

# Bridging the gap: Bantu grammar workshops as a means to support community-based language development

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## Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to present an approach to teaching that brings together academic linguistic research of the typological variety together with a training program for speakers of Bantu languages and Portuguese. The elements included in this “Discovery package” are: Lectures on Bantu grammar, an exercise book, an electronic shell book and several sample grammar sketches. While the lectures contain general linguistic knowledge concerning Bantu structure, the exercise book provides a step-by-step procedure to guide groups of students in their own discovery of data in their mother tongue. A teaching method in five steps is presented, called IDEAL (Introduction, Definition, Extension, Application, and Lesson Learned). This method was developed with multiplication in focus, hence lends itself to training of teachers. The sample grammar sketches of six mozambican languages illustrate the purpose of the workshop, production of grammar sketches by speakers. This is done by filling in data into the shell book which grows directly from lessons, modifying the template according to the individual language. As a by-product of the Discovery program, paradigms as well as a short text from several languages were collected. These data are evaluated in terms of their usefulness for comparative research and language planning.

**Keywords:** linguistics; Bantu grammar; IDEAL.

## Introduction

Mozambique is one of the five african members of the PALOP community. With Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau and São Tome e Príncipe, it shares a complex sociolinguistic situation; the vast majority of citizens speak languages other than the official language, and those who communicate through Portuguese often use a modified form (Gonçalves 1996) or a kind of creole, like the Crioulo of Guinea-Bissau. In the case of Mozambique, even the most optimistic estimate<sup>1</sup> counts a little more

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<sup>1</sup> INE Censo Nacional 1997

than 30% using the language of Camões, which is another way of saying that more than two thirds of the Mozambican population do not communicate in Portuguese. All other national languages belong to the Bantu family of languages, a subgroup of the Niger-Congo phylum of African languages. Mozambique is the only country on the continent with a single African language family represented.

This paper describes an attempt to make use of this relative typological uniformity for language development. The origin and linguistic foundation of the Discovery package are explained in the remainder of this section, section 2 describes the overall design of the discovery package. Section 3 presents the didactic approach developed for the Discovery, and section 4 illustrates the results so far.

## The beginnings

In 2000, the so-called *Projecto Bilingue* was made official. It foresees the use of 17 national languages as means of instruction in primary education, recognizing the fact that mother-tongue education supersedes education in a second language by far. Immediately, the question arises how the program will be implemented. Of the 17 languages listed in the report of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Orthography Conference (Ngunga & Siteo, 2000), several are not adequately documented, let alone standardized in terms of vocabulary or spelling. And, to make things worse, there are more speech forms than those included in the official list (Kröger, 2005). Linguists are faced with the challenge to bridge the gap between the present state of languages and the desired state of their development. And they can build bridges between the lusophone and other communities living in the same nation.

In 2002, a team of Bible translators asked for help in understanding the grammar of their own language, which would improve translation work. We spent three mornings under a gazebo's shade in a district in rural Mozambique. Local dignitaries and governmental officials lent dignity to the occasion. They were fascinated by the fact that their local language – in this case Makua-Meto (Bantu P.30) can be written, just like Portuguese. Their surprise was even bigger when I took the audience on a tour of clause structure and grammatical agreement, starting with Portuguese sample sentences and arriving at the vernacular. The team wanted more, so we spent some time adding notes on parts of speech, agreement, and verb structure. As they jotted down observations, we felt that in Cabo Delgado, as well as other provinces, language personnel might benefit from an overview of grammar features typical for Bantu.

In 2004, the SIL training centre in Nampula hosted the first official Discovery workshop. Speakers of central Makua, *Elolo*, *Ekoti* and *Metó* attended a two-week seminary, immersing themselves into the grammar of their own languages. The process of gathering data was guided by linguistic principles. This participatory approach proved useful. It was generally felt speakers discovered features of their

own speech they would not normally know. As one speaker shared: “When I came, it seemed most doubtful there was anything for me to learn. Now I am stunned and pleased how rich and systematic my language is!”

On invitation of the Catholic University of Mozambique in Nampula, the Discovery workshop was held in the Faculty of Communication and Education, starting in 2006. Students of the B.A. training track for adult education participated. Languages represented were several variants of *Makua*, *Elomwe*, *Nyanja*, *Ronga*, and *Ciyao*.

The majority of students were literacy workers with considerable experience, and their reaction was most positive. They brought original questions and insights to the workshop, real-life issues like word boundaries, what to call a word, what grapheme to choose. The general feeling was that insights into the grammar structure of vernacular languages helped them to make informed decisions about spelling and consequently teach better.

Over the last years, both institutions have utilized the Discovery workshop design. Since it was felt that it could be of use to other educators as well, we extended and further refined the pedagogical components. The goal is to enable speakers of vernacular languages to adequately describe grammatical structures of their own language.

Adequacy, in this context, is significant according to the felt needs of participants. For example, if a team of translators learns about grammar, their main interest will centre around verbal tenses, correct inflection, and noun classes in order to make the right choices in the translation process. Literacy workers, on the other hand, will focus more on hands-on criteria to decide where to begin a new word and other questions related to applied orthography. In fact, a nice by-product of the workshop surfaced when the participants used their newly gained knowledge to understand the report on national orthographies (Afido et al. 1989, Ngunga & Siteo 2000); what used to be mysterious, suddenly made a lot of sense.

