

MINISTRY OF SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL RESEARCH

SOCIOLINGUISTIC SURVEY

AMONG THE

XEDI - LAMANG

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Background

This report is the final report on a sociolinguistic survey carried out by Jürg Stalder in cooperation with the Xedi team (Tourou) and the Lamang team (Gwoza, Nigeria). It took place from January 20 to February 10, 1990. A preliminary report containing the results of the lexicostatistical analysis and the Recorded Text Testing (RTT) was sent to all people concerned in March 1990.

## 1.2. Purpose of the survey

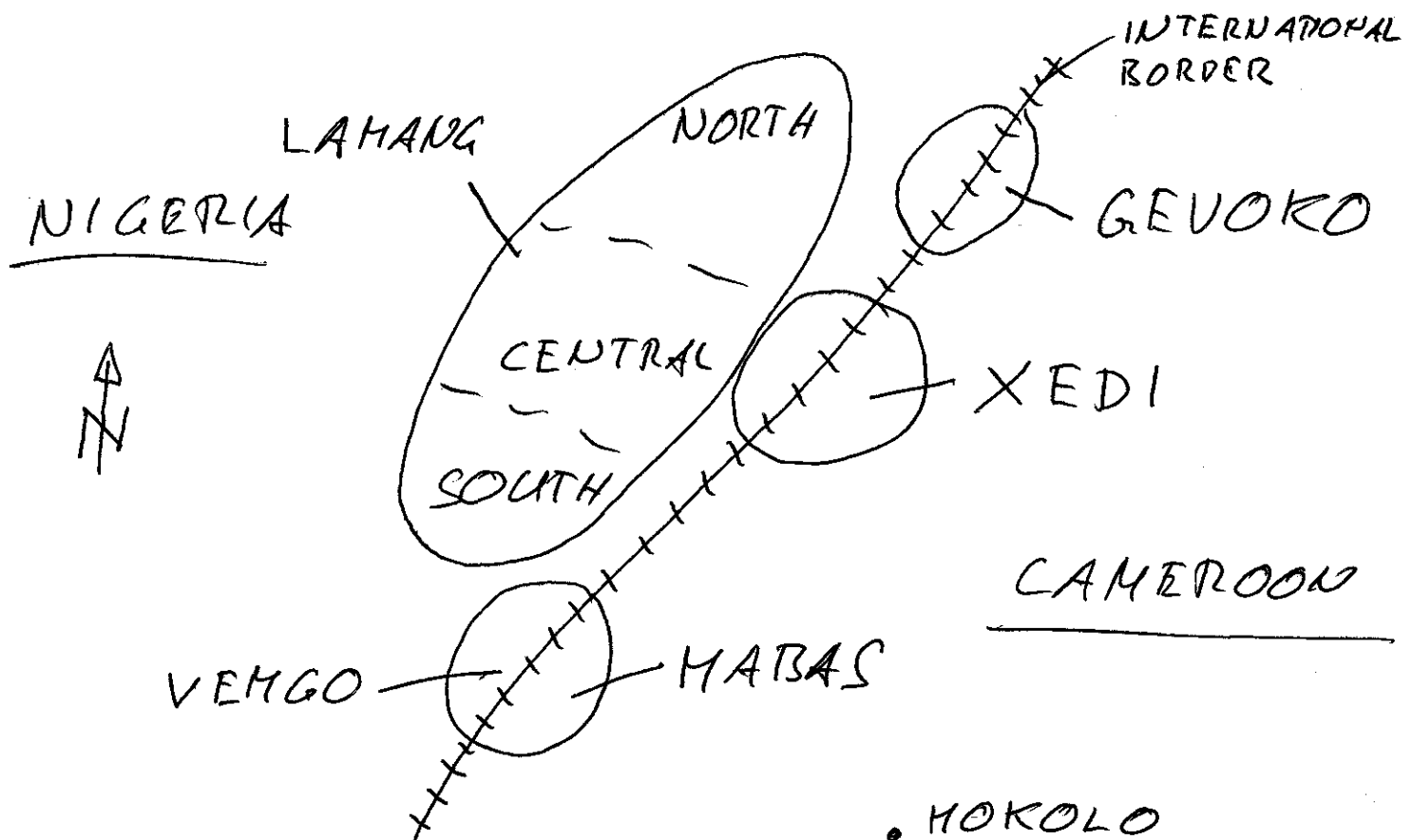
Main purpose:

Clarification of the relationship between Lamang (Hambagda) and Xedi since language research teams are working in both languages, bearing in mind possible ramifications for the future work of both teams.

