

# *Kinshasa Spoken Lingala As A Mixed Language*

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**Abstract** – Toute langue, en contact avec une ou plusieurs autres langues, subit des modifications en son sein et devient souvent une langue mixte. Le Lingala, parlée à Kinshasa, la capitale de la République Démocratique du Congo, est parmi les langues en situation de contact avec d'autres, de ce fait ; elle subit des changements par le mélange des mots provenant des autres langues avec lesquelles elle est en contact et devient par là une langue mixte.

**Keywords** – Langue Mixte, Lingala, Contact Des Langues, Mélange.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Language contact induces different phenomena such as borrowing, code-mixing, code switching, language change, and language mixture. In the latter, features of different languages in contact are fused in one language. The language that undergoes fusion becomes mixed. It is the case of Kinshasa Lingala which mixes features of the languages that are in contact in the setting [1].

Quoting [2], Thomason and Kaufman point that mixed languages exhibit fusion of features from the languages in contact in bilingualism or multilingualism situation. Concerning the mixed features of Kinshasa Lingala, [3] confirmed it when he pointed that it is mixed with words from Kikongo, Kiswahili, Ciluba, Portuguese, French and even English.

The current study sets out to show the extent to which this Kinshasa spoken Lingala is a mixed language. The study targets two objectives:

First, to identify features from different languages that fused in the examined sequences.

Second, discuss the way the concerned features are fused in the sequences. All in all, four sequences were selected for the analysis.

### I.1. On language contact in Kinshasa

The sociolinguistic pyramid of the Democratic Republic of Congo specifies four parts. On the top, summit, are located foreign languages such as English, Spanish, Portuguese even Russian as Congolese are not learning it. The following part belongs to French, which is the official language of the country. The third part includes the four national languages (Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala and Ciluba). At the bottom are located vernaculars languages also called dialects such as Kitetela, Kiyaka and Kisuku [4].

The following figure summarized what is described above:

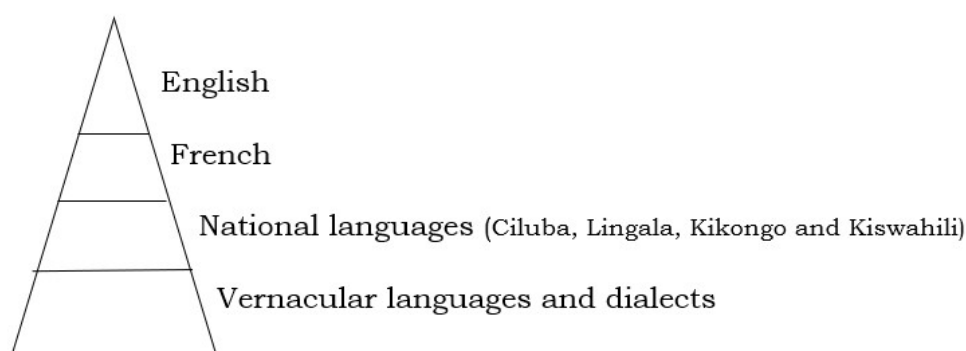


Figure N°1: The DRC language pyramid

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 Swahili [4].

Those languages are mentioned in the following lines.

**Kikongo:** The language of Ne-Kongo, also called Monokutuba, Kikongo ya Leta, or Ikeleve, Kikongo, national language which allows communication among tribes living in Kwilu, Kwango and Kongo Central provinces. It is spoken in Kongo- Central Province, especially in the urban centers of Matadi, Boma, Moanda and Tshela. It is also spoken in Congo Brazzaville and Angola [4].

**Ciluba:** Ciluba language is spoken in the Kasai, Kasai Central, Sankuru and Lulua provinces, at Kikwit in Kwilu province, Kanyama territory in Katanga and in large urban centers particularly in Lubumbashi, Likasi, Kolwezi, Bukama and Kamina were a good number speakers of Kasai origin reside [4].

**Kiswahili:** Kiswahili is spoken in Lomami, Haut Lomami, Tanganika, Lualaba, Haut Katanga, Maniema, Sud-Kivu, Nord-Kivu, Tshopo, Ituri, Haut-Uele, and Bas-Uele provinces. It is also spoken in Mbuji-Mayi, Kananga, and Ilebo were a great number of locutors expelled from Katanga reside [4].

**Lingala:** 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 (the former configuration) 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 [4].

There are two varieties of Lingala: Standard and non standard.

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 [1].