## The linguistic foundation

Since Bantu languages have been the object of linguistic research<sup>2</sup> for more than a century years, it is only logical to make use of some of the findings. The following list includes general features I understand are typical of Bantu<sup>3</sup> languages, and are meaningful in a basic course on Bantu grammar for speakers.

- Noun classes: Every noun belongs to a noun class. The noun class system consists of somewhere between 13 and 20 singular/plural classes, of which up to

<sup>2</sup> For example, Bleek 1862-1869, Meinhof 1910<sup>2</sup>

<sup>3</sup> see Möhlig 1982, Ngunga 2004 for more details

10 can be combined into singular/plural pairs. Also, infinitives and certain local expressions show nominal characteristics similar to non-derived nouns.

- Agreement by concordance: The noun governs adnominal constituents as well as the verb. This type of agreement goes both directions: The subject as well as the object triggers agreement on the verb, expressed by subject respectively object prefixes.
- Complex verb structure: Simple lexical verbs can be highly complex, due to the agglutinating structure of Bantu. Verbal affixes follow a certain order, so that their function can often be predicted from their position relative to the verb root.
- Two distinctive tones: Bantu languages often have two phonemic tones with highly complex rules like floating tone, tone copying, and/or downstep.
- SVO Word order: Constituents occur in relatively rigid SVO order, with temporal adjuncts preceding and local ones following the sentence nucleus.
- Adnominal derivation: Deverbal derivation is very productive, and noun class change leads to locative nouns.
- Weak adjective-verb distinction: The number of lexical adjectives is very limited. Verbs in attributive function and relational expressions (“associative”) are employed as descriptive terms.
- Extensive tense-aspect morphology: Time and aspect are expressed by a large number of verbal prefixes and auxiliaries. The combination of prefixes allows for varied distinctions much more specific than in European languages.
- Predictable verbal extensions: Causative, applicative, passive, and stative are highly productive verbal derivations, changing the basic verb’s meaning and valence. Together with positional and stative, verbal extensions can be combined and occur in a series of three to four suffixes.
- Demonstratives in a set of three: Demonstratives occur in a set of three, including proximal, medial, and distal demonstratives. In a few cases, a fourth set exists. Any demonstrative can be used pronominally, maintaining its agreement with a noun class. Often it will take over the function of a personal pronoun.
- Quinary numeral system: The counting system is normally quinary. In some instances, Arabic loans are integrated.

- Defective verbs as separate category: Copulas and a series of auxiliaries constitute a class of verbs separate from fully inflecting verbs.

These features form the core of basic concepts a student should have acquired after two weeks of discovery. Note that the audience includes non-academic participants, hence terminology plays a minor role. Let us now consider the concept of the course.

## The discovery package

The Portuguese name *Descubra sua língua*, “discover your language” was adopted from the “*Decouvre sa langue*” workshop developed by Ursula Wiesemann in the early 80s in Cameroon. Her workshop design course also inspired the work on the workshop programme I developed in Mozambique. Another source is the participatory approach developed by Kutsch-Lojenga (1996) for phonological research done in cooperation with language communities in Eastern Africa.

It is interesting that the features listed above are characteristic for Bantu languages, but once you go beyond general observations of the type “There are a number of noun classes with characteristic nominal prefixes”, it becomes difficult to determine the exact number of noun classes and the exact shape of the prefixes. Guthrie (1948) tried to establish what is today called typological features, and it is on these features that his zones and groups are based. For the purpose of this paper, I want to take a closer look at the concept of linguistic similarity, and my thesis is that, for language development purposes, similarity can be defined and used in a practical manner. In other words, where is the boundary between relevant questions and those of purely academic interest? As a first and necessary incomplete answer to this question, I will look at experiences in teaching Bantu grammar to speakers of Bantu languages.

The components included in this “Discovery package” are: lectures on Bantu grammar, an exercise book, an electronic shell book, and several sample grammar sketches. I will now briefly describe these four components.

## Lectures on Bantu grammar

Many Mozambicans consider their own language nothing more than gibberish, because of the colonial attitude of European languages as the only “real language” constituted their every-day experience in school. Portuguese was a necessary condition for citizenship and local languages were actively banished in the classroom. So for Bantu grammar to be taught as subject, it needs some explanation. And I find the optimal approach taking Portuguese school grammar as starting point and guid-

ing the students through a process of guided comparison between their own languages' structure and that of Portuguese.

Exercises follow along with lectures, and there is ample space for the speakers to contribute their own knowledge: *O dono da língua é que conhece*. "The owner of the language knows best." as a saying in Mozambique goes. Against the background of colonial suppression, this means a big step towards linguistic pride.

The workshop schedule has morning lectures and afternoon sessions for data entry. The lecture topics are:

day	lecture	content
1.	Introduction	Bantu languages in Mozambique, national alphabets, agreement and prefixes
2.	Nouns	noun structure, noun classes
3.	Verbs I	verb formula, subject, tense, object marking
4.	Verbs II	simple extension, complex extension
5.	Inflecting words I	Parts of speech, adjective and qualifier
6.	Inflecting words II	demonstrative, numeral
7.	Inflecting words III	possessive, associative particle
8.	Non-inflecting words	conjunction, adverb
9.	A sample text	Parts of speech analyzed
10.	Orthography and national languages	Rules for writing, review
	Closing ceremony	

Tabela 1

Lectures are written out and structured in a fashion that allows for changes in sequence, so that content and illustrations can be arranged as needed for the audience as well as the teaching assistant. Flexible order and ready-made definitions together with lesson plans allow for easy knowledge transfer to future teachers.

