



**ELICITING DATA WITH MODAL QUESTIONNAIRES WITH ORAL CONTEXTS:
AN ALTERNATIVE METHOD FOR LANGUAGE FIELD RESEARCH¹**

**OBTENCIÓN DE DATOS CON CUESTIONARIOS MODALES CON CONTEXTOS ORALES:
UN MÉTODO ALTERNATIVO PARA LA INVESTIGACIÓN DE CAMPO LINGÜÍSTICA**

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Abstract: This paper's goal is to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of presenting written vs. oral contexts in questionnaires for fieldwork with underdescribed languages. This research is based on methods employed in fieldwork for semantic analysis (Matthewson, 2004; 2011; Sanchez-Mendes, 2014; Bochnak; Matthewson, 2015; Vander Klok; Rech; Guesser, 2023). Questionnaires are defined as a set of questions designed to elicit a constrained set of answers from multiple respondents (Vander Klok; Connors, 2019) which are normally presented in a written format. We argue that certain linguistic conditions require the application of oral questionnaires, basing this claim on our fieldwork experience with the Guinean language. Despite Guinean having literate speakers and a writing system that should allow the application of questionnaires in a written format, its speakers study Portuguese at schools, not their mother language. Therefore, they are familiarized with writing and reading in Portuguese, not Guinean. Moreover, the writing system proposed for Guinean (Scantamburlo, 1999; 2019) is not adopted broadly in the country. In this scenario, the presentation of contexts orally guarantees that illiterate speakers or speakers of languages with no writing system can do the task. Moreover, using audio resources from native speakers guarantees that the consultant has access to subtle prosodic features that might affect meaning which could be lost in written form (Ferreira, 2024). Another advantage is that it makes the questionnaire more dynamic and less demanding. The disadvantages are the necessity of having previous access to native speakers to record the

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audios, a development process of questionnaires which is longer, more complex and less flexible for adaptations.

Keywords: Fieldwork, Data Elicitation, Modality, Questionnaires, Guinean.

Resumen: El objetivo de este artículo es discutir las ventajas y desventajas de la presentación de contextos escritos vs. orales para la investigación de campo con lenguas poco descritas. Esta investigación se basa en los métodos empleados en el campo para el análisis semántico (Matthewson, 2004; 2011; Sanchez-Mendes, 2014; Bochnak; Matthewson, 2015; Vander Klok; Rech; Guesser, 2023). Los cuestionarios son un conjunto de preguntas que elicitan respuestas de múltiples hablantes (Vander Klok; Connors, 2019), y generalmente se presentan en modalidad escrita. Argumentamos que ciertas condiciones lingüísticas hacen que la presentación en audio de los contextos sea una necesidad, a partir de nuestra experiencia de campo con la lengua guineana. Apesar de que esta lengua cuenta con hablantes escolarizados y un sistema de escritura que permitiría la aplicación de un cuestionario en modalidad escrita, la escolarización se lleva a cabo en portugués, y no en su lengua materna. De este modo, los hablantes están acostumbrados a la modalidad escrita del portugués, pero no del Guineano. Además, el sistema de escritura propuesto para la lengua guineana (Scantamburlo, 1999; 2019) no está ampliamente adoptado en el país. En este contexto, la presentación oral de los contextos del cuestionario garantiza que hablantes no familiarizados con la modalidad escrita del Guineano o de lenguas sin sistema de escritura puedan realizar la tarea. Además, el uso de recursos de audio garantiza que el consultor tenga acceso a factores prosódicos sutiles que afectan el significado y que podrían perderse en la modalidad escrita (Ferreira, 2024). Otra ventaja es que la presentación en audio hace que el cuestionario sea más dinámico y menos agotador. Entre las desventajas de la presentación oral se encuentran la necesidad de acceso previo a hablantes nativos de la lengua para realizar la grabación, un desarrollo del cuestionario más lento y complejo, y una menor flexibilidad de adaptación.

Palabras clave: Trabajo de campo, Elicitación de datos, Modalidad, Cuestionarios, Guineano.

