘Will stay I/I’m the one who will stay.’

e-a-íkal-a                      nga  
 LOC:23-TA-stay-FV        me

Mpundzá (Motingea 1996a: 204):

b. *é-keyá molungé*                      ‘It is warm.’

Marten (2010: 6–8) who considers the use of locative in that perpose as an expletive/default subject marker ; same *γα-* constructions in Lega (Botne 2003: 447–48).

### As a TA

The locative \**γε* is found as TA in the domain only in a vocalic form.

Lokelé (Carrington 1972: 24) :

(14) a. *yékelaka* < *i-é-kel-aka*                      ‘I will do.’  
           *ékelaka* < *á-é-kel-aka*                      ‘He will do.’  
           *békelaka* < *bá-é-kel-aka*                      ‘They will do.’

Ṗotó-Bumba (Motingea & al. 2021) :

b. *ṇtomólí wékayé a nkúla*                      ‘Ladies are bringing the firewood.’  
     N-tomólí    wá-é-kay-é                      a        nkúla  
     10a-female S2-PROG-come-VF    COM firewood

### 3.3 Locative lá

The fact that *lá* derives from \**pa-* cl.16 and \**γα-* cl.24 gives it nowadays a more general meaning in many languages: ‘in, on, towards, at...’.

Soa-Sókó C52 (Motingea 2012: 85) :

(15) a. *béε* (< *bá-ε-a*) *lá bitá*                      ‘They are going to war.’  
           *lá bolingi*                                      ‘to hunting’  
           *lá moté*                                        ‘on the tree’  
           *lá miéhi*                                      ‘into the food’  
           *lá elanga*                                    ‘in the garden’

Ohendó C83 (Motingea 1990: 152) :

b. *lá wendo*                                      ‘in the hollow’  
     *lá nkalása*                                    ‘in the school’

Èlɛmɛ C60 (Hulstaert 1990: 248) :

c. *l’òté*    ‘on the head’  
     *lâ ṛbanja*                                    ‘outsise’  
     *l’ókɔngɔ*                                    ‘behind/in the back’

Tetela (Labaere 1994: 307) :

d. *hakómi lá ngéló*                              ‘He did not arrive at the village.’  
     ha-kóm-i                                    lá        ngéló  
     S3SG:NEG-arrive-FV                    LOC    village.’  
  
     *lá Ngándó*                                    ‘in Ngando’



Western Móngo-Nkundó dialects have *ndá* (Hulstaert 1957: 1390–1391):

- (16) *ndá mbéto* ‘in the bed’  
*ndá ngonda* ‘in the forest’  
*ndá mésá* ‘on the table’  
*nd’ésé* ‘at the village’  
*ɔtswa nd’ékuke* ‘enter through the door’

The preposition of this form recalls what is happening in certain roots (Hulstaert 1999: 56) :

... *l* est dialectalement nasalisé en *nd*, sans qu’il y ait une règle pour cette alternance. Ainsi, en plaçant en première place le bloc N-O: *jwende / jwele* mâle, *fé (felé) / fendé* deux, *band / bal* compter, *kûnd / kûl* battre ...<sup>9</sup>

In Hendo C83 *lá* is used both as preposition and conjunction (Bongo 1973: 108) :

- (17) a. *wě lá mvulú ...* ‘You (are) in the house...’  
 b. *lá ndayaláká* ‘When he was.’  
     *lá nde a-yal-ak+á*  
     LOC he S3SG-be-PF-FV  
     *lá nyayaláká* ‘When you were.’

### 3.4 Other IV morphemes

Epenthetic *l* in categories other than locatives is summarised on Table 2.

Table 2 : Epenthetic *l* in categories other than locatives

PB	Category	BC
*γo-	PP cl.1	L-o > lo-
*-χo-	OP 2SG	L-o > -lo-
*χe-	NP cl.7	L-e > le-
*je-	PP cl.9	L-e > le-

#### 3.4.1 As prefixes

Epenthetic L on prefixes can be illustrated by relative clauses in Tswá-Isangi dialect below (Bola 2021):

- (18) *nagó lékíβó ľmbólábakă*  
 Ø-nagó lé-kíβó ʙló-mbó-láb-ak-a  
 9a-mother 9a-POSS:3PL SREL1-PAS-cook-PF-FV  
 ‘their mother who was cooking’  
 Ekonda : *nyangó ěkíβó őmbólámbakă*  
  
*moto lópóndagé mí*  
 mo-to ló-pó-N-lag-é mí  
 1-person SREL.1-NEG-O1SG-love-FV me  
 ‘someone who does not love me’

<sup>9</sup> + *-béla / -bénda* ‘to pull’ (Hulstaert 1957: 83).

*moto lókóotilé*

mo-to ló-ká-o-til-é  
1-person OREL.1-PROG-S2SG-look.for-FV  
'the person that you are looking for'

*kói lěbutá taβa léki mă*

ᑎ-kói ᑲle-é-βut-á ᑎ-taβa lé-kí mă  
9-leopard SRL1-PAS-catch-FV 9-goat 9-CON mom  
'the leopard which caught mom's goat'

*móna lómbótótépélé*

mo-óna ló-mbó-to-tépél-é  
1-child OREL1-PAS-S1PL-speak-FV  
'the child about whom we were speaking'

Same forms are found in connective agreement elsewhere among other Pygmies: cl.1 *lo-*, cl.7, 9 *le-* ; as for Tswá-Ingende I, see Table in Picavet (1947: 138).