The reactions to the outline can be broadly grouped into two kinds. Several colleagues commented that the content and the way it is arranged does not satisfy scientific needs, others said there was no way uneducated (i.e. linguistically untrained) people would ever be able to work through the materials. Now, the fact that the concept triggers extreme reactions in both directions seems to indicate that we're on the right track: Descriptive linguistics by its very nature also builds bridges between the 'field' and the university campus. For the course to benefit the linguistic communities, the Linguistics employed needs to be tied to the ground, i.e. grounded in the speakers' reality.

## Exercise book

Each lecture is accompanied with written exercises designed for group work during lessons. The definition which was given during the lecture is repeated. Then words or sentences are given in the meta language, in the Mozambican case it is the official language, Portuguese. For convenience, the examples in this paper are translated into English.

The possessive  
= inflecting word which indicates the owner of an object

1) Translate the phrases in the two charts below:

My goat	<i>epuri <u>aka</u></i>	
Your goat	<i>epuri <u>awo</u></i>	
His / her goat	<i>epuri <u>awe</u></i>	
Our goat	<i>epuri <u>ahu</u></i>	
Your (pl.) goat	<i>epuri <u>anyu</u></i>	
Their goat	<i>epuri <u>aya</u></i>	

**Singular: one goat**

My goats	<i>ipuri <u>saka</u></i>	
Your goats	<i>ipuri <u>sawo</u></i>	
His / her goats	<i>ipuri <u>sawe</u></i>	
Our goats	<i>ipuri <u>sahu</u></i>	
Your (pl.) goats	<i>ipuri <u>sanyu</u></i>	
Their goats	<i>ipuri <u>saya</u></i>	

**Plural: several goats**

2) Underline the possessive in all examples

**Imagem 1:** Excerpt from exercise book: Possessive

Let me comment on the above excerpt. The font chosen is 14, because it is easier to read than the customary 12, and it facilitates handwriting in the empty spaces. Also, the original exercise book in Portuguese is printed in landscape format. Both factors help inexperienced readers and writers in recognition and production. Several illustrations were included. As trivial as it seems, visualization helps to clarify concepts that would otherwise consume enormous time, for example, the fact that the first group of possessives refers to one object, and the second one to several objects. One should not underestimate the value of aesthetic elements. The same

icons used in the exercise book were also magnified and put on the wall to illustrate the various parts of speech during the lecture weeks.

## Digital shell book

The digital shell book is a template for production of grammar sketches. It includes a ready-made title page and sample preface and introduction, together with sections on all the topics covered during the workshop:

1. Preface
2. Introduction – The alphabet, the system of grammatical agreement
3. The noun – class 1 and 2 man/men, class 3 and 4 banana tree(s), class 5 and 6 hand(s), class 7 and 8 snake(s), locative classes
4. The verb – structure of the verb, subject prefix, temporal prefix, object prefix, root, verbal extensions
5. Inflecting words – adjective, demonstrative, possessive, associative particle, numeral
6. Non-inflecting words – adverb, conjunction
7. A sample text and its grammatical description
8. Overview of concordance
9. References

The preface offers an opportunity to the team of speakers to explain the origin of the grammar sketch, whereas the introduction contains details regarding the language described. For example, distribution, number of speakers, dialect variation, the alphabet chart (see excerpt below), and an explanation of the orthographic system<sup>4</sup> chosen.

a	otthara	<i>to follow</i>	aa	okilaathi	<i>to sit down (okilathi)</i>
e	othela	<i>to marry</i>	ee	okhuneela	<i>to cover (okhunela)</i>
i	otthika	<i>to return</i>	ii	niitho	<i>eye (niitho)</i>
o	okoha	<i>to ask</i>	oo	wootha	<i>to lie (wotha)</i>
u	mutthu	<i>person</i>	uu	owuruureya	<i>round (owuriureya)</i>

**Tabela 2:** Excerpt from electronic shell book: Vowel chart central Makua

The sections about parts of speech are organized in such a fashion that the speakers first fill in all the data and then modify the explanatory text according to their lan-

<sup>4</sup> In this case, the speakers asked to include both, the official orthography and the traditional (in brackets)

guage. For example, there are fewer noun classes in the shell book than the usual 18 often encountered in Bantu languages, because it was developed with speakers of Emakhuwana and related languages in mind. The speech forms of P.30 have no classes 7 or 8, so if a language from another cluster is being described, then the speakers are encouraged to insert another pair of noun classes. A word on scientific versus pragmatic principles is in order here. For didactic reasons, I chose labels like “people” for classes 1 and 2, and “trees and plants” for classes 3 and 4 (see 3.2). For anybody familiar with a structure of a Bantu language, it is obvious that this is an oversimplification. Neither do these labels cover the whole semantic range of classes, nor do the classes cover all that exists in Bantu. The dilemma is this: If one were to be precise, the amount of detail and complexity would render the shell book (and the lecture) impractical. If, on the other hand, the speakers were left with the idea that the resulting booklet was a serious grammatical description, then the concept of participatory learning would backfire and hinder further discoveries. I have followed the principle of teachability: Anything that is important to teach should be taught, and anything that can be refined can be refined later when it is needed. This is where the difference between the discovery concept and descriptive linguistics shows most clearly. The interested reader of a resulting grammar sketch finds charts with the respective comparative data from Proto-Bantu in the last section before the biographical references.