1 INTRODUCTION

Questionnaires are defined as “a set of questions designed to elicit a set of responses from multiple speakers” (Vander Klok; Connors, 2019, p. 63). The advantages of using questionnaires in field research with underdescribed languages is that they allow for more uniform data collection in different languages, thus enabling a more consistent cross-linguistic comparison (Vander Klok; Connors, 2019).

This paper discusses the use of questionnaires to elicit data for semantic analysis. The main characteristic of fieldwork in this paradigm is the presentation of contexts to guide speakers' intuitions. The context is presented to the consultant, and, after this presentation, they are asked to perform some type of task such as a translation, a grammatical/truth condition/felicity judgment, filling in the gaps, semi-forced choice, etc. taking the context they heard into account (see Matthewson, 2004; 2011; Krifka, 2011; Sanchez-Mendes, 2014; Bochnak; Matthewson, 2015; Bohnemeyer, 2015; Louie, 2015; Vander Klok; Rech; Guesser, 2023; among others). Thus, contexts are fundamental in this perspective, as they provide clues as to how the speaker interprets the sentence, and data obtained in a decontextualized way are considered unreliable for determining the meaning of the sentence.

When applying questionnaires to collect data for semantic analysis, it is common for contexts to be presented to consultants in written form (Vander Klok, 2014; 2023). This presentation can occur in the consultant's own language (target language) or in the language spoken by the linguist (contact language). In some cases, it's desirable to present the context in the target language, for instance, presentation in the target language can be used to avoid the influence of the contact language. However, presenting the context in the consultant's language is challenging if this language does not have a writing system or if it has a writing system to which the speakers are not familiarized.

Therefore, the main objective of this paper is to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of presenting the contexts from questionnaires orally using audio recordings in the consultant's mother language. This discussion is based on the experience

of two of the authors with fieldwork with the Guinean language, which is a Portuguese-based creole language spoken in Guinea-Bissau (Couto; Embaló, 2010; Scantamburlo, 2019; Inlaté, 2023). Guinean has instructed speakers and a writing system (Scantamburlo, 1999, 2019), conditions that, in theory, make it possible the application of a questionnaire in a written format. However, previous fieldwork experiences revealed that our consultants, native speakers of Guinean, found it strange to see the written format of a language that they used mainly orally (Inlaté, 2023). We suppose that this strangeness happens because Portuguese is the language taught in the schools and that is why it did not feel natural for Guinean speakers to consider the written form of their mother language. Another problem that occurs in questionnaires with written contexts is the consultant focusing only on the target sentence without reading the context (Vander Klok, 2023, p. 116).

When they do the task without considering the contexts, based on the reasons pointed above, they provide unreliable data having a confounding effect in the analysis. Therefore, we argue that, in these conditions, it is preferable for the contexts of the questionnaire to be presented using the oral format, with audios recorded and revised by native speakers. We illustrate how to develop and apply a questionnaire with the presentation of prerecorded contexts, step by step, based on the questionnaire we have developed to elicit data in Guinean modal constructions, which express necessities and/or possibilities (Kratzer, 1991; Von Stechow, 2006; Hacquard, 2011).

We argue that this form of presentation brings a series of advantages to the linguist. Firstly, the oral presentation allows the participation of more consultants, as consultants from languages without a writing system or consultants unfamiliar with the written modality can also be included, as is the case with Guinean. Moreover, it guarantees that consultants have access to subtle prosodic features that could affect meaning that might be lost in written form (Ferreira, 2024). It is important, however, that the contexts are short; thus, the task does not become tiresome for the consultant.

However, presenting the contexts orally also has disadvantages. The first concerns the elaboration of the questionnaire itself, which becomes more complex and time-consuming, since the researcher must, after preparing the contexts, find at least two native speakers, deal with recording audios, revising them with another native speaker, and maybe record again to then organize them into a form and be able to apply the questionnaire. Another disadvantage is that prior access to native speakers of the language for recordings is essential, since audio recorded by non-native speakers can have a strangeness effect in the consultants and alter judgments, being another confounding effect. Thus, using the oral presentation is not possible in languages for which there is only one consultant left or languages in which consultants are extremely difficult to find. Furthermore, a third disadvantage is that the use of recordings makes the method less flexible. In case there is the need to change a given context, this modification is relatively simple in a written text, but not so with audio recordings. Despite these disadvantages, certain linguistic conditions make it preferable to present the contexts orally when administering questionnaires. We argue that this is the case for Guinean.

