



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

## **A grammar of Mundabli : a Bantoid (Yemne-Kimbi) language of Cameroon**

Voll, R.M.; Voll R.M.

### **Citation**

Voll, R. M. (2017, October 26). *A grammar of Mundabli : a Bantoid (Yemne-Kimbi) language of Cameroon*. *LOT dissertation series*. LOT, Utrecht. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/56258>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/56258>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/56258> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation

**Author:** Voll, Rebecca

**Title:** A grammar of Mundabli : a Bantoid (Yemne-Kimbi) language of Cameroon

**Date:** 2017-10-26

A grammar of Mundabli  
A Bantoid (Yemne-Kimbi) language of  
Cameroon

Published by

LOT  
Trans 10  
3512 JK Utrecht  
The Netherlands

phone: + 31 30 253 5775  
e-mail: [lot@uu.nl](mailto:lot@uu.nl)  
<http://www.lotschool.nl>

ISBN: 978-94-6093-254-0  
NUR: 616

Copyright © 2017 Rebecca Voll. All rights reserved.

A grammar of Mundabli  
A Bantoid (Yemne-Kimbi) language of  
Cameroon

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van  
de graad van Doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,  
op gezag van Rector Magnificus prof.mr. C.J.J.M. Stolker,  
volgens besluit van het College voor Promoties  
te verdedigen op donderdag 26 oktober 2017  
klokke 13.45 uur

door

Rebecca Maria Voll

geboren te Bonn, Duitsland

in 1977

Promotor: Prof. dr. Maarten Mous

Co-promotor: Dr. Jeff Good (University at Buffalo, USA)

Promotiecomissie: Dr. Maud Devos (Royal Museum for Central Africa,  
Tervuren, Belgium)  
Prof. dr. Roland Kießling (Universität Hamburg)  
Prof. dr. Maarten Kossmann  
Dr. Mark Van de Velde (CNRS/INALCO, France)

This grammar is based on data collected during three field trips to Cameroon. These field trips were financed by the Leiden University Centre for Linguistics (LUCL) and by the Leiden University Fund (LUF).

---

## Contents

---

List of Tables . . . . .	xv
List of Figures . . . . .	xxi
List of abbreviations . . . . .	xxiii
List of glosses . . . . .	xxv
List of symbols . . . . .	xxvii
Lists of affixes, clitics and particles . . . . .	xxix
Acknowledgements . . . . .	xxxi
<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 The Mundabli language . . . . .	1
1.1.1 Geography and infrastructure . . . . .	1
1.1.2 The Mundabli people - Culture and economic activities	3
1.1.3 The name “Mundabli” . . . . .	4
1.1.4 Contact and cross- and intra-dialectal variation . . . . .	5
1.1.5 Classification . . . . .	7
1.2 Description and analysis of Mundabli . . . . .	9
1.2.1 Previous research on Mundabli . . . . .	9
1.2.2 Fieldwork setting . . . . .	10
1.2.3 Presentation of data . . . . .	11
1.2.4 Practical transcription . . . . .	11
<b>2 Phonology</b>	<b>15</b>
2.1 Tone . . . . .	15
2.1.1 Tonal inventory . . . . .	15
2.1.2 Phonetic realization of tones . . . . .	16
2.1.3 Noun and verb tone patterns . . . . .	18
2.2 Consonants . . . . .	18

2.2.1	Consonant phonemes and allophonic variation . . . . .	19
2.2.1.1	Plosives . . . . .	20
2.2.1.2	Affricates . . . . .	21
2.2.1.3	Fricatives . . . . .	22
2.2.1.4	Sonorants . . . . .	22
2.2.2	Minimal pairs . . . . .	24
2.2.3	Consonant-glide (CG) sequences . . . . .	26
2.2.3.1	Cw sequences . . . . .	26
2.2.3.2	Cy sequences . . . . .	28
2.2.4	Nasal-consonant (NC) sequences . . . . .	29
2.2.5	Other issues relating to consonants . . . . .	31
2.2.5.1	The phonetic effect of the high vowels <b>i</b> , <b>u</b> , <b>ɨ</b> and <b>ʉ</b> on preceding consonants . . . . .	31
2.2.5.2	Prepausal devoicing of coda consonants . . . . .	32
2.2.5.3	Preglottalized nasals . . . . .	32
2.3	Vowels . . . . .	33
2.3.1	Vowel phonemes and allophonic variation . . . . .	34
2.3.1.1	Plain vowels . . . . .	34
2.3.1.2	Pharyngealized vowels . . . . .	37
2.3.2	Minimal pairs . . . . .	38
2.3.3	Issues in vowel interpretation . . . . .	39
2.3.3.1	Individual speaker variation in the phonetic prox- imity between high and mid vowels . . . . .	39
2.3.3.2	Pharyngealized vowels: characteristics, distri- bution and origin . . . . .	41
2.4	Phonotactics . . . . .	43
2.4.1	Syllable structure . . . . .	43
2.4.2	Distributional restrictions on consonants . . . . .	44
2.4.2.1	Distributional restrictions on the velar nasal <b>ŋ</b> . . . . .	44
2.4.2.2	Distributional restrictions on the palatal nasal <b>ɲ</b> . . . . .	44
2.4.3	Restrictions on VC sequences . . . . .	44
2.4.4	Restrictions on CV sequences . . . . .	46
2.4.4.1	Neutralization of alveolar and alveo-palatal sibi- lants and affricates before the vowels <b>i</b> and <b>u</b> . . . . .	46
2.4.5	Phonotactics of ideophones . . . . .	46
2.4.6	Loanword adaptation . . . . .	48
2.4.6.1	Loans from English and Cameroon Pidgin . . . . .	48
2.4.6.2	Loans from languages other than English or Cameroon Pidgin . . . . .	49
<b>3</b>	<b>Morphophonology and phrasal phonology</b> . . . . .	<b>51</b>
3.1	Morpheme structure constraints . . . . .	51
3.1.1	Structure of lexical roots . . . . .	52
3.1.1.1	Root-initial position . . . . .	52
3.1.1.2	Root-final coda position . . . . .	54