The sample text included is a free translation of “The north wind and the sun”, the little story used as an illustration in the collection of the world’s languages of the International Phonetic Association. Several weeks before a workshop, the speakers receive the Portuguese version and produce a rendering in their own language. The resulting text is then handed in to the workshop coordinator, who in turn may take examples from several vernaculars represented. The lecture # 9 refers to this text, and aims at giving the students some practice in basic linguistic analysis. In reality, the two-week time-frame has rarely allowed for extensive work with a text. Often the speakers leave with a first draft in hand to complete the text analysis later.

### Sample grammar sketches

Since the workshop is aimed primarily at language workers like literacy specialists, translators, journalists, a good motivational effect can be created by presenting existing grammar sketches. At the time of writing the following grammar notes (see 4.1 output in materials for the community) were produced:

- First editions of *Emakhuwana*, *Ekoti*, *Etakwane* and *Imarenje* are published in the mini-series *Monografias Linguísticas Moçambicanas* (MOLIMO). All these speech forms belong to the Makua-Lomwe cluster referred to as P.30 by Guthrie (1948), with *Emakhuwana* or central Makua as the officially recognized reference language. *Ekoti* is a transition language between the former cluster and

*Swahili* (G.40), and it also has official status. The two officially recognized languages are spoken in Nampula province, and the smaller varieties in Zambezia.

- Drafts of other members of the Makua-Lomwe cluster were produced, namely *Emwinika* and *Elolo*, both spoken in Zambezia province, and *Erati*, spoken in Nampula province. The first draft of *Echuwabo* will be reprinted in the MOLIMO series.
- Drafts of *Shimakonde* and *Ciyao* were elaborated. Both official languages together form the Makonde-Yao cluster (P.20) and are spoken in the northern provinces of Cabo Delgado and Niassa.
- An edition of *Chingoni* notes will be printed this year. This minority language does not have official language status. It belongs to the Manda-Ngoni cluster (N.10) and is spoken in Cabo Delgado.
- Preliminary drafts of *Imetto* and *Kimwani* are produced. The former is considered a variety of *Emakhuwana*, hence does not have official status; the latter is a member of the Swahili cluster of languages (G.40) and is recognized as official. Both are spoken in Cabo Delgado.

The editorial policy foresees the continuation of the mini-series MOLIMO in two formats: In addition to hard copies, the grammar sketches will be available on the net for data retrieval as well as for interactive editing by the speakers.

### Lectures in an IDEAL format

All lectures follow the same outline, captured in the acronym IDEAL:

- Introduce (Introdução) – explains why the new concept is relevant, where its place in the overall scheme of things is and how it relates to Bantu.
- Define (Definição) – provides a practical definition of the concept with examples from the national language and a vernacular one, highlights similarities between the two and contrasts the thematic concept with other concepts.
- Explore (Exploração) – offers opportunity for the class to contribute analogous examples from own languages.
- Apply (Aplicação) – gives each student group to probe into their own language, aided by the exercise book.
- Lesson learned (Lição apreendida)– creates space for all participants to share from what they learned.

These five steps together form the grid for a lecture. During preparation, the teacher or teaching assistant (TA) follows the outline of the lesson. Wherever needed, details can be modified according to personal preferences, but the didactic principles will be maintained. This simplifies the training process, and relieves the TA from a lot of pressure. Also, once the structure of a lecture becomes transparent,

the students relax and know what to expect in terms of passive and active participation. In the remainder of this section (3.1-3.5), a concrete example follows, excerpted from the lecture on nouns.

**Introduce**

Bantu languages, like any spoken language worldwide, have their own categories for words, the so-called parts of speech. The part of speech that is today’s topic is the noun. Nouns, respectively substantives, cover most of initial dictionary work. They are crucial to understand the grammar of any Bantu language, for example: Woman, man, fish, coconut tree. They determine the structure of a sentence and are easy to describe because they don’t change as much as verbs do. They constitute a specialty of Bantu grammar, the so-called noun classes.

**Define**

A noun is a word which typically:

- a) consists of a class prefix and a stem,
- b) refers to countable elements,
- c) belongs to a certain semantic group of objects, and
- d) takes over subject or object function in a clause.

Let us now look at these defining features in detail. Examples are from Emakhuwana, (P.31), the Makua variety spoken in Nampula province.

<b>Singular:</b>	<b>muthiyana</b>	“woman”	<b>mukhole</b>	“coconut trees”	<b>ehopa</b>	“fish”
<b>Plural:</b>	<b>athiyana</b>	“women”	<b>mikhole</b>	“coconut trees”	<b>ihopa</b>	“fish (pl.)”