This paper is divided into six sections, of which this introduction was the first. The second section introduces the political and historical context for Guinean, informing the reader on the fieldwork needs for this language. The third addresses modality in the domain of formal semantics. The fourth section presents the questionnaire we have developed using the presentation of audio recordings step by step. The fifth and final section reviews the benefits of using audio questionnaires, providing the paper's final considerations.

2 GUINEAN

Guinean is a creole language that emerged from the contact between African languages spoken in Guinea-Bissau and Portuguese⁵. As expected in these situations of linguistic contact, the superstrate language — Portuguese — has a massive contribution to the Guinean lexicon. According to Scantamburlo (2019, p. 210) “The lexicon of Guinean Creole derives for 80% of its total from Portuguese”. This is an important fact to take into consideration since linguists, when studying some aspect of Guinean, might encounter items that look similar to Portuguese on a surface level, as it is the case with the modal verbs. In Guinean, there is a correlation between phonology and syntax since stress placement is dependent on the syntactic category of the lexeme (Kihm, 1994, p. 14). For example, the category of verbs is stressed on the final syllable.

The most widespread theory about the creation of the Guinea-Bissau Creole is brought by Rougé (1986), who defends the creation of Guinean from people brought from Europe, known as ‘lançados’ who, when uniting with African women, the tangomãs⁶, had Portuguese transformed into pidgin and passed it on to their children, who turned it into a structured language.

The lançados must have spoken simplified Portuguese with both the grumetes⁷ and their wives. This simplified Portuguese would have been reproduced and modified by the grumetes and the tangomãs, resulting in an even more simplified Portuguese, the Portuguese pidgin that may have served as linguistic input for their children, the first generation of Creole speakers (Intumbo, 2007, p. 8).

Guinea-Bissau is a diverse country linguistically speaking. According to Ethnologue (2023), the Republic of Guinea Bissau is constituted of 19 living indigenous languages and 7 non-indigenous languages, one of which is the official one, Portuguese. The indigenous languages are: Bainouk-Gunyaño, Balanta, Biafada, Bijagó, Fula, Futa Fula, Guinea-Bissau Creole, Guinea-Bissau Sign Language, Jola Bayote, Kanjad, Kasanga, Kobiana, Mandinka, Mandjak, Mankanya, Mansoanka, Nalu and Papel (Ethnologue, 2023).

Despite having most of its lexicon based on Portuguese, Guinean is influenced by some other languages from this country. One example is Balanta from which Guinean inherited its negation particle *ka* (Kihm, 1994, p. 46), the collective names (Intumbo, 2007, p. 35) and the forms of the negative imperative (Intumbo, 2007, p. 106), among other grammatical features. Among the languages spoken in the country, the best known and used by the majority of the population is Guinean (Inlaté, 2023). The use of Guinean, in speech, is present in all contexts, including in public service environments, as shown in the following example:

⁵ The term ‘Guinean’ and ‘Guinea-Bissau Creole’ refer to the same language. However, some researchers prefer the ‘Guinean’ rather than ‘Creole’ since it is a more precise term to identify this language (Inlaté, 2023).

⁶ ‘Tangomãs’ is the term used to refer to the Guinean women who were married to lançados, Portuguese people who established themselves in Guinea during the first contact between European and African people. From these unions came the mixed-raced families whose children were known as ‘filhos da terra’.

⁷ Grumetes were, in the context of the Portuguese colonization of West Africa, native Africans who established contact with the Portuguese, ending up assimilating their habits and behaviors.