3.1.1.3	Root-vowels . . . . .	54
3.1.2	Structure of affixes . . . . .	54
3.1.2.1	CV(N)- prefixes . . . . .	54
3.1.2.2	Non-syllabic prefixes . . . . .	55
3.1.2.3	The infinitive marker <b>N-...-n/ N-</b> . . . . .	55
3.1.2.4	The first person singular preverbal clitic <b>N=</b> . . . . .	56
3.1.3	Structure of functional items . . . . .	57
3.1.3.1	Initial position in function words . . . . .	57
3.1.3.2	Lack of codas in function words . . . . .	58
3.1.3.3	Vowels in function words . . . . .	58
3.2	Morphotonology . . . . .	58
3.2.1	Noun tone patterns . . . . .	58
3.2.1.1	Tone of segmental noun class prefixes . . . . .	59
3.2.1.2	Tone in monosyllabic nouns of genders other than Gender 9/10 . . . . .	59
3.2.1.3	Tone of polysyllabic nouns of Genders other than Gender 9/10 . . . . .	61
3.2.1.4	Tone in Gender 9/10 nouns . . . . .	62
3.2.2	Verb tone patterns . . . . .	64
3.2.2.1	Verb tone classes . . . . .	64
3.2.2.2	Final vs. non-final verb tone patterns . . . . .	64
3.2.2.3	Perfective vs. imperfective verb tone patterns . . . . .	66
3.2.2.4	Tone sandhi in verb sequences . . . . .	66
3.3	Morphophonological alternations . . . . .	68
3.3.1	Place assimilation of nasals in NC sequences . . . . .	68
3.3.2	Initial consonant mutation in Gender 3/10 nouns . . . . .	71
3.3.3	Consonant mutation in the numerals 'two' and 'three' . . . . .	71
3.3.4	Pharyngealization in the numeral 'one' . . . . .	73
3.3.5	Ablaut in perfective vs. imperfective verbal stems . . . . .	73
3.4	Phrasal phonology . . . . .	76
3.4.1	Vowel elision across word boundaries . . . . .	76
3.4.2	Low tone spread . . . . .	77
<b>4</b>	<b>The noun class system</b> . . . . .	<b>79</b>
4.1	Previous treatments of Yemne-Kimbi noun class systems . . . . .	80
4.2	Overview of the noun class system . . . . .	81
4.3	Noun class pairings and unpaired classes . . . . .	83
4.3.1	Gender 1/2 . . . . .	85
4.3.2	Gender 3/7a . . . . .	86
4.3.3	Gender 7/8 . . . . .	87
4.3.4	Gender 9/10 . . . . .	89
4.3.5	Gender 19/18 . . . . .	90
4.3.6	The exceptional Gender 3/10 . . . . .	92
4.3.7	Single Gender 6 . . . . .	93
4.3.8	Single Gender 8a . . . . .	95

4.3.9	Unpaired noun classes (single genders) other than Class 6 and 8a . . . . .	96
4.4	Noun class assignment of borrowed nouns . . . . .	96
4.5	'Derivational' use of noun classes . . . . .	99
4.5.1	Associative plural with the Class 2 prefix ( <b>bà-</b> ) . . . . .	99
4.5.2	Diminutive derivation with the Class 19/18 prefixes <b>fi-</b> and <b>mùN-</b> . . . . .	100
4.5.3	Use of Gender 7/8 pronouns for derogatory reference . . . . .	102
4.6	Discussion of the current analysis of the noun class system . . . . .	102
<b>5</b>	<b>Agreement</b> . . . . .	<b>105</b>
5.1	Agreement in pronouns . . . . .	106
5.1.1	Agreement in 3rd person singular personal pronouns . . . . .	106
5.1.2	Agreement in possessive pronouns . . . . .	107
5.2	Agreement in demonstratives and determiners . . . . .	111
5.3	Agreement in adjectivals . . . . .	112
5.3.1	Agreement in adjectives . . . . .	114
5.3.2	The quantifier <b>-lō</b> 'all' . . . . .	116
5.3.3	The quantifier <b>-dzwē</b> 'a lot of' . . . . .	117
5.3.4	The quantifier <b>-ntʃíŋ</b> 'few' . . . . .	118
5.3.5	The nominal modifier <b>-dzú</b> 'other', 'certain' . . . . .	119
5.3.6	The nominal modifier <b>-dóm</b> 'some' . . . . .	120
5.3.7	The nominal modifier <b>dó</b> 'certain' . . . . .	121
5.3.8	The interrogative quantifier <b>-mìŋ</b> 'how much', 'how many' . . . . .	121
5.3.9	The selective interrogative <b>mwān</b> 'which' . . . . .	122
5.4	Agreement in numerals . . . . .	123
5.5	Overview of agreement patterns . . . . .	125
5.6	Gender conflict resolution . . . . .	126
<b>6</b>	<b>Pronouns</b> . . . . .	<b>129</b>
6.1	Personal pronouns . . . . .	129
6.1.1	Preverbal pronouns . . . . .	132
6.1.2	Non-preverbal pronouns . . . . .	134
6.1.3	Pronouns as objects of the comitative preposition <b>ā</b> . . . . .	135
6.1.4	Pronouns as objects of postpositions . . . . .	135
6.1.5	Benefactive pronouns . . . . .	138
6.1.6	Compound pronouns . . . . .	139
6.2	The dummy subject . . . . .	139
6.3	The impersonal subject pronoun <b>bā</b> . . . . .	140
6.4	Interrogative pronouns . . . . .	140
6.5	Indefinite pronouns . . . . .	141