- a) All the above words consist of a class prefix and a stem, as you can see when you compare their singular and plural forms: The singular forms in the first line start with *mu-* respectively *e-*, whereas the plural forms in the second line start with *a-*, *mi-* or *i-*.
- b) They refer to countable entities, i.e. occur in singular and plural forms, with the exception of abstract nouns (*opatthani* “friendship”) and mass nouns (*nakhuwo* “corn”).
- c) They belong to a certain semantic group of objects, like for example human beings, animals and plants.
- d) They take over subject or object function in a clause:

*Muthiyana ole oothuma ehopa.* “That woman bought fish.”  
 woman that bought fish

The properties of class prefix and semantic characteristics together constitute the so-called noun class. A noun class is a group of nouns identified by specific nom-

inal prefixes. Any noun belongs to a certain noun class. Several noun classes can be arranged in pairs of singular/plural nouns, like we saw before is the case with “woman, coconut tree, fish”. In linguistic circles, these noun classes are referred to by numbers. During lectures, we will use the numbering system in a simplified manner, but will select nouns as typical representatives of their classes, hence the examples can be reordered the following way:

**muthiyana/ athiyana** “woman/ women” = people, included in classes 1 & 2  
**mukhole/ mikhole** “coconut tree/s” = trees and plants, included in classes 3 & 4  
**ehopa/ ihopa** “fish/ fish(pl.)” = animals, included in classes 9 & 10

Accordingly, **mulopwana** “man” and **alopwana** “men” would also belong to the classes of human beings, “people”, with the numbers 1 in the singular and 2 in the plural.

The noun class can change to indicate differences in meaning, e.g.

**mukhole** “coconut tree” (cl.3)    **ekhole** “coconut with hard flesh” (cl.9)

For clarity’s sake, the example above in *Emakhuwana* needs to state that *ekhole* refers to a coconut with hard flesh, because the language distinguishes between several states of coconut by means of lexical units: *ekoma* “small unripe coconut”, *nikoloma* “coconut with milk”, *nshala* “coconut with soft flesh and sweet milk”, *ekopora* “ripe coconut, beginning to germinate”.

This is how the contents so far could be represented on the blackboard (imagem 2).

More data should be available, in case dialect issues arise. Often lexical items differ between dialects, even if belonging to the so-called core vocabulary. In Makua, several dialects like for example *Emarevone* have *nkole* for “coconut tree”. The teacher will need to be flexible to integrate variations quickly. Also, having alternative examples available will save a lot of time for the lecturer, which is otherwise spent on irrelevant discussion.

## Explore

Call participant upfront; let him/her write vernacular language examples, following the same list as above. Note that the stages in this participatory event need to be built up systematically: i) you ask the student to translate all example words on the board by writing the vernacular words next to them, ii) identify noun prefixes by underlining them, and finally iii) transfer the results to a chart on the board which is provided beforehand.

**Nouns:** Woman, man, fish, coconut tree

Nouns in Emakhuwana:

Muthiyana "woman"      muhole "coconut tree"  
ghopa "fish"

Athiyana "women"      mihole "coconut trees"  
ihopa "fish (pl.)"

Nouns as subject and object:

Muthiyana ole oothuma ehopa. "That woman bought fish."  
 woman that bought fish

Noun classes:

muthiyana/ athiyana "woman/ women" = "people", classes 1 & 2  
(m)uhole/ mihole "coconut tree/s" = "trees and plants", classes 3 & 4  
ghopa/ ihopa "fish/ fish(pl.)" = "animals", classes 9 & 10

Noun classes can change:

mukhole "coconut tree" (cl.3)    gkhole "coconut with hard flesh" (cl.9)

**Imagem 2**

Do the same with another participant.

	Emakhuwana	Echuwabo	Ekoti
"man"	<u>m</u> ulopwana	<u>m</u> ulobwana	<u>n</u> lume
"men"	<u>a</u> lopwana	<u>a</u> lobwana	<u>n</u> lume
	Emakhuwana	Echuwabo	Ekoti
class 1	mu-	mu-	n-
class 2	a-	a-	a-

**Imagem 3**

There is no need to discuss orthography issues or choice of words at this point. These types of questions will be dealt with during step 5 Lesson Learned, and during the lecture on orthographies.

### **Apply**

The speakers now work in groups. It is recommended to have at least 3, the optimal number is four. The ideal language team is composed of 2 fluent speakers, plus one person able to orderly write down examples, and an elderly person who is honored in the language community. He will help to achieve acceptance of language materials by other speakers. The exercise book (see section 2.2) contains support material for all lectures. For any given theme, a list of sample sentences and words in the national official language (OL), in this case Portuguese, is followed by blanks to be filled in by the speakers of vernacular languages. The group now discusses the vernacular equivalent to the OL and fills out the blanks. During discussion, issues concerning word boundaries and choice of symbols are likely to surface. This is a good opportunity to test decisions that were made during the first session (working orthography), and also serves as an appetizer. Once the examples are translated, the group applies the segmentation or similar techniques learned during the lecture and then transfer the morphemes to a chart.

The group process increases acceptance and heightens efficiency. It also provides broader data than one individual could contribute and ensures transparent orthographic decisions.

The writing mode provides exercise in spelling. Under normal circumstances, speakers will need to practice their own writing system. Writing data on the spot ensures documentation, without which a workshop's results are lost in the process, because documentation was saved until the last minute. Manual writing is a natural and crucial way to prepare for keyboarding. Even those participants used to working with computers need to focus on data collection first and then work separately on typing. Having written notes in hand is a visible sign of progress and provides material for the next step. The use of charts greatly enhances understanding. It forces the group to decide on results and to immediately present them visually.

Variation in data needs to be noted and documented, because at the intended level of discovery, it is important that speakers learn both the systematic character of their own languages as well as the idiosyncratic ways some words have.

### **Lesson learned**

Each group sends a representative who fills in the results in a prepared chart on a flipchart. Charts are color coded for language, represented by different fonts in this paper. It helps data entry if the charts have lines.