Tswá-Ingende II (Hulstaert 1948: 25) :

- (19) a. *moto ló-á ové* 'a bad man/man of badness'  
      *poko lé-a néne* 'a large field/largeness of field of banana trees'

Lokaló (Hulstaert 1988: 142) :

- b. *moli le bayene* 'the mothers goat'

**Prefix cl.7 le- Type.** Hulstaert (1988: 138) was surprised to find this kind of prefix among the Môngo languages : « La variété *le-* n'a pas été signalée ailleurs dans le domaine Môngo. ». This form of prefix in class 7 is in fact only attested in the dialects of the Hunter-Gatherers Batswá and Lokaló of the upper Tshuapa as well as in those of the Bokála-Nkólé of Yahuma and the Bambuli of Kasai.

Aaká-Bokála-Nkólé (Motingea 2002: 26):

- (20) a. *le-futu* 'hole' *le-kulu* 'morning'  
      *le-koto* 'skin' *le-tutu* 'wall'  
      *le-seka* 'companion' *le-tok-o* 'the well, spring'

Lokaló (Hulstaert 1988: 138):

- b. *le-fele* 'wall' *le-ot-o* 'parent'  
      *le-felo* 'civet' *le-tok-o* 'the well'  
      *le-keke* 'time' *le-tsum-a* 'war'  
      *le-koto* 'skin' *le-sele* 'struggle'

Lombuli (Motingea 1993: 67, Jacobs 2000: 74):

- c. *le-hudu / bi-hudu* 'tortoise(s)' *le-tu / bi-tu* 'clothes'  
      *le-saka* 'container' *le-mengá* 'pigeon'  
      *le-liba* 'pond' *le-lemma* 'thigh'  
      *le-kuke* 'door' *le-φekele* 'stump'

In this last language the connective, which is represented only by the PP (except in class 1), has in classes 7 and 9 the same form *le-* (Jacobs 2000: 74–75).

Carrington (1947: 104) has established in Olombo C54 *le-* ~ *e-* admitting that these forms are to be related to ur-Bantou \**ke-* but it does not provide examples with *l(e)-*, and in concords we see rather the prefix *lo-* in this class 7, identical to that of class 11 (Carrington 1947: 107).

- (21) *e-langa lo-bé* ‘a bad garden’  
*e-langa ló-moi* ‘one garden’  
*e-langa ló lokonda* ‘a forest garden’

Note that similar confusions are frequent in Jǒfé in the use of verbal prefixes (22a) ; some of them are even unknown in Common Bantu (22b) (Hulstaert 1986: 244) :

- (22) a. *ito-sola* ‘They are washing.’  
*ito-ngo-ia* ‘You are not going.’  
 b. *mboli a-lya* ‘The goat is eating.’  
*mboli na-lya* ‘Goats are eating.’

### Pfx 1SG *le-* and *la-* Type

As shown on Table 3, the 1SG verbal prefix type *lV-* is found in several languages in north-eastern part of the Inner Congo Basin; examples are provided below.

Table 3: Geographical distribution of 1SG prefix *lV-*

Area	Language	Guthrie	VP	Source
Nord	Mbesa	C51	lé-	De Boeck 1951, Motिंगea 2012
	Soa-Sókó	C52	le-/_V	Motingea 2012
	Ngando N	C63	la-/_V	Walling 1937, Motिंगea 2000 Tuerlings 2008
Nord-East	Yasanyama	C63	l-/_V	Motingea 2019
	Lokaló-Ngombé	C50	l-/_V	Motingea 1997
South-East	Língá-Ngoo	C50	l-/_V	Motingea 2019
	Ombo	C76	l-á-	Meeussen 1952
	Tetela-Ewangó	C71	l-á-	Hagendorens 1975
	Tetela-Sambálá	C70	l-á-	Motingea & Ohaki 2017
South	Tetela-Hamba	C70	l-á-	Motingea 2019
	Ndengese	C81	l-á-	Hulstaert & Goemaere 1984
	Nkutsu-Hendo	C82	l-á-	Bongo 1968, Motिंगea 1990
	Élémbe	C???	l-/_V <sup>10</sup>	Hulstaert 1990
Central-West	Ekota	C60	l-/_V	Motingea 2018

- (23) a. Bantu C50 (Motingea 2012) :  
*le-le la wále* ‘I feel ill.’ (Soa-Sókó) [p. 60]  
*lé-lel-a* ‘I cry.’ (Mbesa) [p. 117]

<sup>10</sup> Sporadically (Hulstaert 1990: 238): “Devant un infixe vocalique un cas a *l* pour la première pers. sing.”; but Hulstaert did not provide that example.

Ngando C63 :

- b. *l-á-mel-a* 'I drink.' (Tuerlings 2008: 31)  
*l-á-wá nkángi* 'I am diyng/feeling ill.' (Motingea 2000: 136)  
*l-ók-a* 'I hear.' (Motingea 2000: 136)

Lingá-Ngoo C50 (Motingea 2019: 156) :

- c. *lókúlaki* 'I have beaten him.'  
l[H]-o-kúl+ak-<sup>H</sup>i  
S1SG-O3SG-beat-PF-FV

Ombo C76 (Meeussen 1952: 24) :

- d. *lálimeli* 'I got lost.'  
l-á-límel-i  
S1SG-TA-get.lost-FV

*láφoloti* 'I have pulled.'  
l-á-φolot-i  
S1SG-TA-pull-FV

Yasanyama C63 (Motingea 2019: 298) :

- e. *l-ók-a* 'I hear, feel.'  
*lócwá* 'I am going.'  
<sup>H</sup>l-o-cwá  
S1SG-PROG-go

Lokaló-Ngombɛ (Motingea 1997: 384) :

- f. *lókákí lói nkángi* 'I have been sick yesterday.'  
l-<sup>B</sup>ók-ak+i      lói      nkángi  
S1SG-feel-PF-FV    yesterday    illness