Additional goal:

The 1988 edition of the Ethnologue classifies Vemgo as a dialect of Lamang. Since previous RTT (Recorded Text Testing), carried out by Larry Roettger, revealed that the Vemgo had a high level of comprehension of Lamang (Hambagda) in spite of a low level of lexical similarity as revealed by lexicostatistical analysis, we were keenly interested in gaining more insight into the matter.

## 1.3. Geographical location



## 1.4. Classification

### 1.4.1. ALCAM (Atlas Linguistique du Cameroun):

- 121 Gevoko
- 122 Xedi (Hide)
- 123 Mabas

The above-mentioned speech forms are considered separate languages. (Lamang and Vemgo, being Nigerian speech forms, are not mentioned in ALCAM.)

### 1.4.2. Ethnologue. The following classification has been proposed for the 1992 edition of the Ethnologue:

- Gevoko (NGS)
- Hide alternate for Hedi (TUR)
- Mabas (VEM)
- Lamang (HIA)
- Vemgo alternate for Mabas (VEM)

Dialects of Lamang: North Lamang, Central Lamang, South Lamang.

Subdialects:

North: Zaladeva, Dzuba, Leghva, Gwoza-Wakane  
Central: Hedkala, Waga, Dlige  
South: Ghudavan

Lamang (Hambagda), i.e. the village of Hambagda (Nigeria) referred to in this report, is located between the North Lamang and Central Lamang areas.

## 2. PROCEDURES

### 2.1. Lexicostatistical analysis

- word list used: ALCAM 120-item word list
- word lists for the following languages were included in the analysis:  
Gevoko, Xedi, Mabas, elicited by the Xedi team;  
Lamang (Hambagda) elicited by the Lamang team.
- software for analysis: Wordsurv

### 2.2. Recorded Text Testing

RTT was initially planned to take place in the following three locations: Hambagda (Nigeria), Tourou, Mabas

As the survey unfolded it was decided to carry out RTT in Vemgo (Nigeria) as well. No RTT was planned for Gevoko.

### 2.3. Interviews

Group as well as individual interviews were carried out in order to gain insight into people's perceptions concerning the surrounding speech forms.

## 3. RESULTS / EVALUATION

### 3.1 Lexicostatistical analysis:

Gevoko	Xedi	Lam (Hamb)	Mabas	
100				Gevoko
56(6.3)	100			Xedi
50(6.7)	64(5.1)	100		Lam (Hamb)
50(7.5)	78(4.5)	64(5.7)	100	Mabas

Comments on the above figures:

- figures without brackets: percentage of lexical similarity
- figures in brackets: range of error, +/- the indicated value (%)

The lexicostatistical analysis was not done until after the survey, since the word lists were not available beforehand. Had we already known the above figures, we would have totally excluded Gevoko from RTT.

### 3.2 Recorded Text Testing:

BY SPEAKERS OF:	COMPREHENSION OF:			
	Gevoko	Xedi	Lam(Hamb)	Mabas
Gevoko	---	---	---	---
Xedi	35%	98%	48%	51%
Lamang (Hamb)	9%	31%	100%	37%
Mabas	---	36%	56%	88%
Vemgo	12%	50%	84%	93%

Comments:

Testing among the Vemgo was carried out using the Lamang (Hambagda) test tape as the hometown test.

Only 4 people were tested in Vemgo. Since Vemgo as a testing point was not on our schedule, we did not have the time (due to Visa restrictions) to test the requisite minimum of 10 people.

### 3.3. Interviews

3.3.1. Answers of 11 Lamang speakers in Hambagda concerning what language they speak when they are in Vemgo or Tourou respectively:

when they are in:	Vemgo	Tourou
they use:		
MT	6	5
LWC	1	2
they do not know	4	4

i.e. they do not know or they use the mother tongue, not so much the language of wider communication.

