

The documentation and description of labial-velar and implosive consonants in the Ubangi River basin: A field report

Lorenzo Maselli^{1,2,3}

¹Universiteit Gent, ²Université de Mons, ³Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

This contribution is intended as a field report on recent phonetic and phonological documentation conducted by the presenter at Université de Bangui (Central African Republic) between February and March 2025. The aim of the mission was to collect new empirical evidence on the production of labial-velar and implosive consonants in the Bantu, Central Sudanic, and Ubangi languages spoken in the Ubangi River basin. The broader objective is to develop the first comprehensive acoustic and articulatory analysis of these articulations in Central Africa, integrating electroglottographic, aerodynamic, and acoustic data.

The mission yielded over 100 GB of speech material from 125 speakers representing 20-30 linguistic varieties; this constitutes the largest phonetic corpus yet assembled in Central Africa. Recordings include both local lects and the Central African lingua franca, Sango, making this simultaneously the most extensive corpus ever collected for any individual language in the region.

In this field report, I will discuss methodological aspects of data collection, including elicitation protocols, recording conditions, and the use of specialised equipment in the field, all information that may be of practical use to others planning similar missions. I will also cover aspects relative to ongoing data analysis, including measurement selection and Praat processing of the acoustic and articulatory traces. The report will close with reflections on the execution of instrumental phonetic fieldwork, particularly regarding the implementation of laboratory methods in under-documented linguistic contexts.