Tetela-Sambala C70 :

- g. *dimí lákómba* 'I wish.' (Motingea & Ohaki 2017: 95)  
dimí l-á-kómb-a  
me S1SG-TA-wish-FV

*halákóké* 'I can not.' (Jacobs 1962: 128)  
ha-l-á-<sup>H</sup>kok-é  
NEG-S1SG-can-FV

*lóoka* < *l-á-ók-a* 'I listen.' (Jacobs 1962: 64)

Hamba C70 (Motingea 2019: 374) :

- h. *lakeni* 'I have seen.'  
l-aka-en-i  
S1SG-NAR-see-FV

Ndengésé C83 (Hulstaert & Goemaere 1984: 73):

- i. *lókenda* 'I am leaving just now.'  
l-o-kend-a  
S1SG-TAM-go-FV

Ekota spoken in lower Tshuapa C60 (Motingea 2016):

- j. *lóka εεfé* 'I have pain.'  
 l-ók-a εεfé  
 S1SG-feel-FV pain

The *l-* may be considered as epenhetic because in many pygmies languages there is no formal 1SG subject prefix, a phenomenon called *Pro-drop*.<sup>11</sup>

Tswá-Bosabola (Motingea 1993: 492) :

- (24) a. *me kalagga* 'I like (it).'  
*o-ka-kel-a nga woja* 'How are you making ?'

Tswá-Maindombe (Motingea 2010: 222) :

- b. *gá lela* < *Ø-l-el-a* 'I will cry.'  
*gá pusoa* 'I will run.'  
*to-ga pusoa* 'We will run.'

Hamba (Motingea 2019: 374) :

- c. *etɔ* < *Ø-et-o-a* 'I wake up.'  
*ɔla tɔla* 'I am laughing (the laugh)'

### 3.4.2 As a TAM

Tswá-Inɔngó (Motingea 2010: 221–222) :

- (25) a. *álelelá* 'You cried.'  
*á-le-lel-á*  
 S3SG-PAS-cry-FV  
  
*i-je-lel-á* 'I cried.'  
*tó-le-pusoá* 'We ran.'

Tswá Lɔ́ndɔ-Bosanga ((Motingea 2010: 217)

- b. *aleyala ebosa etiti* 'He was a very small child.'  
 a-le-yal-a e-bosa e-titi  
 S3SG-PAS-stay-FV 7-young 7-small

We are not able as for now to provide examples of locative *\*ye* used as a TAM, but we found cases where it is represented as *-e-* (26a) ; sometimes fused with the vowel prefix (26b).

Tswá-Isangi (Bola 2021) :

- (26) a. *bakâamá baélótá pohó iyá nama*  
 ba-kâamá ba-é-lót-á N-pohó í-á N-nama  
 2a-ancestor S2-PAS3-wear-FV 10-skin 10-CON 10-animal  
 'Our ancestors wore animals skins.'

*aéyá laipé*

<sup>11</sup> While unknown un Bantu languages, "Pro-drop is a widespread linguistic phenomenon in which, under certain conditions, a structural NP may be unexpressed, giving rise to a pronominal interpretation." (Bresnan 1982: 384).

a-é-yá-á                      laípe  
 S3SG-PAS3-come-FV      day.before.yesterday  
 ‘He came the day before yesterday.’

*baélyáká mot’omǎ lóβí*  
 ba-é-lyák-á                  mo-to    o-mǎ    lóβí  
 S2-PAS3-kill-FV      1-man   1-one   yesterday  
 ‘Somebody killed a man yesterday.’

*voíná vómǎ voéyalá*  
 vo-íná    vó-mǎ            vo-é-yal-á  
 3-day    3-certain      3-PAS3-be-FV  
 ‘Once upon a time ...’

Lokelé (Carrington 1972: 24)

- b. *yékelaka* < *i-é-ke-l-aka*                  ‘I will do.’  
       *ékelaka* < *á-é-ke-l-aka*                  ‘He will do.’  
       *békelaka* < *bá-é-ke-l-aka*                ‘They will do.’

About the use of LOC as TAM, one can refer to Pusch (2003) according to whom the evidence available in many languages of the world indicates that the progressive aspect is in many cases the result of expressions or constructions with locatives value. Comrie (1976) agrees with the same:

In many languages, belonging to various genetic and geographical groupings, there is similarity between the formal expression of imperfective aspect, especially progressive aspect, and various locative adverbial phrases. [p. 98]

Bastin (2020) has devoted an article to the use of the class 18 locative prefix *\*mo-* for the expression of the present progressive in Bantu.

It is not excluded that locatives were also used for other verb aspects. Note, in fact, that in Tswá languages the locative prefix *\*ya-* is used as PROG marker :

Tswá-Bosabola (Motingea 1993: 496) :

- (27) a. *me kalagga*                  ‘I like.’  
       me    N-ka-lagg-a  
       me    S1SG-PROG-like-FV

*okaela nga woya ?* ‘How are you making ?’  
 o-ka-el-a                      nga    woya  
 S1SG-PROG-do-FV      like    INTER

Tswá-Ingende II (Hulstaert 1948: 27) :

- b. *káóká kele*                      ‘I am angry.’  
       N-ká-ók-á                      kele  
       S1SG-PROG-feel-FV      anger

Tswá-Isangi (Bola 2021) :

- c. *kókó ákavéka* ‘The the rooster is crowing.’  
 n-kókó á-ka-vék-a  
 9-cock S3SG-PRS-crow-FV

#### 4. Epenthic nasal

Apart from epenthetic *l*, there are cases of nasal insertion. The first one is found in Hamba C71 (Motingea 2019: 359) with the prefix of classe 5 : \**di-* > *ndi-*.