<b>7</b>	<b>Noun modifiers and noun phrase structure</b>	<b>143</b>
7.1	Simple noun phrases . . . . .	143
7.1.1	Lexical Nouns . . . . .	144
7.1.2	Pronouns in appositive constructions . . . . .	145
7.1.3	Demonstratives . . . . .	145
7.1.4	Adjectives . . . . .	148
7.1.5	Numerals . . . . .	151
7.1.5.1	Basic numerals . . . . .	151
7.1.5.2	Complex numerals . . . . .	153
7.1.5.3	Etymology of numerals . . . . .	157
7.1.5.4	Borrowing of numerals . . . . .	158
7.1.5.5	Finger counting and signing numbers . . . . .	158
7.1.6	Adverbials as noun modifiers . . . . .	159
7.2	Complex noun phrases . . . . .	159
7.2.1	Associative constructions . . . . .	160
7.2.1.1	Associative constructions with nominal possessor	160
7.2.1.2	Associative phrase with pronominal possessor	161
7.2.1.3	Special cases of possessive marking . . . . .	162
7.2.2	Conjunctive coordination of noun phrases . . . . .	164
7.2.2.1	Conjunctive coordination of noun phrases with <b>āmī</b> ‘and’ . . . . .	165
7.2.2.2	Inclusory conjunction . . . . .	167
7.2.3	Comitative phrases with the preposition <b>ā</b> ‘with’ as noun modifiers . . . . .	173
7.2.4	Postpositional phrases with <b>ṅgō</b> ‘upon’ can modify nouns	173
7.2.5	Locative postpositional phrases headed by derived postpositions as noun modifiers . . . . .	174
7.3	Word order in the noun phrase . . . . .	175
7.3.1	Non-canonical word order . . . . .	175
7.3.1.1	Possessor + possessed order in possessive con- structions . . . . .	176
7.3.1.2	Determiner + noun order with distributive read- ing . . . . .	176
7.3.1.3	Numerals detached from the rest of the noun phrase . . . . .	177
<b>8</b>	<b>Verb morphology and the verbal complex</b>	<b>179</b>
8.1	Verb morphology . . . . .	179
8.1.1	Segmental structure of the uninflected verb stem . . . . .	179
8.1.2	Verb tone classes and tonal inflection of verbs . . . . .	180
8.1.3	Ablaut in perfective vs. imperfective verb stems . . . . .	181
8.1.4	Linear verb morphology (in non-finite verb forms) . . . . .	182
8.1.4.1	The nasal infinitive prefix <b>N-</b> or circumfix <b>N-...-n</b>	182
8.1.4.2	The prefix <b>kā-</b> on non-finite verbs expressing ability . . . . .	184

8.2	Tense markers and other preverbal markers . . . . .	184
8.2.1	Tense markers . . . . .	184
8.2.2	Other preverbal markers . . . . .	186
8.3	Order of elements in the verbal complex . . . . .	187
8.4	Constructions involving non-finite verb forms . . . . .	188
8.4.1	The infinitive . . . . .	188
8.4.1.1	Infinitives as complements of ‘start’ and ‘know’	189
8.4.1.2	Infinitives as heads of preposed relative clauses, used to express simultaneity . . . . .	190
8.4.1.3	Infinitives in the progressive construction . . .	190
8.4.1.4	Infinitive as the object of its finite equivalent, for contrastive verb focus . . . . .	191
8.4.1.5	Infinitive inside adverbial phrase for emphasis	192
8.4.1.6	Infinitive as subject or object . . . . .	192
8.4.2	The ability construction with auxiliary and prefixed main verb . . . . .	192
8.5	Constructions involving finite verb forms . . . . .	193
8.5.1	Tense marking constructions . . . . .	194
8.5.1.1	Verb tone patterns of tense marking construc- tions . . . . .	194
8.5.1.2	P0 (present/immediate past) constructions with- out a segmental marker . . . . .	196
8.5.1.3	Ʋ1 (hodiernal past) constructions with the Ʋ1 marker <b>fǔ</b> . . . . .	196
8.5.1.4	Ʋ2 (nonhodiernal past) constructions with the marker <b>à~nà</b> . . . . .	197
8.5.1.5	Ʋ3 (distant past) constructions with the marker <b>kà</b> . . . . .	198
8.5.1.6	Ʋ1 (hodiernal future) constructions with the F1 marker <b>dí</b> . . . . .	198
8.5.1.7	Ʋ2 (non-hodiernal future) constructions with the Ʋ2 marker <b>ká</b> . . . . .	199
8.5.1.8	Overview of tense markers and verb tone pat- terns in all tenses . . . . .	200
8.5.2	Constructions with preverbal markers other than tense markers . . . . .	202
8.5.2.1	Verb tone patterns of constructions with mark- ers other than tense markers . . . . .	202
8.5.2.2	The marker <b>kǔ</b> and the habitual aspect con- struction . . . . .	204
8.5.2.3	The marker <b>mī/mí</b> and consecutive constructions	204
8.5.2.4	The marker <b>tá</b> and truth focus constructions .	206
8.5.2.5	The preverbal conditional marker <b>kó</b> . . . . .	207
8.5.3	Negation in constructions involving finite verb forms .	208
8.5.3.1	Negation in tense marking constructions . . .	208