Language	Emakhuwana	Echuwabo	Ekoti	Imetto
man	mu-	mu-	n-	n-
men	a-	a-	a-	a-

Tabela 3

Note that *Emakhuwana* and *Echuwabo* show the same set of prefixes for class 1 and 2, whereas Imetto, another variant of Makua, is similar to *Ekoti* in this regard, but not to the central dialect. This is a typical example of variety that the chart will show. It cannot be overemphasized that the students were fully able to deal with differences. In fact the step “Lesson learned” proved as very useful as a testing tool for comprehension of the content of the lecture. More often than not, the student group would spontaneously discuss systematic relationships between neighboring languages. Several times they applied grammatical knowledge they had just acquired to correct their colleagues’ results. A case in point was the attempt at writing a demonstrative together with its head noun, which elicited critical comments by other participants. Without any assistance by the teacher, the group applied concepts like demonstrative, noun, prefix and noun class. As a result, the false conjunctive spelling was replaced by a disjunctive one.

## Results

What results can you expect from a discovery workshop? There is output in materials for the linguistic community, output in people, and output in linguistic data.

### Output in materials for the community

In two weeks, the participants representing their own languages produce a 40-A5-page booklet containing paradigms of all basic parts of speech together with illustrating examples, an alphabet chart, and a short text. It takes one PC and two typists and printing facilities on the site of the workshop. After the first draft is ready, the team can take the hard copies to the language area to test and refine the material. For final production, a well-defined revision cycle is crucial.

The 1<sup>st</sup> draft is the immediate result of the workshop. It includes language data in all sections, individual phrases as well as the “Sun and North Wind” story. The introductory sections need to be written, and data needs checking. Community testing allows for inclusion of more speakers and it also enhances acceptance of the grammar sketch.

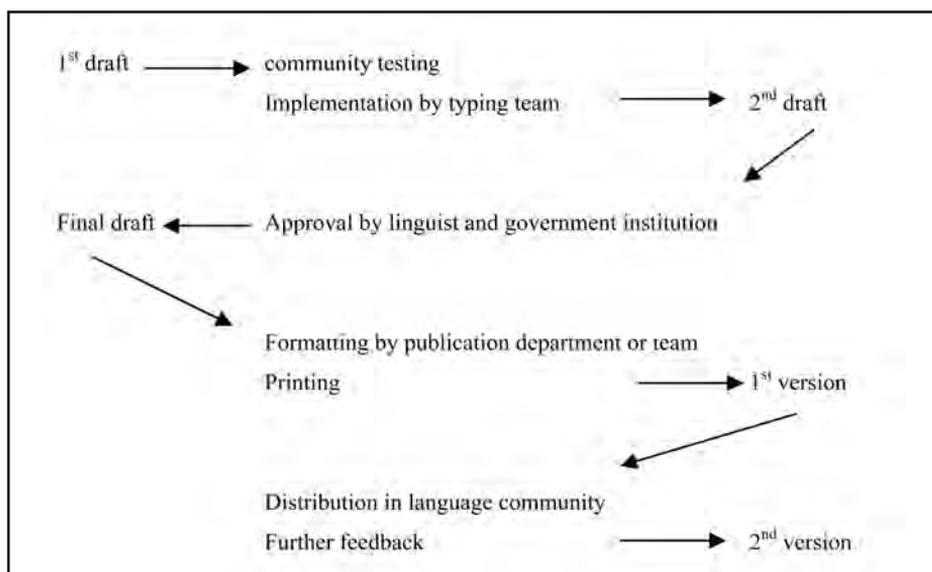
The 2<sup>nd</sup> draft includes all the corrections and additions suggested by the language community. The orthography needs checking by a linguist or anybody familiar with phonological principles able to observe consistency in regard to graphemes

and word division. It is desirable to have it checked by some national institution, for example a provincial or district education department. This official approval helps to coordinate between varying orthographic systems and also increases credibility.

The final draft then goes through a final check by the linguist familiar with the language. Formatting is done by the authors' team or – if available – the publication department.

For printing, the language community will need to decide the number of copies and the venues for distribution.

The 1<sup>st</sup> version is the actual product for publication. This edition will receive a number for registration under the national publication institute. If the team plans for later editions, it needs to set up a system for further feedback.



**Imagem 4**

So far we have produced the sketches as 40-page booklets in A-5 format. One needs to weigh up between reader-friendly format and the effort it takes to produce. In a mostly oral society, a booklet goes through many hands, hence A-5 is more user-friendly and robust than any other format. On the other hand, revision and printing is much easier when A-4 is used. But the making of books has no end, so editing brochures and printing them is only part of the discovery package.

## Output in people

Perhaps more important than the written results, are the results in terms of training. For every language represented, a group of up to four speakers arrives at a basic understanding of the grammar rules of their own language and goes through the whole process from analysis to production of a grammar sketch booklet.

The community is encouraged to consider the VL as a proper language and gathers experience - often for the first time - in revision of VL materials. So on the emotional level, participants gain more linguistic self-confidence and often take active part in activities that lend value to mother tongue development.

One or two people are trained on the job as teachers and are enabled to teach future discovery grammar courses themselves. Another technical skill is the capacity to transfer handwritten notes to the computer.

All participants gain capacity to produce language data and to analyze it following directions. Even though not made explicit, abstract techniques like comparison, segmentation, contrasting, and summarizing are introduced and practiced.