3.3.2. Answers of 10 Xedi speakers in Tourou concerning what language they speak when they are in Hambagda or Mabas respectively:

when they are in:	Hambagda	Mabas
they use:		
MT	4	3
LWC	4	4
they do not know	2	3

i.e. both are used, the mother tongue as well as the language of wider communication.

3.3.3. Statements from the group interview in Vemgo:

Mabas:---The name Mabas refers to a location. The people there speak the same language (Vemgo) and they belong together.

Lamang:---The Vemgo are part of the Lamang. Referring to the language, they expressed that there are different dialects of Lamang.

Xedi:---Tourou is considered a different language.

3.3.4. Statements from the interview with the chief in Mabas:

Vemgo:---They speak the same language as the Mabas. They belong together, the same with Visik.

Xedi/Lamang:---The Mabas understand the Xedi better than they do the Waga (Lamang). The Vemgo understand the Waga because they intermarry with them.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS / GENERAL COMMENTS

### 4.1 Relationship Xedi-Lamang:

The lexicostatistical analysis and RTT show that GEVOKO, XEDI, MABAS and LAMANG should be considered as separate languages due to low lexical similarity and low intelligibility. Consequently, the new entry in the Ethnologue for Xedi as a separate language seems to be justified.

The lack of adequate intelligibility is also confirmed by the answers given by the people in Hambagda and Tourou who expressed that both, the mother tongue and the language of wider communication are used or that they did not know what they used. These answers express an attitude which reflects distance rather than a strong sense of belonging together.

#### 4.2 Vemgo:

Based on the findings of the survey, it was suggested to separate Vemgo from Lamang and to list it together with Mabas. The following reasons can be cited:

Geographical situation: Although the Mabas are on the Cameroonian side, on the edge of a plateau, while the Vemgo are on the Nigerian side, at the foot of the plateau, they are immediate neighbours.

In informal interviews among both the Mabas and the Vemgo, people expressed that they are one and the same ethnically and linguistically.

The RTT results seem to indicate that both the Mabas and the Vemgo understand Lamang better than Xedi. But it seems that the geographical situation and the international border influence the relationship to Lamang and Xedi respectively. The Vemgo seem to have stronger ties with the Lamang (Waga) (big market, intermarriage) and consider themselves to be part of Lamang as well. Although the Chief of Mabas expressed that they understand Xedi better than Lamang (which is not reflected by the above RTT results), his statement seems to express that the Mabas feel closer to the Xedi.

Although the results of the RTT among the Vemgo is based on an inadequate sample, the high level of Mabas comprehension seems to reflect the emic view, expressed in the informal interviews, that the Mabas and the Vemgo belong together.

Since the lexical similarity between Lamang and Mabas is only 64% (+/- 5.7%), and assuming as valid speaker reports that Mabas and Vemgo are the same language, we may then conclude that the high level of Lamang comprehension among the Vemgo (84%) is due to bilingualism. (This was also the Roettgers' conclusion considering the results of their survey, i.e. that there is a high comprehension level due to bilingualism.)

#### 4.3 Cooperation between the Xedi and Lamang teams, future survey:

Independent of the findings of the survey, the justification of having teams in both Xedi and Lamang was never really questioned. Since the situations in Cameroon and Nigeria are so different from each other, different approaches are required. There are the following major differences:

- official languages: English in Nigeria, French in north Cameroon
- LWCs (languages of wider communication): Hausa in Nigeria, Fulfulde in north Cameroon
- religious practices: Islamized in the Lamang area of Nigeria,

## African traditional religions and Christianized in the Xedi area

The results show that the development of separate written materials has to be envisaged, without excluding cooperation in the area of linguistic analysis and translation. In any case, CARLA (Computer Aided Related Language Adaptation) would basically be possible.

The survey did not concentrate on viability, an issue best dealt with through long-term observation by the teams. As regards viability, however, the Lamang team expressed certain doubts about their programme's future. Nevertheless, they are not only well aware of the sociolinguistic situation but also that there may be other reasons which justify their being among the Lamang people.

Further research, in the form of Rapid Appraisal (RA) survey, should be carried out among the Gevoko and the Mabas/Vemgo in order to determine their translation needs. The methodology of RA is such that it would allow the survey to be carried out by the local language teams themselves (i.e. the Xedi and Lamang teams).