Non standard Lingala is the variety that is used in informal everyday situation. In addition, there are differences between the spoken Lingala of Kinshasa and the one of Brazzaville. Both varieties have a significant number of borrowings from French and other Bantu languages [5] quoted by [4]. But Guthrie [6] divided the Lingala language into several variations, which are: Standard Lingala, Spoken Lingala, Kinshasa Lingala and Brazzaville Lingala, whereas, Bokamba [7] 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 [8] 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 Standard Lingala.

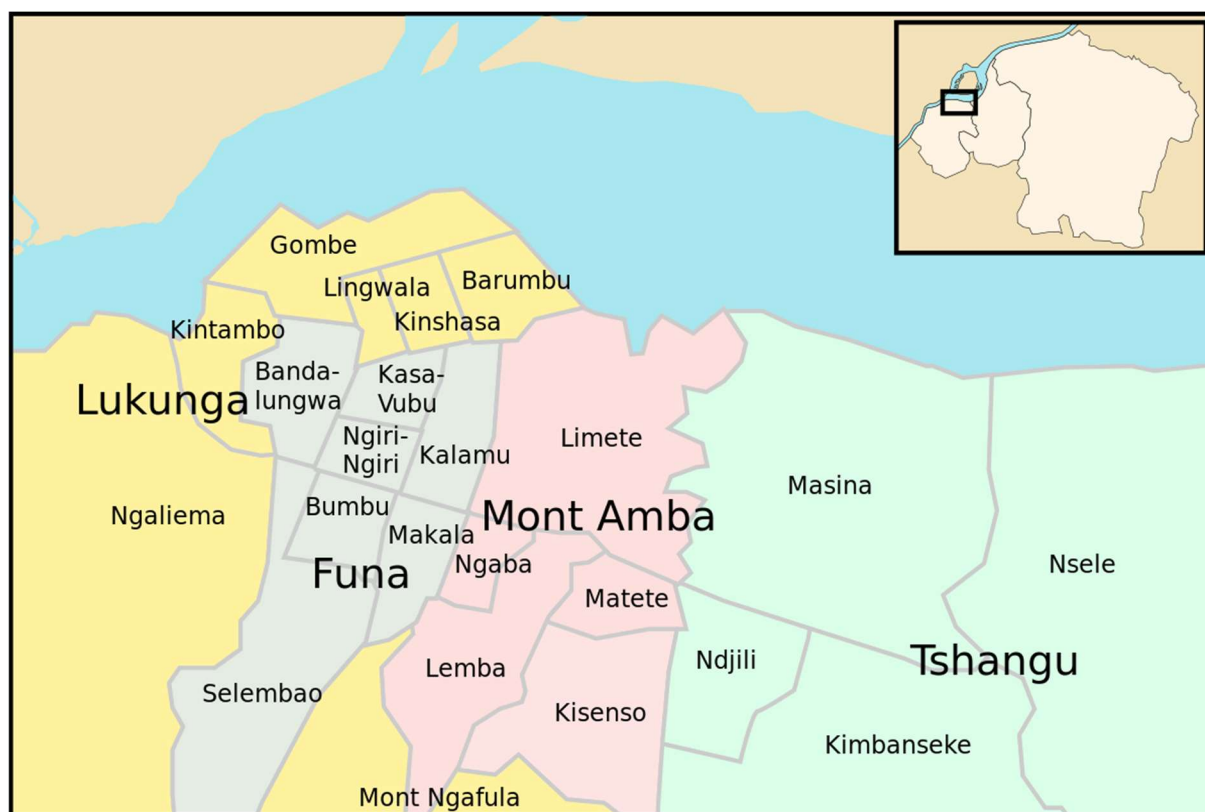
Karine Tanguy [9] distinguished four varieties of Lingala: Lingala Makanza called standard or classic, Lingala populaire, Lingala of Kinshasa, and Lingala of Brazzaville.

## II. MILIEU

Kinshasa, the capital city of the Democratic Republic of Congo, where this Lingala is spoken has been chosen as the research milieu. Kinshasa is limited:

- At East by Kwango and Kwilu provinces,
- At West by Brazzaville,
- At North by Mai-Ndombe province,
- At south by Kongo Central province.

With a population estimated at 17,07 million inhabitants and a surface of 9.965 Km<sup>2</sup> [13], Kinshasa has twenty-four municipalities and 326 quarters [10] and all the 450 tribes and 250 dialects are represented [4].



Source: [11].