As for the social dimension, participants go through an intensive time of interaction with speakers of other languages. By means of rational comparison, they arrive at an appreciation of differences and similarities which greatly enhances the concept of national culture. In addition to this inter-ethnic experience, the small work group creates a chance to practice discussion and exchange ideas in a balanced fashion. Since the groups follow instructions from an external source, elders learn to listen to younger people. These in turn learn to respect the opinion of older people, and nobody feels they have lost face.

## Output in linguistic data

With about 500 Bantu languages and approximately half of them undocumented, linguistic research has barely covered ground for comparative studies. Small as they are, the grammar sketches offer a beginning in grammar description. Two speech forms in Mozambique - *Chingoni* and *Imarenje* - received a grammar sketch, the first written material ever published. More often than not, a workshop produces unpredictable data. All this leads towards a more complete picture, more than Guthrie's times allowed.

A practical application is the actual use of grammar sketches as a measuring instrument for similarity. What defines relevance here is the simple question whether the linguistic output contributes to education. It is obvious that for production of materials, linguistics has a contribution to make.

The other contribution will be in providing specific criteria for decision-making in the language engineering domain. Katupha (1988: 28) was the first to suggest

applying Guthrie's (1984: 11ff) reference system as linguistic criteria for the grouping of Mozambican VL into 8 major groups:

Swahili Group (G.40)	Manda Group (N.10)
Nyanja Group (N.20)	Yao Group (P.20)
Makua Group (P.30)	Shona Group (S.10)
Tsonga-Ronga Group (S.50)	Chopi Group (S.60)

Since Katupha's paper, the validity of sound linguistic criteria for language policy has not changed. Some more research was done since then, and I added the Manda group, of which *Chingoni* is the sole representative in Mozambique.

As for an appropriate language policy, the Discovery approach offers a method to gather data from several varieties without making statements concerning their status as language or dialect; the workshop simply provides basic data. It also allows speakers of minority or not officially recognized languages to document their speech before a decision is made as to the language status, including the potential inclusion in primary education.

In the remainder of this section, some of the discoveries we were able to make during the series of workshop will be presented. I will use some of the Bantu features (see above 1.2) together with the two dimensions of difference and mismatch: When one compares European and Bantu languages, there will be differences, but there are also mismatches in the way that languages solve the task of providing means for communication, in the sense that one language does things in a manner that differs unexpectedly from the other one. This has often led to the perception that Mozambican languages are unsystematic, the Portuguese use of the word *dialecto* in its pejorative sense of "gibberish" is symptomatic for this attitude. And since many Portuguese citizens tend to think in this vein, it seems valuable to illustrate some of the differences, showing the systematic character of Bantu languages and the beauty in variation.

Noun classes: Other than the two grammatical gender in Romance languages, Mozambican languages offer up to five grammatical classes with their respective plural forms, plus several other content-related classes (abstract, augmentative, diminutive, locative). Here is a synopsis of some noun class paradigms:

class	<i>Shimakonde</i>	<i>Emwinka</i>	Echuwa	Imeeto	Eko	Emakhuwana	<i>Etakwane</i>	<i>Imarenye</i>
1	mu, n	mu	mu	n	n, mu	mu	mu	mu
2	a, va	a	a	a	a	a, asi	a	a
3	mu, u	mu	mu	n, mu	mu	mu	mu	mu
4	mi	mi	mi	mi	mi	mi	mi	mi
5	shi	/	/	/	/	/	/	i
6	vi	/	/	/	/	/	/	vi
7	li	ni	ni	ni	li	ni	ni	li
8	ma	ma	ma	ma	ma	ma	ma	ma
9	i	e	e	i	e	e	e	N
10	di	i	vi	i	vi	i	dhi, N	N
15	ku	o	o	o	o	o	zero	zero
16	pa	va	va	pa	va	va	va	va
17	ku	o	o	wa	o	o	o	u
18	mo	mo	mu	mu	n	mo	mu	mu

Tabela 4

**Agreement by concordance:** In both, Romance as well as Bantu, the noun governs adnominal constituents as well as the verb. See Portuguese and *Emakhuwana* as illustration:

Mu-thiyana o-le o-o-thuma e-hopa. Aquel-a mulher compr-ou peixe.  
*cl.1-woman cl.1-that cl.1-past1-buy cl.9-fish that-fem woman buy-3sg.past1 fish*  
 ‘That woman bought fish.’

Athiyana ale aathuma ehopa. Aquel-a-s mulher-es compr-aram peixe.  
*cl.2-woman cl.2-that cl.2-past1-buy cl.9-fish that-fem-pl woman-pl buy-3sg.past1 fish*  
 ‘Those women bought fish.’

But whereas Portuguese uses different suffixes for gender and number, Bantu languages reserve prefixes assigning both, semantic class and number at the same time.

**Complex verb structure:** Simple lexical verbs can be highly complex, due to the agglutinating structure of Bantu. Verbal affixes follow a certain order, so that their function can often be predicted from their position relative to the verb root. See the increase of verbal suffixes in the following *Echuwabo* verbal forms:

- |               |                                      |
|---------------|--------------------------------------|
| a) ogula      | “comprar / buy“                      |
| b) oguliha    | “vender / sell (make buy)“           |
| c) ogulihiwa  | “ser vendido / be sold“              |
| d) ogulihedha | “vender a alguém / sell to somebody“ |
| e) oguliwa”   | “ser comprado / be bought“           |

**4.3.4 Two distinctive tones:** Bantu languages often have two phonemic tones with highly complex rules like floating tone, tone copying and/ or downstep. For grammatical tone, see the *Kimwani* example:

- |            |                     |
|------------|---------------------|
| a) asukure | “he/ she ate”       |
| b) asukúre | “he/ she has eaten” |

The distinction between simple past and perfect is only signalled by tone: The former verbal form carries exclusively low tones, whereas the latter one has a high tone on the penultimate syllable. Note that tone refers to the pitch of a speech sound only, independent of its accent, which is normally the combination of stress and tone together with increased length in European languages. Accordingly, Portuguese speakers associate high tone with stress.