- (1) HHC: Eu queria falar com o sr. M. N.!
- I wanted to speak to Mr. M.N.!
- Answer: I ka stá!
- 'he's not there'
- HHC: O sr. J. A. está?
- 'Is Mr. J. A. here?'
- Answer: I bin ma i bai
- 'he came, but he's gone'

(Couto; Embaló, 2010m, p. 51)

The example above features a telephone conversation between a member of the community and a representative of a government agency. It is, therefore, clear that Guinean is present even in formal communication contexts. However, when it comes to written language, Portuguese is more prestigious.⁸

Figure 1: Notice that encourages/requires the use of the Portuguese language.



Source: (Namone, 2020, p. 32)

The image above is a photo of a classroom door at a university in Guinea-Bissau. In the door, there are three notices that state “think in Portuguese and speak Portuguese”, “the more one speaks a language, more ability and more domain one will have of this

⁸ An interesting fact about this example is that Portuguese is being spoken by a member of the community, while Guinean is being used by the representative of the public service. Couto and Embaló (2010) do not present details about the data of this linguistic collection, but we suppose that the person who called might be a (descendant of) portuguese who lives in the country or is visiting it.

language” and “your success in schools depends on your domain of expression and understanding capacity in the Portuguese language”. According to Scantamburlo (2013), even with the imposition of Portuguese as the official language, there are no professionals in schools and universities capable of teaching the Portuguese language.

It is worth noting that projects have been created with the aim of including Guinean in education. One of them is the *Projeto de Apoio ao Ensino Bilingue no arquipélago de Bigajós* (PAEBB – Project to Support Bilingual Education in the Bigajós archipelago). Its initial intention was to teach literacy in Guinean and then switch to Portuguese (Scantamburlo, 2019, p. 204), but, despite its efforts, it did not make much progress towards its purpose. Thus, the inhabitants of Guinea-Bissau continue to use Guinean in all formal and informal speaking situations, being led, however, to use Portuguese in written communication.

In this section, we have discussed Guinean formation and why it has assumed a second role in written communication despite it being the most spoken language in the country. This contextualization is important because it shows Portuguese’s influence in their culture and the weight it has for the written tradition relegating Guinean to the oral domain. This linguistic scenario justifies the development of experimental tasks that use oral presentation of contexts in Guinean to collect data of this language, as proposed in this paper (see section 4.2).

3 MODALITY

This section discusses modality within formal semantics. A sentence expresses modality when it expresses some type of possibility or necessity which constitutes its modal force (Kratzer, 1991; Von Stechow, 2006; Hacquard, 2011). For example, the sentence in (2a) expresses the necessity of Maria returning home at 9 pm, while the sentence in (2b) expresses the possibility of Maria returning home at 9 pm. Thus, both sentences in (2) are considered modals within this paradigm.

- (2) a. Maria must return home at 9pm.
b. Maria might return home at 9pm.

A necessity may be weak or strong. For example, in (3) and (4) we present two pairs of a context and a sentence. Both sentences state the necessity of Maria paying a fine. However, the necessity expressed by ‘must’ in (3) is stronger than the necessity expressed by ‘should’ in (4). Thus, ‘must’ is classified as a strong necessity modal whereas ‘should’ is classified as a weak necessity modal. This constitutes the second dimension of modality called modal strength.

- (3) Weak necessity deontic

CONTEXT: Rima is not yet used to riding a motorbike, she just started learning to ride 1 month ago. Her friend suggests that/gives her advice to:

Rima **should** drive slowly.

(Vander Klok, 2013, p. 3)

- (4) Strong necessity deontic

CONTEXT: When Agus went to the hospital, he was confused at first

because he tried to get a doctor's appointment, but he couldn't! But then, the nice lady at the information desk explained that he didn't yet have a hospital ID card to be a patient here, and if you don't have one, there are no exceptions. This is because the regulations at the hospital state:

Patients **must**/should have a hospital ID card to use the hospital services.

(Vander Klok, 2013, p. 3)

Thus, the distinction between necessity and possibility modals — the modal force — is not enough to account for further differences in strength as illustrated in (3) and (4), which in turn motivates the differentiation between weak necessity and strong necessity — the modal strength.