8.5.3.2	Negation in constructions with preverbal markers other than tense markers . . . . .	211
8.5.3.3	Frustrative . . . . .	213
8.5.3.4	The not-yet tense . . . . .	213
<b>9</b>	<b>Serial verb constructions and verbal adverbs</b>	<b>215</b>
9.1	Asymmetrical SVCs . . . . .	216
9.1.1	Motion . . . . .	217
9.1.1.1	Deictic orientation . . . . .	217
9.1.1.2	Path . . . . .	220
9.1.2	Aspectuality or aspect-related . . . . .	229
9.1.2.1	<b>dó</b> ‘stay, remain’ . . . . .	230
9.1.2.2	<b>mě</b> ‘finish’ . . . . .	230
9.1.2.3	<b>nīm</b> ‘sit’ . . . . .	231
9.1.3	Valency . . . . .	232
9.1.3.1	Causative SVCs with <b>lā</b> ‘do, make’ . . . . .	232
9.1.4	Manner . . . . .	233
9.1.4.1	<b>dzí</b> ‘travel; aimlessly’ . . . . .	233
9.1.4.2	<b>bán</b> ‘be clean; be white; shine; clearly’ . . . . .	234
9.2	Symmetrical SVCs . . . . .	235
9.2.1	Sequential events . . . . .	235
9.2.2	Fixed expressions . . . . .	236
9.3	Expression of grammatical categories in SVCs . . . . .	238
9.3.1	Tone and mood in SVCs . . . . .	238
9.3.2	Perfective/imperfective aspect marking in SVCs . . . . .	238
9.3.3	Tense and polarity in SVCs . . . . .	239
9.3.4	Nominalization in SVCs . . . . .	239
9.3.4.1	Infinitive constructions involving SVCs . . . . .	239
9.3.4.2	Ability constructions involving SVCs . . . . .	240
9.4	Verbal adverbs . . . . .	240
9.4.1	Verb-core-final verbal adverbs . . . . .	241
9.4.1.1	<b>tí</b> ‘surprisingly’ . . . . .	242
9.4.1.2	<b>fúbǎ, bǎ</b> ‘also’ . . . . .	242
9.4.1.3	<b>mě</b> ‘only’ . . . . .	243
9.4.1.4	<b>dzǒŋǎ~dzǒŋ</b> ‘again’ . . . . .	244
9.4.1.5	<b>bǎ</b> ‘exactly’ . . . . .	245
9.4.1.6	<b>tá</b> ‘really’ . . . . .	245
9.4.2	The verb core-initial adverb <b>sén</b> ‘then’ . . . . .	246
<b>10</b>	<b>Other word classes</b>	<b>247</b>
10.1	Adverbs . . . . .	247
10.2	Adpositions . . . . .	248
10.2.1	Prepositions . . . . .	248
10.2.1.1	The comitative/ instrumental preposition <b>ā</b> ‘with’	249
10.2.1.2	The locative preposition <b>ǐ</b> . . . . .	250

10.2.2 Postpositions . . . . .	251
10.2.2.1 Postpositions vs. nouns . . . . .	253
10.3 Temporal deictics . . . . .	254
10.4 Spatial deictics . . . . .	255
10.5 Ideophones . . . . .	258
10.6 ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ . . . . .	261
10.7 Interjections . . . . .	262
<b>11 Basic clause structure</b>	<b>265</b>
11.1 Types of argument frames . . . . .	265
11.1.1 Extended intransitive verbs . . . . .	267
11.1.2 Extended transitive verbs . . . . .	268
11.2 Constituent order within the clause . . . . .	269
11.3 Syntactic arguments . . . . .	270
11.3.1 Subject . . . . .	272
11.3.2 Object . . . . .	273
11.3.3 Comitative . . . . .	274
11.3.4 Locative . . . . .	276
11.3.5 Dative . . . . .	277
11.4 Grammatical relations . . . . .	279
11.4.1 Case morphology in pronouns . . . . .	279
<b>12 Relative clauses</b>	<b>283</b>
12.1 Position of the relative clause . . . . .	284
12.2 Relative clause-marking . . . . .	285
12.2.1 Postverbal relativizer . . . . .	285
12.2.2 Clause-initial subordinating conjunction . . . . .	287
12.3 The representative of the head nominal . . . . .	287
12.4 Accessibility to relativization . . . . .	290
12.5 Asymmetries between main and relative clause properties . . . . .	291
<b>13 Copulas and nonverbal predicates</b>	<b>297</b>
13.1 Copula verbs . . . . .	297
13.2 Nonverbal predicate constructions . . . . .	298
13.2.1 Equative constructions . . . . .	298
13.2.2 Adjectival predicates . . . . .	300
13.2.3 Similative predicates . . . . .	301
13.2.4 Numeral predicates . . . . .	302
13.2.5 Locative predicates and existential clauses . . . . .	302
13.2.5.1 Locative predicates . . . . .	303
13.2.5.2 Existential . . . . .	304
13.2.5.3 Predicative possession . . . . .	305
13.2.5.4 The locative copula <i>gê</i> . . . . .	306
13.2.6 Constructions with the semi-copula <i>tʃú</i> ‘come, become’ . . . . .	308
13.3 Other grammatical functions of copula verbs . . . . .	308