- (28) a. *ndi-kamb-o* ‘affair, matter’  
*ndi-mbonga* ‘urban center, town’  
*ndi-kalanga* ‘charcoal’  
*ndi-kafi* ‘leaf’  
*ndi-kɔndɔ* ‘banana’  
*ndi-ko* ‘height’  
*ndi-konja* ‘money’  
*ndi-kula / a-kula* ‘arrow(s)’  
*ndi-men-a* ‘joy’  
*ndi-yata* ‘duck’  
*ndi-hɔhɔ / a-hɔhɔ* ‘maize’  
*ndi-oke j’okungu* ‘packet, parcel’ ; Nk. *bokongá* (Hulstaert 1957: 180)

In stems :

- b. *ndi-mbot-o* ‘family, clan’  
*ndi-mbonga* ‘town’  
*m-bondi ~ bondi* 1. ‘goat’, 2. ‘sheep’  
*fundu* ‘bird’  
*lo-mbeng-o* ‘market’  
*a-ndiko* ‘height’  
*mpampa* ‘my father/dad’

An epenthetic N is also observed among the Jǒfé Pygmoids of the upper Tshuapa. Hulstaert 1986: 230) has find the phenomenon quite peculiar as the realization of the combination results in *ng*:

*Une particularité remarquable est que devant le préfixe nominal ou pronominal plusieurs exemples ont la séquence ng/nga qui forme une unité avec la voyelle suivante – le cas échéant avec l’élision de la consonne – de sorte que l’ensemble fonctionne comme un préfixe qui impose l’accord, même du verbe.*

One can specify that the sequence *ng/nga* appears in classes 6, 7 and 17 (locative) where the forms without epenthesis are respectively: *wa*<sup>12</sup>, *e-* and *o-*. This means that at a certain stage *e-* and *o-* were *χe-* and *χo-* (29a), a weakening product of stops which is observed both in roots (29b) and in agreements (29c).

<sup>12</sup> Note that some items have *ha-* instead : *ha-kula* ‘arrows’, *hawuli* ‘feathers’.

The epenthesis would thus undoubtedly have been a strategy to protect the fricatives threatened by erosion <sup>13</sup> :

(30)	<u>Pré-Jǒfé</u>		<u>Jǒfé</u>	
a.	<sup>o</sup> <i>wa-χolo</i>	6	>	<i>nga-kolo ~ ma-kolo</i> ‘legs’
	<sup>o</sup> <i>wa-χonga</i>	6	>	<i>nga-onga</i> ‘spears’
	<sup>o</sup> <i>wa-χáse</i>	6	>	<i>ng-aye ~ w-aye</i> ‘water’
	<sup>o</sup> <i>wa-sángú</i>	6	>	<i>nga-sangu ~ ba-sangu</i> ‘maize’
	<sup>o</sup> <i>χe-ndondó</i>	7	>	<i>nge-ndondo ~ e-ndondo</i> ‘elder’
	<sup>o</sup> <i>χe-sola</i>	7	>	<i>nge-sola ~ e-sola</i> ‘farm, field’
	<sup>o</sup> <i>χo-m-poχa</i>	17+9	>	<i>ngo mpoa</i> ‘on the road’
	<sup>o</sup> <i>χo-bi-sola</i>	17+8	>	<i>ngo bisola</i> ‘in the fields’

b	<u>Pré-Jǒfé</u>		<u>Jǒfé</u>	
	* <i>li-χé</i> CS.809	>	<i>li-nge</i>	‘egg’
	* <i>li-χála</i> CS.980	>	<i>li-ngala</i>	‘charcoal’
	* <i>mo-χáli</i> CS.989	>	<i>mo-ngali</i>	‘wife’
	* <i>mo-γend-a</i> ps.211	>	<i>mo-ngend-a</i>	‘guest’
	* <i>n-géma</i> ps.221	>	<i>n-gema</i>	‘monkey’
	* <i>li-bóχo</i> CS.158	>	<i>li-wɔngɔ</i>	‘arm’

c.	<i>nge-sombo ng-a mito</i>	‘an old (of) man’
	< <sup>o</sup> <i>χe-sombo γ-a mito</i>	
	<i>nge-sola nge-ngwe ngeluli</i>	‘Your field is large.’
	< <sup>o</sup> <i>χe-sola χe-γwe χe-lul-i</i>	
	<i>nga-golo nga-ngwe nga-engɔ mbindo</i>	‘Your legs are dirty.’
	< <sup>o</sup> <i>wa-yolo wa-γwe wa-ko mbindo</i>	
	<i>ng-aye nga-ehɔ ntsitsi</i>	‘The water is cold.’
	< <i>w-aye wa-εχo ntsitsi</i>	
	<i>ng-aye nga-ngo ngetao</i>	‘The water is hot.’
	< <sup>o</sup> <i>w-aye wa-ko ketao</i>	

The consonant erosion, a regular development in the C50 group, is still noticeable in some items in Jǒfé (31a), but it is necessary to note here also aberrant agreements which reflect their ignorance of the genius of the Bantu languages (31b).

	<u>Jǒfé</u>		<u>Móngɔ/PB</u>	
(31)	a.	<i>m-umbu</i> ‘wind’	<	<i>-kumb-</i> ‘to blow’ (Hulstaert 1957: 1068)

<sup>13</sup> Cases of sporadic epenthesis of N are also observed in Holoholo D28a (Coupez 1955): *-bánd-* ‘climb’ < *-bát-* or *-báát-* ‘go up’, *-lang-* teach CS500 ‘show, teach’, *-lang-o* 3/4 ‘teaching’, next to *-lag-* ‘warn’ CS463-64 ‘show, teach’; *-isó* ~ *-insó* ‘eye’. Holoholo is a pejorative nickname of the Kunda scattered across northern Katanga believed to be the oldest tribe in the region, but they were overwhelmed by subsequent waves of migration (De Saint Moulin 1998: 615).