Table 1: Administrative subdivision

Municipalities	Quarters	Municipalities	Quarters
Kinshasa	7	Kintambo	8
Kalamu	18	Kisenso	14
Ngiri-Ngiri	8	Lemba	15
Ngaba	6	Selembao	18
Bumbu	13	Limete	14

Matete	13	Kimbanseke	30
Makala	14	Ngaliema	21
Lingwala	9	Masina	21
Kasa-Vubu	7	Mt Ngafula	16
Barumbu	9	gombe	10
Bandal	7	N'sele	16
Ndjili	13	Maluku	19

Source: [10].

### III. METHODS

The researcher had recourse to qualitative method whereby the documentary technique helped to draw the needed data. As the examined language is a spoken one, four sequences of the TV program, talk show were transcribed. In talk show, different Kinshasa residents participated actively.

### IV. RESULTS

Kinshasa is considered to be a mirror of the country that is to say different tribes and ethnic group can be found in Kinshasa. Kinshasa speech community made of members from different tribes and ethnic groups. Once they speak Lingala traces of their ethnic or tribal languages are noticeable.

Nsimabote [1] examined a slanted Lingala which is the Lingala spoken by Kikongo speakers. It is characterized by borrowing, code-switching, code-mixing and interference, similar phenomenon can be identified by other ethnic or tribal groups.

#### IV.1. Data presentation

As the Lingala used by some Kinshasa native speakers in the media is really a reflexion of the spoken language since many of them who communicate in the media in Lingala do it the way they speak. The texts from the different tv talk show and observation constituted the source of the data:

- Mum*: Fiston, yeba **que** nga, na sala **économie**, tata na yo azua **visa** to tinda yo na poto, **mais en retour** ozo kanisa biso te.

*Daddy*: **Nge kanga inua**, mbala suka atinda 50\$.

*Mum*: **Tatu**, okanisi 50 eza eloko ? 100.000 **pour manger pendant combien des jours** ?

*Daddy*: **Week end** oyo to zali na **retraite** ya ba **couple**, tindela biso **quelque chose de consistant**.
- Lady*: **Baby**, na moni ezo wumela **trop**, tolingani banda kala, **mais signe** moko eza te soki toko balana.

*Boy*: **Bibi yangu**, zala **calme d'ici là** makambu eko bonga, zala na kondima, na ozela **boss**, alakaki nga, **dès qu'il revienne tout sera fait**. Oyebi mokolo ango okobima na **new look** na **kabambi** ya **sac à mains**. **Ma chérie, mamu** na nga, yeba que dans 9 **mois** ba kobenga yo **mwambuyi**.
- A*: **Mes chers amis**, nini ezo kende te na **club** na biso **trois matchs perdus** oh **nzambi a mpungu**,

*B*: **Mbuta**, ya liboso, **coach** Raoul azo koka te, **foot** ya lelo eza neti ya kala té, **tous a vraiment changé mais** ye aza na **vision** té,

*C*: Akende kuna **coach** ya **tshanana**,

*D*: **Equipe** eza nde na mbongo té, nionso ba zo loba, **luvunu na bo, akuna franca, faut** ba tika **équipe** na bato ya ba **moyen**.

4. A:Bandeko, Kin *sans moto*, na yebe té soki to kokoma ba nani, tala bato na *arret, pas des bus, bwala* nini oyo ?  
B. Eh nga na a pressé na zui mwa *job* moko na *ville il faut* na koma *avant Chief sinon* na kozua *problème*.  
C :Mukubwa, komisa biso ata na Kintambo awa *transport mpasi*.

#### IV.2. Discussion of the data

Observing the Lingala text 1 above, in which parents are talking to their son living Europe, what could be examined is the fact that parents while talking to their son by phone, inserted in their Lingala speech words from other languages such as: French, Kikongo, Ciluba and English. Those words are inserted in Lingala may be for many reasons but not for prestige. Kikongo words are inserted because daddy is a Kikongo speaker, that is why when speaking Lingala some Kikongo words intervened, for example “nge”. Ciluba word “tatu” is inserted because mum is Ciluba speaker, she uttered as a respect sign to her husband. French and English words are inserted may be because of their belonging to this or that social class or social group or depending on their education level.

The mixing features occurred here by borrowing, code mixing and code switching, for example:

- na kenda *maternité une seule fois dans ma vie* (code-mixing)
- *Week end* oyo to zali na *retraite* ya ba *couple*, (borrowing)
- okanisi 50 eza eloko ? 100.000 *pour manger pendant combien des jours* ? (code switching)

Text 2 concerns two young lovers discussing about the future of their relationship. What is interesting here is the ways that they uttered by fusing in their Lingala words from English, French, Kiswahili and Ciluba. As they still young, born in Kinshasa, the fusion of those words could be due to the influence those fused languages in their environment.