13.3.1 F1 future marking . . . . .	308
13.3.2 Compound tense and counterfactual conditional constructions . . . . .	309
13.3.3 The ability construction . . . . .	310
<b>14 Information structure</b>	<b>311</b>
14.1 Introduction . . . . .	311
14.2 Argument focus . . . . .	312
14.2.1 Canonical constituent order . . . . .	313
14.2.2 Non-canonical constituent order . . . . .	314
14.2.2.1 Immediate after verb (IAV) focus position . . .	314
14.2.2.2 Defocalization of canonically postverbal constituents . . . . .	314
14.2.3 Subject focus . . . . .	315
14.2.4 Defocalization of objects . . . . .	316
14.2.5 Defocalization of obliques . . . . .	317
14.2.6 Oblique focus . . . . .	317
14.2.7 Modifier focus . . . . .	318
14.2.8 Omission of topical objects . . . . .	319
14.3 Verb focus . . . . .	319
14.3.1 Cognate deverbial noun constructions . . . . .	320
14.4 Truth focus . . . . .	321
14.4.1 Serial verb constructions with <b>bǎn</b> ‘clearly’ . . . . .	321
14.4.2 The particle <b>tǎ</b> . . . . .	322
14.5 Thetic sentences . . . . .	323
14.6 Cleft constructions . . . . .	324
<b>15 Non-declarative clauses</b>	<b>327</b>
15.1 Questions and question words . . . . .	327
15.1.1 Polar questions . . . . .	327
15.1.1.1 Tag questions . . . . .	328
15.1.2 Content questions . . . . .	329
15.1.2.1 The interrogative pronoun <b>mān</b> ‘what’ . . . . .	330
15.1.2.2 The interrogative pronoun <b>ndè</b> ‘who’ . . . . .	332
15.1.2.3 The interrogative word <b>nā</b> ‘where’ . . . . .	333
15.1.2.4 The interrogative word <b>bèn</b> ‘when’ . . . . .	333
15.1.2.5 The interrogative word <b>āgān</b> ‘how’ . . . . .	334
15.1.2.6 The borrowed interrogative word <b>why</b> . . . . .	334
15.1.2.7 The interrogative nominal modifier <b>-mwān</b> ‘which’	334
15.1.2.8 The interrogative noun modifier <b>mìŋ</b> ‘how much, how many’ . . . . .	335
15.1.2.9 Multiple interrogative words . . . . .	335
15.1.2.10 Plural forms of interrogative words . . . . .	336
15.1.3 Questions in reported speech . . . . .	336
15.2 The Imperative . . . . .	337

15.3 The Prohibitive . . . . .	339
15.4 The Jussive . . . . .	340
15.5 Imperatives and jussives with <small>PL</small> addressee . . . . .	341
<b>16 Glossed texts</b>	<b>343</b>
16.1 Song by Yung Henrik, “It is eating me up” . . . . .	343
16.1.1 Introduction . . . . .	343
16.1.2 Text . . . . .	343
16.2 Recipe for corn beer . . . . .	352
16.2.1 Introduction . . . . .	352
16.2.2 Text . . . . .	352
References . . . . .	355
Samenvatting in het Nederlands . . . . .	363
Curriculum Vitae . . . . .	369



---

## List of Tables

---

1.1	Age-based variation in the pronunciation of original CVI stems	6
1.2	List of vowel graphemes compared with IPA symbols and symbols used in the Cameroonian alphabet (Tadadjeu and Sadembouo 1979)	12
1.3	List of tone marks compared with IPA symbols and symbols used in Tadadjeu and Sadembouo (1979)	13
1.4	List of consonant graphemes compared with IPA symbols and symbols used in Tadadjeu and Sadembouo (1979)	14
2.1	Tonal diacritics	16
2.2	Approximate pitch values of level and contour tones for Yung Donatus Kungmba	17
2.3	Approximate pitch values of level and contour tones for Ntie Jacqueline Kemba	17
2.4	Inventory of consonant phonemes	19
2.5	Onset minimal pairs	26
2.6	Coda minimal pairs	26
2.7	Attested Cw sequences	27
2.8	Examples and total of Cw sequences	27
2.9	Attested Cy sequences	28
2.10	Examples and total of Cy sequences	28
2.11	Monomorphemic NC(G) clusters	31
2.12	Minimal pairs for vowels	39
2.13	Possible combinations of vowels and coda consonants	45
2.14	CVI words	45
2.15	Restrictions on consonant-vowel sequences (only simple onsets)	47
3.1	Stem-initial consonants	53
3.2	Examples of stem-initial CG sequences	53

3.3	Examples of stem-initial NC(G) sequences . . . . .	53
3.4	Consonantal agreement in demonstratives . . . . .	55
3.5	Infinitives with the infinitive circumfix . . . . .	56
3.6	Infinitives with a prefix . . . . .	57
3.7	Initial consonants in function words . . . . .	58
3.8	Tones of nouns belonging to genders other than Class 9/10 in utterance-final vs. non-final position . . . . .	59
3.9	Mid tone singular, high tone plural nouns . . . . .	60
3.10	Low singular, mid-low plural nouns . . . . .	60
3.11	Other tonal stem changes in non-Gender 9/10 nouns . . . . .	61
3.12	Tonal patterns of bisyllabic nouns (in isolation) . . . . .	61
3.13	Tones of Gender 9/10 nouns (in isolation) . . . . .	62
3.14	Tonal patterns of bisyllabic nouns of Gender 9/10 (in isolation) . . . . .	63
3.15	Verb tone classes with examples of perfective present tense verbs in utterance-final and non-final position . . . . .	64
3.16	Perfective/imperfective tone patterns . . . . .	66
3.17	Homorganic nasals in infinitive verb forms . . . . .	69
3.18	Historical nasal assimilation across word boundaries in Gender 7/8 nouns . . . . .	71
3.19	Lack of nasal assimilation in Gender 7/8 nouns . . . . .	71
3.20	Examples of Gender 3/10 consonant mutation (taken over from §4.3.6) . . . . .	71
3.21	Agreement in numerals (adopted from §7.1.5) . . . . .	72
3.22	Perfective vs. imperfective stems without ablaut . . . . .	74
3.23	Regular ablaut in perfective/imperfective stems . . . . .	74
3.24	Ablaut with <i>ɔ</i> in perfective stems . . . . .	75
3.25	Ablaut with <i>ə</i> in perfective stems . . . . .	75
3.26	Overview of perfective/imperfective ablaut patterns . . . . .	76
4.1	Noun classes with corresponding nominal prefixes and pronouns . . . . .	82
4.2	Examples of noun classes showing noun class marking on the noun or lack thereof . . . . .	83
4.3	Relative frequency of singular-plural noun class pairings . . . . .	84
4.4	Singular-plural pairings of Gender 1/2 nouns . . . . .	85
4.5	Singular-plural pairings of Gender 3/7a nouns, examples of identical singular and plural forms . . . . .	87
4.6	Irregular singular-plural stem alternation in Gender 3/7a nouns . . . . .	87
4.7	Singular-plural pairings of Gender 7/8 nouns, examples of identical singular and plural forms . . . . .	88
4.8	Singular-plural pairings of Gender 7/8 nouns, examples of irregular stem alternation . . . . .	88
4.9	Singular-plural pairings of Gender 9/10 nouns showing tonal stem alternation . . . . .	90
4.10	Singular-plural pairings of underived Class 19/18 nouns (without prefix) . . . . .	91