<i>m-poa</i>	<	<i>m-bóka</i>	‘road’
<i>mo-onda</i>	<	*-gonda C.S.897	‘forest’
<i>mo-ua</i>	<	*-gúá ps.247	‘salt’
-tsi-	<	*-tíg- C.S.1746	‘to leave’
-we(k)- ‘parler’	<	*-bék- C.S.121	‘to announce’

b. *moponga bɔngɔmɛ* ‘my rice’

As for the *N* epenthetic one can refer to riparian languages of Bumba Territory : °N-{w fi} > *ɲg*.

Ebango (Motingea 1995: 34) :

(32) a. *ɲgwaí mbái te* ‘He gave me nothing.’  
a-N-há-í mbái te  
S1-O1SG-donner-VF moi NEG

Potó (Motingea *et al.* 2021) :

b. *ɲgwakí=alio*  
N-wá-ak+í=alio  
S2SG-mourir-PF-VF=INAC  
‘I am not yet dead.’

*to-wa-í* ‘We agree.’  
°N-wa-í > *ɲgai* ‘I agree/am okay’  
*lo-ási / ɲgási* < °N-kási ‘leaf / leaves’, PB \*-káyí C.S.1020

The last example above suggests that a lost velar consonant is still surviving as a ghost consonant. The fact is close to what happening in Nsong B85d, a language of Kwilu river area, which shows a morphophonological shift consisting in the velarisation and unpacking of the homorganic nasal *n* to *ɲg* in front of verb roots starting with a glide (Koni & Bostoen 2019: 419).

c. °N-wób > *ɲgwób* ‘I take a bath’  
°N-yéndék > *ɲgyéndék* ‘I begin’

### Conclusion and discussion

- Gregoire (2003: 369) was right to draw attention to the fact that the so-called Móngɔ group is far less homogeneous than has been maintained by Hulstaert.

Note ... the very specific traits that can be found in the languages of the zone covered by the river complex Jwafa-Lomela-Loilaka. These traits represent a transition towards Yela (C74), Kela (C75) and Hendo (C70), which is already display some features that are shared by Tetela (C71) ...

- The phenomenon of epenthesis seems to be a common characteristic to former Hunter-Gatherers and to groups that would be closely related to them; although some today deny their Pygmy origin (Hulstaert 1986b: 216). It constitutes one of the indisputable traces of a homogeneous ancestral proto-population (Motingea 2021), which in contact with various

Bantu groups acquired the Bantu languages without however penetrating their genius (Schebesta 1952: 378).

- The **I** epenthesis to vocalic morphemes is believed to be a very old phenomenon among these CB hunter-collectors, as it is only attested among them. It is difficult to explain the origin and the causes of that peculiarity. An analogy source that could be the basis of this innovation would be, as we demonstrated, lenition and loss of certain consonants in diachrony; but the possibility of older contacts cannot be ruled out. \***I** loss is largely attested outside the Inner Congo Basin, namely in Swahili/Sabaki dialects (Nurse & Hinnenbusch 1993: 98–106).
- The upper Tshuapa- Lómela area may be considered as higher interest because several facts. One finds here the Hunters-Gatherers who would have emigrated from the upper Maringa-Lopori basin (Van der Kerken 1944: 395). Hulstaert specifies that they do not say they came with masters; that they are therefore more or less independent like the Jǒfě, to whom their traditions relate them (Hulstaert 1984: 40). Regarding the Jǒfě, Hulstaert was able to draw attention to the fact that the territory where they led a nomadic life of hunting and gathering extended beyond the border between the provinces of Equateur and Kasai-Oriental (Hulstaert 1986: 227).
- According to Van der Kerken (1944: 204–205), the region delimited approximately by the districts of Lake Leopold II, Bas-Congo, Kwango, Kasai and Sankuru, after having been occupied by former populations (Negroïds with yellowish skin, reminiscent in some respects of the Boschimans and the Hottentots; Negroes of smaller size; Pygmoid and Pygmies with yellowish or blackish skin, “varieties” of Negroïds or Negroes of smaller size), was successively invaded by: (i) populations originating in the West with matrilineal succession, speaking semi- Bantu, Bantoid or West African, languages having certain similarities with the Bantu languages (class system and lexicography) and certain similarities with the Sudanese languages... (ii) populations originating in the East, speaking Bantu languages... (iii) the populations of the greater ethnic Mongo Group, Bantu populations, originating in the North-East...  
Hulstaert (1992: 57–61) in an article on the contribution of linguistics to the history of the Móngɔ has returned to the possibility of external influences on Móngɔ languages spoken in this neighboring region.
- The Bakutsu who are said to be the first Bantu comers in the Central Congo Basin (Hulstaert 1972: 51–52) and speak Móngɔ dialects with many strange features including not only the loss of **I** but also morphological phenomena such as locative postposition (Hulstaert 1980) and loss of the vowel prefix cl.5 **i-** (Hulstaert 1993: 314–315), both recalling languages spoken very far outside the Móngɔ area ; for instance Aka C10 (Duke, 2001: 67), Duala A24 (Guthrie 1953: 21), Mbete B61 and Teke B70 (Guthrie 1953: 44, 78), Kongo H16 (Kadima *et al.* 2002: 48-49), Bangubangu D27 (Meeussen, 1954: 12–14) ; would acquired those features from the hunters-gatherers.