In this text, the mixing features occurred by borrowing and code switching for example:

- *Baby*, na moni ezo wumela *trop*, (borrowing)
- alakaki nga, *dès qu’il revienne tout sera fait*. (code switching)

Text 3 concerns a group of members of V Club (a football team) complaining about the way their team is playing. As for previous texts, it is observing the insertion of other words from French, English, Kikongo, Ciluba and Kiswahili in their Lingala. These different words are inserted in their Lingala because Kinshasa, the capital city is the center of all Congolese dialects and the four national languages.

Here, the mixing features occurred by code mixing, borrowing and code switching for example:

- *Mes chers amis*, nini ezo kende te na *club* na biso (code mixing)
- *Mbuta*, ya liboso, *coach* Raoul azo koka te (borrowing)
- *foot* ya lelo eza neti ya kala té, *tous a vraiment changé* (code switching)

Text 4 is about a conversation among three persons at the bus station wondering about the transportation in Kinshasa. While uttering, one of them took a motorcycle and went because he was in a hurry. Four languages are concerned in this conversation: French, English, Kiswahili and Kikongo. Words from these four languages are inserted in Lingala by the three persons.

For this last text, the mixing features occurred by borrowing and code mixing for example:

- Bandeko, Kin *sans moto* (borrowing)
- komisa biso ata na Kintambo awa *transport mpasi* (code mixing)

#### IV.3 Findings

The observation made on the four texts analyzed reveals that the Lingala used by their authors mixes words, phrases and sentences from five languages such as French, English, Kikongo, Kiswahili and Ciluba, and the mixing features occurred by borrowing, code-mixing and code switching. The table below demonstrates the statistic of different words that fused Lingala.

Table 1. Statistics of different words

Languages	Text 1	Text 2	Text 3	Text 4	Total	Percentage
French	18	16	16	13	63	65,62
English	2	4	4	4	12	12,5
Kikongo	3	-	6	2	11	11,45
Kiswahili	-	3	2	1	6	6,25
Ciluba	1	2	1	-	4	4,16
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>100</b>

The table above shows that 96 words from other languages are mixed in Lingala among which: 65,62 % or 63 from French, 12,5 % or 12 from English, 11,45 % or 11 from Kikongo, 6,25 % from Kiswahili and 4,16 % or 4 from Ciluba. All these words are seen in the table below

Table 2. Words mixed in the four texts

Sources	French	English	Kikongo	Kiswahili	Ciluba
Text 1	Que, économie, Visa, mais, en, Retour, pour, manger, pendant, combine, des, jours, retraite, couples, quelque, chose, consistant	Week end	Nge, kanga, inua		Tatu
Text 2	Trop, mais, signe, calme, ici, là, dès, qu'il, revienne, tout, sera, fait, sac, à, mains, ma, chère, mois	Baby, boss, new, look		Bibi, yangu, kabambi	Mamu, mwambuyi
Text 3	Mes, chers, amis, trois, perdus, tous, a, vraiment, changé, mais, vision, équipe, faut, moyen	Club, matchs, foot, coach	Nzambi, ampungu, mbuta, luvunu, na, bo	Akuna, franca	Tshanana
Text 4	Sans, moto, arrêt, pas, des, bus, ville, il, faut, avant, sinon, problème, transport	Job, chief	Bwala, mpasi	Mukubwa	

In the table above, French is the first language donor of words to the four texts concerned with this work with 63 words, followed by English with 12 words, then came Kikongo with 11 words, Kiswahili with 6 words and Ciluba with 4 words.

## V. CONCLUSION

This article aimed at demonstrating the extent to which the Lingala spoken in Kinshasa is a mixed language. The Lingala spoken in Kinshasa gets fused with features of other languages such as, French, Kikongo, Kiswahili, Ciluba, and English as seen in the current work. These features are fused in Lingala by borrowing, code mixing and code switching.

Data for the elaboration of this work came from four written texts from Tv talk show and observation.

French, Kikongo, Kiswahili, Ciluba and English are the concerned languages that are mixed in Lingala according to the present context. But while going deeply in observing the Kinshasa speech community, in situation of language contact phenomena, Lingala being in contact with other languages such as: Kikongo, Kiswahili, French, English and Portuguese undergoes the influence of them by fusing words from them into it.

What makes that fusion could be: Lack of Lingala vocabulary, difficulty of pronouncing some Lingala words, the environment where the speech took place, the influence of the audience, and the prestige.

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