4.11 Singular-plural pairings of derived Gender 19/18 nouns (with prefix) . . . . .	91
4.12 Singular-plural pairings of Class 3/10 nouns, examples showing initial consonant mutation . . . . .	92
4.13 Singular-plural pairings of Class 3/10 nouns, examples without consonant mutation . . . . .	93
4.14 Class 6 nouns . . . . .	94
4.15 Class 8a nouns . . . . .	95
4.16 Single gender 3a, comprehensive list . . . . .	96
4.17 Single gender 7b, comprehensive list . . . . .	96
4.18 Single gender 9a, comprehensive list . . . . .	97
4.19 Single gender 10a, comprehensive list . . . . .	97
4.20 Selected nominal loans . . . . .	98
4.21 Noun classes, current system . . . . .	103
4.22 Agreement classes . . . . .	103
5.1 Overview of agreement patterns, illustrated by pronouns . . .	106
5.2 Agreement in preverbal and non-preverbal third person singular pronouns for all noun classes . . . . .	107
5.3 Agreement in possessive pronouns . . . . .	108
5.4 Agreement in 1sg possessive pronouns . . . . .	109
5.5 Consonantal agreement in demonstratives . . . . .	111
5.6 Agreement prefixes in adjectivals, three different tone patterns: mid, high and low . . . . .	113
5.7 List of adjectives (not exhaustive) . . . . .	114
5.8 Agreement prefixes and tonal alternation in adjectives, illustrated by the adjective <b>-fyíŋ</b> ‘new’. . . . .	115
5.9 Agreement prefixes and tonal alternation in the quantifier <b>-lō</b> ‘all’	116
5.10 Agreement prefixes and tonal alternation in the quantifier <b>-dzwē</b> ‘a lot of’ . . . . .	117
5.11 Agreement prefixes on <b>-ntjíŋ</b> ‘a few’, ‘a bit’, ‘a little’ . . . . .	118
5.12 Agreement prefixes on the modifier <b>-dzú</b> ‘certain’, ‘other’ . . .	119
5.13 Agreement prefixes on <b>-dóm</b> ‘some’, ‘any’, ‘other’ . . . . .	120
5.14 Numeral agreement prefixes . . . . .	123
5.15 Noun class agreement in numerals . . . . .	123
5.16 Overview of agreement patterns, including prefixes and tonal changes, exemplified by different types of noun modifiers . . .	125
6.1 Overview of personal pronouns (non-preverbal forms) . . . . .	130
6.2 Preverbal, non-preverbal and object of postposition forms for 1st and 2nd person personal pronouns and paired genders . . .	130
6.3 Preverbal, non-preverbal and object of postposition forms of single gender personal pronouns . . . . .	131
6.4 Preverbal forms of personal pronouns . . . . .	132
6.5 Non-preverbal forms of personal pronouns . . . . .	134

6.6	Forms of personal pronouns when they are the object of a post-position . . . . .	136
7.1	Demonstratives . . . . .	145
7.2	List of adjectives (not exhaustive), repeated from Table 5.7, §5.3.1	148
7.3	Adjective agreement prefixes . . . . .	149
7.4	The numerals 1 to 10 in their absolute form . . . . .	152
7.5	Agreement in the numerals 1 to 4 . . . . .	152
7.6	Multiples of 10, 100 and 1000, the numeral nouns . . . . .	154
7.7	A few examples of complex numerals combining multiples of 10, 100 and 1000 . . . . .	155
7.8	Complex numerals which combine higher digits with the basic numeral 10, or with a single-digit numeral . . . . .	156
7.9	Signing numbers to others . . . . .	159
7.10	Inclusory conjunction of pronouns . . . . .	168
8.1	Tone patterns of (monosyllabic) imperative verbs of tone classes A, B and C with examples . . . . .	180
8.2	Tone patterns of imperfective verbs of all three verb tone classes in utterance-final position with examples . . . . .	181
8.3	Regular ablaut in perfective/imperfective stems, repeated from Table 3.23 . . . . .	182
8.4	Infinitives with circumfix, repeated from Table 3.5, §3.1.2.3 . . . . .	183
8.5	Infinitives with prefix, repeated from Table 3.6, §3.1.2.3 . . . . .	183
8.6	Tone patterns of Class A, B and C ability verb forms . . . . .	184
8.7	Tense markers . . . . .	185
8.8	Non-tense preverbal markers and their functions . . . . .	186
8.9	Tone patterns of the infinitive in utterance-final and non-final position, the contrast between Class B and C is neutralized . . . . .	189
8.10	Segmental tense markers and tone patterns of final and non-final perfective verbs of tone classes A, B and C in all tenses (P0-P3 and F1-F2) . . . . .	194
8.11	Tone patterns of non-final affirmative perfective verbs and of negated perfective verbs in P3 . . . . .	195
8.12	Elicited example of verb-final and non-verb-final simple clauses containing perfective verbs of verb tone classes A, B and C, in all tenses (P0-P3 and F1-F2) . . . . .	201
8.13	Tone patterns of final perfective consecutive verbs in all tenses (P0-P3 and F1-F2) . . . . .	203
8.14	Tense markers and merged tense + pre-core negation markers . . . . .	208
8.15	Tone patterns of negated and of affirmative non-final perfective verbs of tone classes A, B and C in all tenses (P0-P3 and F1-F2) . . . . .	209
8.16	Elicited examples of affirmative non-verb-final simple clauses containing perfective verbs of Class A, B and C in all tenses (P0-P3 and F1-F2) . . . . .	211