Modality also comes in different flavors. For instance, when the criteria is one's knowledge, as illustrated in (5a), it is called epistemic modality. The modality is deontic when the possibilities/necessities are considered according to the rules, as illustrated in (5b). When possibilities/necessities are considered based on someone's desires, as illustrated in (5c), the modality is called bouletic.

- (5) a. Context: After observing people coming inside with wet umbrellas.
It has to be raining. (epistemic)
- b. Context: hospital regulations.
Visitors have to leave by six pm. (deontic)
- c. Context: stern father.
You have to go to bed in ten minutes. (bouletic)

(von Fintel, 2006, p. 2)

Kratzer's (1977), in her analysis of English modal verbs, postulates that the modal force is given in the lexicon while the modal flavor is pragmatic. The reason for this analysis is that modal flavor varies according to the context whereas modal force does not. For example, the context and sentence pairs in (5) show that the verb 'have to' can convey different modal flavors, but its modal force is always one of necessity. This also occurs with the other modal auxiliary verbs. However, not all languages behave like this. Matthewson, Rullman and Davis (2005) show that, in the St'át'imcets language, the opposite occurs with the modal particles 'k'a', 'ka' and 'ka- -a'. For these particles, while the modal force is determined by the context, the modal flavor is lexically encoded, as illustrated in table 1.

Table 1: St'át'imcets modal particles

Types/modal force	Weak	Strong
Epistemic	k'a	
Deontic/Irrealis	ka	
Circumstantial	ka- -a	

Source: Matthewson, Rullman and Davis (2005)

Thus, the description of modal items for a new language must determine if their modal force, modal strength and modal flavor are given in the lexicon or pragmatically in context. Our intention when applying a modal questionnaire in Guinean was that it would provide data to decide if modals in this language are similar to English modals having lexicalized modal force but modal flavor determined by the context, similar to St'át'imcets modals having lexicalized modal flavor, but modal force determined by the context or even follow a different pattern from these languages. In order to do this, one should observe the contexts in which a native speaker accepts the modal. If a modal is accepted in a given context, it means that it is compatible with the force, strength and flavor imposed by the context. Determining the modal flavor is also important in a syntactic analysis, given that, at least in syntactic cartography, different modal flavors are associated with different syntactic heads in the hierarchy of functional heads (Cinque, 1999; 2006; Cinque; Rizzi, 2008). Vander Klok (2023) has proposed a questionnaire to gather data for the analysis of modality in a language that distinguishes: (i) modal force (i.e., necessities from possibilities); (ii) modal strength (i.e., weak necessity from strong necessity) and; (iii) modal flavors. The questionnaire we propose for Guinean was adapted from Vander Klok (2023)'s questionnaire which was elaborated to identify the modal force, modal strength and modal flavors of modals of Paciran Javanese language (see section 4.1).

4 MODAL QUESTIONNAIRE

A questionnaire is “a set of questions designed to elicit a set of responses from multiple speakers” (Vander Klok; Connors, 2019, p. 63). As discussed in the previous section, data collection in the case of formal semantics is based on the presentation of contexts. These should be short and appropriate to the culture of the informants. Vander Klok's questionnaire was initially developed for research on Paciran Javanese (Vander Klok, 2014). This questionnaire is based on formal semantics' descriptions of modality illustrated in section 3. Thus, its main purpose was not only to identify the modals used in a given language, but also to identify their (i) modal force, (ii) modal strength and (iii) modal flavor. It has been adapted for languages such as Paresi (Rech, Brandão, and Wit 2018), Manda (Bernander 2017), and many others (see Vander Klok 2023, p. 115).

In this section, we expose some points of the modal questionnaire with a presentation of the written contexts for interlinguistic use, proposed by Vander Klok (2014, 2023), as well as tasks that can be performed using the questionnaire. We also address the advantages and disadvantages of its use in research in underdescribed

languages. Next, we present the modal questionnaire with oral presentation of the contexts, which we developed based on Vander Klok (2023), showing the stages of its construction and application, the presentation of some examples of its use and, finally, its advantages and disadvantages in relation to the written version.

