

## 2. Presentation and correlation of the lexical data

### 2.1. Introduction

This chapter presents in as visual form as can be contrived the data on which the analyses in the following chapters are based, consisting of 542 standard vocabularies. It details the lexical questionnaire, lists the contributors and sources of the vocabularies, maps their distribution, and finally presents the data gloss by gloss on symbolic maps.

The linguistic questionnaire, published in English and French versions as a supplement to the *Bantu Newsletter* 2 (February 1975), listed 92 glosses, reduced from the standard 100-word list of Maurice Swadesh by the omission of glosses that were climatically inappropriate or that belonged more to grammar than lexis. Precisions were added to avoid ambiguity in the meanings of some glosses, e.g. 'skin' was to refer to human skin (rather than treated animal hides or vegetable rinds). Generic terms were to be preferred to specific, the grammatical category of the gloss was not binding (for example, an adjective might be rendered by a verb or noun if that was more natural in the language being collected), and multiple responses were allowed where several terms were in equal currency. Respondents were asked to leave blanks in cases of uncertain comprehension or interpretation. The vocabulary is set out in Table 2.1.1 with added precisions.

|  |                                     |   |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|
| all/tous                               | good/bon                            | rain <i>n</i> /pluie                          |
| arm/bras                               | ground (on the ~)/terre (par terre) | red/rouge                                     |
| ashes/cendres                          | hair (of head)/cheveu               | root/racine                                   |
| bark <i>n</i> /écorce                  | head/tête                           | round (as ball)/rond (comme une               |
| belly/ventre                           | hear/entendre                       | boule)  |
| big/grand (≠ long)                     | heart/coeur                         | sand/sable                                    |
| bird/oiseau                            | horn/corne                          | say/dire                                      |
| bite/mordre                            | kill/tuer                           | see/voir                                      |
| black/noir                             | knee/genou                          | seed <i>n</i> /semence (graine mise en terre) |
| blood/sang                             | know/savoir                         | sit/assis                                     |
| bone/os                                | leaf/feuille (d'arbre)              | skin (human)/peau (humaine)                   |
| breast/sein                            | leg/jambe                           | sleep <i>n</i> /sommeil                       |
| burn <i>intr</i> /brûler (être en feu) | lie (down)/couché                   | small/petit                                   |
| cloud/nuage                            | liver/foie                          | smoke <i>n</i> /fumée                         |
| cold (weather)/froid (temps)           | long/long (≠ grand)                 | stand/debout                                  |
| come/venir                             | louse/pou                           | star/étoile                                   |
| die/mourir                             | man/homme (être humain masculin)    | stone/pierre                                  |
| dog/chien                              | many/beaucoup (nombreux)            | sun/soleil                                    |
| drink <i>v</i> /boire                  | meat/viande                         | swim/nager                                    |
| dry/sec                                | moon/lune                           | tail/queue                                    |
| ear/oreille                            | mountain/montagne                   | tongue/langue (corps)                         |
| eat/manger                             | mouth/bouche                        | tooth/dent                                    |
| egg/oeuf                               | nail/ongle                          | tree/arbre                                    |
| eye/oeil                               | name/nom                            | two/deux                                      |
| fat <i>n</i> /graisse (animale)        | neck/cou                            | walk/marcher                                  |
| feather/plume                          | new/nouveau                         | warm (weather)/chaud (temps)                  |
| fire/feu                               | night/nuit                          | water/eau                                     |
| fish <i>n</i> /poisson                 | nose/nez                            | what?/quoi?                                   |
| fly <i>v</i> /voler (oiseau)           | one/un (nombre)                     | white/blanc                                   |
| full/plein                             | path/chemin                         | who?/qui?                                     |
| give/donner                            | person/personne (être humain)       | woman/femme (être humain féminin)             |

Table 2.1.1: word-list

The sources of the vocabularies are set out in section 2.2. Most have been collected from named informants by numerous collaborators, a few have been excerpted from published sources, not always contemporary. Not infrequently, several vocabularies have been collected of the 'same' language; though some show a close concurrence, most commonly the similarity is between 80% and 90%, and in a few cases that may be suspected of mislabelling, is as low as 60%. We have treated each vocabulary as a sep-