8.17 Elicited examples of negative simple clauses containing perfective verbs of Class A, B and C in all tenses (P0-P3 and F1-F2) . . .	212
9.1 Verbal adverbs . . . . .	241
10.1 The two prepositions with glosses and meanings . . . . .	249
10.2 comprehensive list of postpositions with glosses . . . . .	251
10.3 Comparison of postpositions and cognate nouns . . . . .	254
10.4 Selected temporal deictics . . . . .	255
10.5 Ideophones, partly in context, with descriptions, sorted according to semantic criteria . . . . .	260
10.6 Variants of 'yes' and 'no' . . . . .	261
11.1 Preverbal, non-preverbal, object of postposition and object of comitative preposition forms of all personal pronouns, adapted from Table 6.2 . . . . .	280
11.2 Special dative/benefactive pronoun forms . . . . .	281
12.1 Preverbal pronouns and determiners/relativizers . . . . .	286
12.2 Segmental tense markers and tone patterns of non-final perfective verbs of verb tone classes A, B and C in all tenses (P0-P3 and F1-F2) in main and relative clauses . . . . .	292
15.1 Comprehensive list of question words . . . . .	329
15.2 Imperative verb forms in single verb cores . . . . .	337
15.3 Examples of second person prohibitives with single verb cores . . . . .	339



---

## List of Figures

---

1.1	Lower Fungom Language Map, courtesy of Pierpaolo Di Carlo .	2
1.2	Niger-Congo family tree, adapted from Schadeberg (2003: 155)	7
1.3	Bantoid family tree, following Glottolog (Hammarström et al. 2017) . . . . .	8
2.1	Inventory of plain vowel phonemes . . . . .	33
2.2	Inventory of pharyngealized vowel phonemes . . . . .	34
2.3	Vowel plot (speaker: Kemba Jacqueline Ntie) . . . . .	40
4.1	Singular-plural noun class pairings . . . . .	84
11.1	Basic word order . . . . .	269
12.1	Position of the relative clause relative to the head nominal and to other noun modifiers . . . . .	284





---

## List of abbreviations

---

ADJ	adjective
ATR	advanced tongue root
C	consonant
DB	database
G	glide
IAV	immediate after verb position
IBV	immediate before verb position
IPA	international phonetic alphabet
intr.	intransitive
n.	noun
N	nasal
NP	noun phrase
O	object
PB	Proto Bantu
PRO	pronoun
S	subject
sp.	species (used for animal and plant species and for different versions of an object, like e.g. baskets)
SVC	serial verb construction
tr.	transitive
V	vowel
v.	verb
vcl.	voiceless
vcd.	voiced



---

## List of glosses

---

1, 2, 3	first, second, third person
(a), (b), (c)	verb tone classes in gloss
A, B, C	verb tone classes in text
ADVLZ	adverbializer
CL <i>n</i>	noun class <i>n</i>
COM	comitative
COMP	complementizer
COND	conditional
CONSEC	consecutive
COP	copula
CS.QUOT	current speaker quotative marker
CS.QUOT.Q	initial question marker in current speaker quotatives
DAT	dative/benefactive
DEM	demonstrative
DET	determiner
DIST	distal
DS	dummy subject
F1	hodiernal future
F2	non-hodiernal future
FRUST	frustrative
FUT	future
HAB	habitual
IDEO	ideophone
IMP	imperative
IMP.PL	plural addressee imperative marker
IMPERS	impersonal pronoun
INF	infinitive
IPFV	imperfective
INTERJ	interjection

IRR	irrealis
LOC	locative
NCS.QUOT.Q	initial question marker in non-current speaker quotatives
NEG	negative morphemes
NMLZ	nominalizer
NPVB	non-preverbal
NCS.QUOT	non-current speaker quotative marker
P0	immediate past/present perfect
P1	hodiernal past
P2	hesternal past
P3	distant past
PFV	perfective
PL	plural
POSS	possessive
PP	special pronoun form used when a pronoun is object of a postposition
PROHIB	prohibitive
PROX	proximal
PVB	preverbal
Q	question marker
QTAG	question tag
QUOT.Q	final question marker in quoted questions
RED	reduplicant
REL	relativizer
SG	singular
SUBJ	subjunctive
SUBORD	subordinator
VER.FOC	verum focus

The glosses used here adhere to the glossing conventions introduced by the Leipzig Glossing Rules (Comrie et al. 2008). As suggested there, when a single object-language element is rendered by several metalanguage elements (words or abbreviations), these are separated by periods. If an object-language element (words only) is neither formally nor semantically segmentable and only the metalanguage happens to lack a single-word equivalent, the underscore is used instead of the period Rule 4a.