The **I** epenthetic in hunters-gatherers’s languages would be an contact-induced feature by analogy to lost consonants in stem initial in Bakutu language<sup>14</sup>. Many other features support that Hunters-Gatherers were in contact with the Móngɔ of earlier wave of invasion (N-E-

---

<sup>14</sup> See Hulstaert (1974: 7).

S) including Bakutu-Mbóle-Ankutsu :  $\text{N-V} > nd$ , reflexive prefix *-yo-*, prefix 2PL *bo-* ; instead of *nj-*, *-yo-* and *lo-*.

*L* of the 2PL prefix *lo-* in many M'ongó dialects may also be considered as product of epenthesis. In fact, apart from Bongando (Walling 1938: 11, Motíngéa (2000: 118) and Yasanyama (Motíngéa 2019: 208) which have *bo-* (< *\*ba+o-*) like in Lingala. The *lo-* ~ *bo-* in 2PL allomorphs are observable elsewhere in the domain; this is the case among the Ndengésé (Hulstaert & Goemaere 1984: 14) and the Ipinga of Lókenyé (Bola & Motíngéa, 2018).

- Indeed, one can also postulate an hypothesis of epenthesis from an earlier prefix 1SG ur-Bantu *\*kɪ(n)-*. See Sotho-Tswana : Subject pronoun *kɪ(n)*, *n* Object pronoun (Tucker 1929: 116–117). The two forms *\*kɪ-* and *\*N-* of the prefix 1SG are all very old. In fact, this is also the provisional conclusion reached by Bastin (2006: 34).

Moreover, many africanistics have forgotten that the reflexive prefix and the infinitive cl.5 *li-* ~ *i-* have developed from *\*ɣi-* (Meinhof & Warmelo 1932: 43):

In many grammars the reflexive pronoun is regarded as a stem-forming verbal prefix, i. e., a prefix which changes the meaning of the stem just as the verb-endings do, whereas it is simply an objective pronoun with reflexive meaning. Cf. Grundzüge p.110 sq. where I have traced it to *ku-ɣa*, *ku-ɣe* ; which then, in many cases becomes *ɣi-*, sometimes even *li-*...

There is another verbal prefix *i-* however, which I take to be the old infinitive prefix, see Grundzüge p.69 sq. It was survived in the North-Western part of the Bantu area, and is there treated like noun of cl. 5. But originally this prefix must have been *ɣi-* and this form became identical with pref. cl. 5.

This diagram *\*ɣi- > i- ~ li-* is reflected in Boyela dialects as well by an alternation : *li-/\_C* initial stem, and *y-/\_V* initial one.

Boyela (Motíngéa 2019: 102) :

- (33) a. *likenda* 'to go'  
*lilanga* 'to love, to like'  
*litóma* 'to send'
- b. *y-ěn-a* 'to see'  
*y-ĩy-a* 'to steal'  
*y-ěy-a* 'to know'

Kela (Forges 1977: 43, 108) :

- (34) a. *li-lá* 'to eat'  
*li-kálang-a* 'to roast'
- b. *y-ĩs-a* 'to hide'  
*y-ĩy-a* 'to steal'  
*y-ěy-a* 'to know'  
*y-óm-a* 'to heat up'

An infinitive/geround with prefix *i-* is also found in some languages of C30.

Hupper Ngiri languages (Motingea 1996: 107) :

- (34) a. *tóke i-yek-a* (Likátá) ‘Let’s go to see !’  
*totfěnde i-tfeka* (Lobálá) ‘Let’s go to see !’  
*nemé i-kek-a isokó yá bebí* (Litóká) ‘Stop to inspect your friends keep nets !’

Bolia C35b (Mamet 1960: 66) :

- b. *i-ke-l-a* ‘to do, to make’  
*imola < i-im-ol-a* ‘to remove’

#### REFERENCES

- Amidu Assibi A. 1997. *Classes in Kiswahili: A Study of their Forms and Implications*. Köln: Rüdiger Köppe.
- Amidu Assibi A. 2007. *Semantic Assignment Rules in Bantu Classes. A Reanalysis Based on Kiswahili*. (East African Languages and Dialects, 18.) Köln: Rüdiger Köppe.
- Bastin, Yvonne. 2020. The class 18 locative prefix and the expression of the present progressive in Bantu. *Africana Linguistica* 26: xxx–xxx.
- Bola Lieta, Prosper. 2021. Esquisse phonologique et morphologique du parler pygmée d’Isangi (Lac Tumba). Ms, Kinshasa.
- Botne, Robert. 2003. Lega (Beya dialect) (D25). In *The Bantu languages*, Derek Nurse & Gérard Philippson (eds), pp. 422–449. London / New York: Routledge.
- Bresnan, Joan (ed.). 1982. *The Mental Representation of Grammatical Relations*. Cambridge / Massachusetts: MIT Press.
- Bybee, Joan, Revere Perkins & William Pagliuca. 1994. *The Evolution of Grammar: Tense, aspect, and modality in the languages of the world*. Chicago / Londres: University of Chicago Press.
- Carrington, John F. 1977. Esquisse morphologique de la langue likile. Dans *Africana Linguistica VII*. (Annales, 90.) Tervuren: Musée Royal de l’Afrique Centrale.
- De Rop, Albert. 1957. Over de riviernamen in het mongo-gebied. *Aequatoria* 20: 5–9.
- De Rop, Albert. 1958. *Grammaire du lomongo*. (Studia Universatis « Lovanium », 3.) Kinshasa: Facultés de Philosophie et Lettres.
- De Saint Moulin, Léon. 1998. Conscience nationale et identités ethniques, contribution à une culture de paix. *Congo-Afrique* 330: 587–622.
- De Wolf, Paul. 1971: *The noun class system of Proto-Benue-Congo*. (Janua Linguarum. Series Practica, 167.) The Hague / Paris: Mouton.
- Demuth, Katherine. 2000. Bantu noun class systems: loan word and acquisition evidence of semantic productivity, in G. Senft (ed.) *Classification systems*, pp. 270–292. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Denny, Peter J. & Chet A. Creider. 1986. The Semantics of Noun Classes in Proto Bantu. In Craig, Colette G. (ed.), *Noun Classes and Categorization. Proceedings of a symposium on categorization and noun classification, Eugene, Oregon, October 1983*, pp. 217–239. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Gauton, R. 2000. Locative noun classes in Bantu: the case for recognizing two additional locative nouns class prefixes. In H.E. Wolff & O.D. Gensler (eds), *Proceedings of the 2nd World Congress of African Linguistics Leipzig 1997*, pp. 525–542. Köln: Rüdiger Köppe.
- Grégoire, Claire. 1975. *Les locatifs en bantou*. (Annales, 83.) Tervuren: Musée Royal de l’Afrique Centrale.
- Grégoire, Claire. 1980. Les locatifs en bantou. In Bouquiaux Luc (ed.) *Expansion bantoue: actes du Colloque International CNRS / Viviers (France) – 4-16 avril 1977*, pp. 511–525. Paris: Société d’Etudes Linguistiques et Anthropologiques de France (SELAF).