**Adnominal derivation and prepositions:** In Bantu, derivation is very productive. For example, nouns are often derived into local nouns to express local relations. In European languages, there is less noun-to-noun derivation, but prepositions are more widely used.

See the example in Imeetto:

- |    |                               |                                    |
|----|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| a) | mw-atta                       | <i>field</i>                       |
|    | cl.3-field                    |                                    |
| b) | Ki-n-rwaa <b>o-matta-ni</b> . | <i>I am going to the field.</i>    |
|    | I-Pres-go cl.17-field-loc     |                                    |
| c) | mw-ako                        | <i>mountain</i>                    |
|    | cl.3-mountain                 |                                    |
| d) | Kinrwaa <b>omwakoni</b> .     | <i>I am going to the mountain.</i> |
|    | I-Pres-go cl.17-mountain-loc  |                                    |

The nouns *mwatta* ‘field’ and *mwako* ‘mountain’ are derived into locative nouns

by the prefix for class 17 and the locative suffix *-ni*, allowing their employment as local complements of motion a motion verb.

Weak adjective-verb distinction: The communicative function of description is often taken over by a separate category adjective in European languages, whereas Bantu prefers to use verbs for the same purpose. See how it is done in *Emwinika*:

<b>oreera</b>	<i>to be good, to be beautiful</i>
<b>opadjera</b>	<i>to begin, be the first</i>
<b>waatta</b>	<i>to be full, to abound</i>
<b>wuuma</b>	<i>to dry</i>

Extensive tense-aspect morphology: Bantu verbal structure allows for the expression of highly complex temporal-aspectual relation by means of morphology only. European languages tend to utilize more adverbs and auxiliaries to do the same. Here is an example from *Ekoti*:

a)	olima	cultivate
b)	kinlima	I cultivate, I am cultivating
c)	kalima	I have just cultivated
d)	kaalimiye	I had cultivated
e)	kilime	for me to cultivate
f)	kalime	so that I would cultivate
g)	kilima	I, cultivating
h)	kilimiye	I, having cultivated
i)	kilimaka	cultivating
j)	lima	cultivate!
k)	khulima	and then cultivated

Tabela 5

Predictable verbal extensions: In most Bantu languages, a predictable set of meanings can be expressed by suffixes, called verbal extensions. See the examples in *Imarenje*, with the extension in bold:

Causative:	osuuza	“learn / apreender“	osuu <b>ziha</b>	“teach (make learn) / ensinar”
Reversive:	ofuga	“close / fechar“	ofug <b>ula</b>	“open / abrir”
Stative:	woona	“see / ver”	woone <b>ya</b>	“be visible / ser visível”
Intensive:	ogwadda	“cut / cortar“	ogwadd <b>anya</b>	“cut in pieces / cortar em pedaços”

In European languages like English and Portuguese, the semantic relationships between the basic verb form and its derivation are hardly recognizable.

## Conclusion

### Purpose

In summary, the Discovery Package is a set of tools designed to support language communities in their effort to develop the language of their heart by providing the necessary skills and means for linguistic research at grassroots level. The audience can be composed of any group people interested in furthering VL, whether it is literacy trainers, national translators, teachers or media workers. The resulting grammar sketch is often the first written documentation of underresearched languages or dialects. The byproduct of a Discovery workshop consists in the gathering of valuable comparative language data crucial for establishing criteria for decisions regarding language policy as well as language engineering.

### Content

The content focuses on basic grammar, i.e. initial morphology and parts of speech.

In order to include less literate people, exercises are available in a ready-made workbook, written with group work in mind. All four components, lectures, exercise book, sample grammar sketches and digital shell book, are available in Portuguese. For English, only the shell book and part of the lectures exist, but can be translated if so desired.

Skills are acquired in several areas. Psychologically, linguistic self-confidence increases, and students learn to expressly value their mother tongue. In the cognitive domain, participants acquire capacity to produce language data, and increase capacity to analyze abstract concepts. As for technical skills, participants are enabled to transfer handwritten notes to computer, and those with little practice in writing practice organized handwriting and working with charts.

### Methodology

The teaching method is a mix of participatory and lecture, allowing structured teachers' training and controlled knowledge transfer.

The examples are a key element to the participatory method; newly elicited during lecture and translated from the OL, e.g. Portuguese into a given Bantu language, they enhance the students' understanding by drawing from their own experience.

Comparison between several VLs supports the learning process: By treating Bantu language data as proper linguistic data; the speakers acquire a new behavior, hence do exactly what adult learning theory defines as successful learning – they change!

## Application and future steps

The application extends into two areas: First, contribution to education, e.g. the development of literacy manuals, dictionary work, and bilingual education teacher training. Second, facilitation for linguistic research: Any linguist is welcome to adopt the Discovery Package and modify it into a research tool, whether for the university professor or student. Ideally, African students of linguistics would spend a couple of weeks in their home village and continue their studies with a pocket version of their own grammar in hand!

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