---

## List of symbols

---

◇	marks an elicited example
-	morpheme break
;	morpheme break without exact location (in gloss)
=	clitic boundary
.	separates labels (in the gloss) when a single object-language element is rendered by several metalanguage category labels
_	separates words (in the gloss) when a single object-language element is rendered by several metalanguage words
/	separates alternative glosses
~	connects reduplicant and reduplicated morpheme
~	marks phonological variants
<...>	mark orthographic forms
??	gloss unknown



---

## Lists of affixes, clitics and particles

---

This section contains a list of affixes and bound forms including noun class and agreement prefixes and a list of free particles.

affix	gloss	
<b>kī-~kā-</b>	NMLZ	nominalizer
<b>Ñ=</b>	1SG.PVB	preverbal form of first person singular pronoun; procliticizes to the verbal core
<b>N-...-n~N-</b>	INF	infinitive prefix/circumfix; choice depends on the shape of the verb stem
<b>bə-~b-</b>	CL2	Class 2 agreement prefix
<b>bi-~b-</b>	CL8	Class 8 agreement prefix
<b>bə-~b-</b>	CL2	Class 2 nominal prefix and agreement prefix
<b>fi-</b>	CL19	Class 19 nominal prefix and agreement prefix
<b>ki-~k-</b>	CL7	Class 7 agreement prefix
<b>mu(N)-~m-</b>	CL18	Class 18 agreement prefix
<b>mu(N)-~m-</b>	CL6a	Class 6a agreement prefix
<b>wu-~w-</b>	CL1	Class 1 agreement prefix
<b>wu-~w-</b>	CL3	Class 3 agreement prefix
<b>wu-~w-</b>	CL5	Class 5 agreement prefix
<b>yi-~y-</b>	CL9	Class 9 agreement prefix
<b>yi-~y-</b>	CL10	Class 10 agreement prefix

particle	gloss	
à	Q	polar question particle; finishes off original (as opposed to quoted) polar questions
à~nà	P1	hesternal past
ā	COM	preposition ‘with’; used with comitative and instrumental semantics, licenses additional verb argument, invokes special tonal pronoun form
ā	NEG	preverbal negative marker; directly precedes the verb, following tense/aspect markers
ǎ	ADVLZ	adverbializer; precedes adverbs and adverbial phrases
āmì	‘and’	conjunction; conjoins NPs or phrases
b̀̀	FRUST	frustrative
dǐ	F1	hodiernal future
fǒ	P1	hodiernal past
ĩ	LOC	locative preposition
kā	F2	non-hodiernal future
k̀̀	P3	distant past
kǒ	COND	conditional marker; introduces a conditional clause
kǒ	HAB	habitual marker; TAM marker
m̀̀	CS.QUOT	current speaker quotative marker
m̀̀	NCS.QUOT.Q	marks non-current speaker quoted questions; follows the complementizer yē which introduces sequences of reported speech
m̄, m̄	CONSEC	consecutive marker, ‘and (then)’; clausal conjunction; with a mid tone in P3, F1 and F2 clauses and with a high tone in P0, P1 and P2 clauses
nà~à	P2	hesternal past
ná	as	as, like
nǒ	QTAG	question tag; follows a clause, turning it into a tag question; used in positive lead questions
nō~nō	SUBORD	subordinator; also introduces relative clauses
nǐ	IMP.PL	follows verbs in plural imperatives
tá~ǎ	PROHIB	prohibitive
tó	VER.FOC	verum focus
wō	NEG	negative particle; follows the verbal core; always co-occurs with the preverbal negation marker ā
yē	COMP	complementizer; precedes complement clauses, including utterance complements
yē~ē~ā	QUOT.Q	question marker in quoted questions; can finish off quoted polar and content questions



---

## Acknowledgements

---

There are many people to whom I would like to express my gratitude. First of all, I want to thank my supervisors, Jeff Good and Maarten Mous. Thank you so much for your enthusiasm and for your constant encouragement! I also want to thank the Akuma family and the Tanto family for their friendship and for sparking my interest in Cameroon.

I am deeply indebted to the Mundabli people, and especially to Chief Tem Nyungfu. Thank you for welcoming me with open arms and for supporting me in my research. I am grateful for the friendship that developed with Jacqui, Donatus, and others. I also want to express my gratitude to the other people who supported me during my stays in Cameroon, such as Philip Mutaka, Jules Assoumou, Pius Tamanji, Maggie, the Tanto family, the Kums, the Attias, Jonathan Yessa and his family, Donatus Kungmba, Kenneth Tangko, Idrisu Alkali and the late George Ngong. I would also like to thank my fellow researcher Jesse Lovegren and his family, Pierpaolo Di Carlo, Doreen Schröter, Britta Neumann and Doriane Ngako, and everyone else who has supported me during some stage of this thesis. Thanks a lot to everyone I met during my time in Leiden, in particular Ongaye, Marijn, Stanly, Allie, Camelia, Kaca, Juliette, Jessie, Kamto, Heleen, Anne-Christie, Christian, Sandra, Ramada, Khalid, Mule, Victoria, Margarita, Antoinette, Hamine, Mercy, Felix, Paul, Jan, Ibrahima, Azeb, Felix A., Maarten K., Connie K.-L., and everyone at LUCL, but also to Robert and Sylvia, Alexander and Hui-Yin, and Han and Ionica and their families, and everyone else I met during my time in Leiden.

Most of all, though, I want to thank my family. Thank you, Mum, for always saying what you think and for encouraging me in everything I do. Thank you, Judith, for your love and support. Thank you, Klaus. Thank you, Mira and Eliah, for reminding me of what really matters in life. I'm so glad you are around! You are great, and I am glad you are the way you are. Thank you, Josh, for enduring my moods when I thought I wasn't getting anywhere. Thanks for believing in me. Thanks for taking care of other things when I was occupied. Thanks for all your help and support for this thesis. Thanks for being around!

xxxii

Finally, Dad, although you're not able to see this anymore: Thank you for your love, for always having believed in me, and having encouraged me in everything I do!

In case you do not find your name here, but feel you should, please feel included!