- Grégoire, Claire. 2003. The Bantu languages of the forest. Dans *The Bantu Languages*, Derek Nurse & Gérard Philippson (eds), pp. 349–370. London / New York: Routledge.
- Guthrie, Malcolm. 1967. *Comparative Bantu: an introduction to the comparative linguistics and prehistory of the Bantu languages*. 4 t. Farnborough: Gregg.
- Hadermann, Pascale. 1994. Les marques *yo* et *to* dans la conjugaison de quelques langues bantoues de la zone C. *Afrikanistische Arbeitspapiere* 38: 163–180.
- Hagendorens [M<sup>gr</sup>] Joseph Augustin. 1975. *Dictionnaire tetela-français*. (Ceeba Publications, III-5.) Bandundu: Centre d'Etudes Ethnologiques de Bandundu.
- Hulstaert, Gustave. 1948. Le dialecte des Pygmôïdes Batswá de l'Equateur. *Africa* 18: 21–28.
- Hulstaert, Gustave. 1957. *Dictionnaire lomóngɔ-français*. (Annales, 16.) Tervuren: Musée Royal du Congo Belge.
- Hulstaert, Gustave. 1974. Sur les dialectes des Bakutu. *Cultures au Zaïre et en Afrique* 4: 3–46.
- Hulstaert, Gustave. 1980. Un cas de postposition chez les Mongo. *Africana Linguistica* 8: 137–198. (Annales, 101.) Tervuren: Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale.
- Hulstaert, Gustave. 1986a. La langue des Jǎfé. *Annales Aequatoria* 7: 227–264.
- Hulstaert, Gustave. 1986b. Encore Bondombe. *Annales Aequatoria* 7: 195–219.
- Hulstaert, Gustave. 1992. La linguistique et l'histoire des Móngɔ. *Annales Aequatoria* 13: 53–66.
- Hulstaert, Gustave. 1999. Eléments pour la dialectologie mongo I. *Annales Aequatoria* 20: 9–322.
- Hulstaert, Gustave. 2007. Eléments pour la dialectologie móngɔ. Suite et fin: formes relatives et particules. *Annales Aequatoria* 28: 201–332.
- Hyman, Larry M. 2003. Segmental phonology. In *The Bantu languages*, Nurse Derek et Gérard Philippson (eds), pp. 43–58. London / New York: Routledge.
- Jacobs, John. 1962. *Tetela-grammatica: Fonologie, Morfologie A, Morfologie B (Orientalia Gandensia)*. Gent: Story-Scientia.
- Jacobs, John. 2000. Classes nominales et radicaux verbaux en lombóle (Katako-Kombe) Sankuru, Kasai Oriental. *Annales Aequatoria* 21: 69–82.
- Jarad, Najib Ismail. 2015. From Locative to Existential: The grammaticalization of “ft” in the spoken Arabic of Aleppo. *Romano-Arabica* 15: 235–254. Bucharest, University of Bucharest: Center for Arab Studies.
- Koni Maluwa, Joseph & Koen Bostoen 2019. Nsong B85d. In *The Bantu languages*. Mark Van de Velde, Koen Bostoen, Derek Nurse, and Gérard Philippson (eds), pp. 414–448. 2nd ed. Routledge.
- Kouarata, Guy Noël. 2014. *Variations des formes dans la langue mbochi (Bantu C25)*. PhD Thesis, Université Lumière (Lyon 2).
- Marten, Lutz. 2010. The great siSwati locative shift. In Breitbarth, Anne & Lucas, Christopher & Watts, Sheila & Willis, David (eds.), *Continuity and Change in Grammar*, pp. 249–267. Benjamins, Amsterdam.
- Meeussen, Achille E. 1967. Bantu grammatical reconstructions. In *Africana Linguistica III*, (Annales, 61), pp.79–121. Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, Tervuren.
- Meinhof, Carl & Nicolas J. Van Warmelo. 1932. *Introduction to the phonology of the Bantu languages*. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer / Ernst Vohsen.
- Motingea Mangulu. 1997. La langue des Lokalo-Ngombe du Territoire de Bokungu. *Annales Aequatoria* 18: 341–406.
- Motingea Mangulu. 2005. *Leboale et lebaate: langues bantoues du plateau des Uélé, Afrique Centrale*. (ILCAA Language Monograph Series, 3.) Tokyo: Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa.

- Motingea Mangulu. 1993a. Le lombuli du Kasai est-il un dialecte môngo ? *Afrikanistische Arbeitspapiere* 33: 61–82.
- Motingea Mangulu. 1993b. Note sur le parler des Batswa de Bosabola (Lac Mai Ndombe). *Annales Aequatoria* 14: 483–501.
- Motingea Mangulu. 1994. Notes sur le parler des Pygmées d’Itendo (Zone de Kiri/Maindombe). *Annales Aequatoria* 15: 341–382.
- Motingea Mangulu. 1996. *Etude comparative des langues ngiri de l’entre Ubangi-Zaïre*. (CNWS Publications, 43.) Leiden: Research School CNWS.
- Motingea Mangulu. 2000. La langue des Bongando septentrionaux (bantou C.63). *Annales Aequatoria* 21: 91–158.
- Motingea Mangulu. 2010. *Aspects des parlers minoritaires des Lacs Tumba et Inongo. Contribution à l’histoire de contact des langues dans le bassin central congolais*. (ILCAA Language Monograph Series, 5.) Tokyo: Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa.
- Motingea Mangulu. 2018. Lokota: un dialecte nkundó-môngo marginal. Ms, Kinshasa.
- Motingea Mangulu. 2019. *Spécimens des langues minoritaires de la haute Tshuapa et de la Lomela, République démocratique du Congo*. Beau Bassin: Editions Universitaires Européennes.
- Motingea Mangulu. 2021. Vers une écologie linguistique des anciens chasseurs-cueilleurs du bassin central congolais: Traces d’une proto-population ancestrale homogène. *Anthropos* 116: 153–159.
- Nurse, Derek & Thomas J. Hinnebusch. 1993. *Swahili and Sabaki: A linguistic history*. (Linguistics, 121.), Thomas J. Hinnebusch (ed.) with an special addendum by Gérard Philippson. Berkeley – Los Angeles – London: University of California Press.
- Nurse, Derek. 2000. Tense and aspect in Lingala revisited. *Afrikanistische Arbeitspapiere* 62: 137–150.
- Picavet, R. 1947. Het Dialekt der Batswa. *Aequatoria* 10: 137–141.
- Pusch, Claus D. 2003. La grammaticalisation de l’aspectualité: les périphrases à valeur progressive en français. *Verbum* 25: 497–510.
- Rood, Nicolas. 1958. *Dictionnaire ngombe-néerlandais-français*. (Annales, 21.) Tervuren: Musée Royal Colonial Belge.
- Schadeberg, Thilo C. 1992. *A sketch of Swahili morphology*. Köln: Rüdiger Köppe.
- Schebesta, Paul. 1952. *Les Pygmées du Congo belge*. (Mémoire, 26.) Bruxelles: Institut Royal Colonial Belge.
- Tanghe, Joseph. 1929. Mabale Sories. *Bulletin of School of Oriental Studies* 5: 571–586.
- Van Bulck, Gaston. 1949. *Manuel de linguistique bantoue*. (Mémoires, 17.) Bruxelles: Institut Royal Colonial Belge.
- Van Bulck, Gaston. 1952. Les langues bantoues. Dans *Les langues du monde*, nouvelle édition, t.II. A. Meillet et M. Cohen (sous la direction de), pp. 847–904. Paris: Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique.
- Van der Kerken, Georges. 1944. *L’ethnie môngo*. (Mémoires, 13.) Bruxelles: Institut Royal Colonial Belge.
- Van Leynseele, Hélène. 1976/1977. An outline of Libinza grammar. Mémoire, Université de Leiden.
- Walling, Lawrence E. 1937. *Notes on the Grammar of Longando*. Bongandanga: Congo Balolo Mission.
- Welmers, William E. 1973. *African languages structures*. Berkeley / Los Angeles / London: University of California Press.
- Ziervogel, Dirk & E.J. Mabuza. 1976: *A grammar of the Swati language (iSwati)*. Pretoria: J.L. van Schaik.

Ziervogel, Dirk. 1971. The Bantu locative. *African Studies* 30: 371–383.

#### SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

◦	:	structural transcription
*	:	reconstruction
∅	:	zero morphem
+	:	harmony
~	:	alternative form
<	:	derived from
>	:	becomes
1, 2, 3...	:	morphological classes
APPL	:	applicative extension
ASS	:	associative extension
B	:	Low Tone
Ḃ	:	Flotting Low Tone
CCT	:	extension contactive
COM	:	comitative
CON	:	connective
COP	:	copula
CS.	:	Comparative Series
DEM	:	Demonstrative
FUT	:	future mark
Ḥ	:	Flotting Hight Tone
HAB	:	habitual
IMPO	:	impositive
INF	:	infinitive
INTER	:	interrogative
INTR	:	intransitive extension
LOC	:	locative
NAR	:	narrative
NEG	:	negative
NP	:	nominal prefix
NP	:	nom personnel
OP	:	objet prefix
PAS	:	past
PF	:	pre-final
PI	:	pre-initial
PL	:	plural
PP	:	pronominal prefix
PROG	:	progressive
<i>ps.</i>	:	partial series
PSF	:	passive extension
REC	:	recent
SEP	:	separative extension
STAT	:	stative extension
TA	:	Tense-Aspect
TRANS	:	transitive extension
V	:	vowel or verb
VF	:	final vowel
VP	:	verbal prefix

vs. : versus