4.1 Written Modal Questionnaire (VANDER KLOK 2014, 2023)

Vander Klok's questionnaire (2014, 2023) constitutes a tool to understand modals in a given language, as well as possible grammaticalization strategies regarding modal force and flavor, only modal force and only modal flavor. To achieve this, the questionnaire brings a series of contexts that segment force or gradation of modal force — necessity, weak necessity or possibility — and modal flavor. The organization of the questionnaire establishes different contexts, and, in each context, a modal flavor and force is specified, for example: a context that aims at “epistemic possibility” with a context of “epistemic necessity”. From the contrast between these contexts, the force and flavor of a modal item is determined.

The questionnaire was developed to understand modality marks in Javanese. Many authors began, however, to apply it in different languages, belonging to different linguistic families (Hohaus, 2020; Rech et al, 2018; Kolagar, 2017; among others). Such extension in the use of the questionnaire requires adaptations, both linguistic and cultural, without, however, compromising the task (see Vander Klok 2023, p. 112-113).

Regarding the format of the questionnaire, the discursive contexts described are relatively short, but the complete questionnaire is extensive, considering that the latest version contains 46 contexts divided into 5 modal flavors — epistemic, deontic, teleological, circumstantial and bouletic — and three grades of modal strength — necessity, weak necessity and possibility as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2: Discursive contexts directed to the types of modality in the revised questionnaire.

	EPISTEMIC	ROOT / NON-EPISTEMIC			
		PARTICIPANT-EXTERNAL		PARTICIPANT-INTERNAL	
	Epistemic	Deontic	Teleological	Circumstantial	Bouletic
Necessity	5	4	4	4	3
Weak Necessity	3	3	3	–	–
Possibility	4	5	3	5	–

Source: Vander Klok (2023, p. 102)

According to Vander Klok (2023, p. 115), a questionnaire is not properly an elicitation task since elicitations need to be conducted by the researcher or a collaborator and questionnaires, on the other hand, could be given to the consultant so that they can complete it without rushing and without the supervision of the researcher or a collaborator. Nevertheless, questionnaires can be implemented as an elicitation if the researcher believes it to be a more productive way to collect data with sessions conducted by the researcher or a collaborator.

Vander Klok's (2014, 2023) proposal was to develop a questionnaire with controlled discursive contexts to understand a specific type of modality and modal force, applicable in different languages and in different ways, depending on the research objectives. The author shows how after the presentation of the context, the linguist may ask the consultant to perform different types of tasks such as the translation task, the felicity judgment task, the semi-forced choice task and the Likert classification task. We present each of these briefly below.

The translation task consists of providing sentences in a language within a context (either the target language or the contact language) and asking the consultant to translate them to sentences which are adequate in the same context. For example, in (6), the linguist provides a context in the target language and a sentence in the contact language and asks for a translation for the sentence in the target language. The translation method is used as a first approach when one wants to know the meaning of a linguistic expression, or when one wants to know the most natural reading for a certain sentence (Matthewson, 2004, p. 381).

- (6) Fatu ka odja si sakola di padas di tisidus. I buska na guarda-fatu, na kuzinha, na baranda i ka sta na nin un di e lugares. Pera! I ka djubi inda na guarda-fatu di si ermon matchu, ma Fatu ka ten serteza si kontra i sta la.

(Sakola di Fatu pudi sta na guarda-fatu di ermon.)⁹.

One problem pointed out by Vander Klok (2023) about the translation task is that research consultants may translate the target sentence without considering context; in this way, the objective of the investigation is lost. According to the author, to mitigate this problem, a question can be inserted into the translation task about whether there are other ways of expressing the same content in the target language, as Rech et al (2018, p. 237) do in an adaptation of Vander Klok (2014)'s modal questionnaire for Paresi (Aruák).

The second type of task is the judgment task. Judgment consists of accepting or rejecting some linguistic object (Matthewson, 2011, p. 270). There are different types of judgment tasks such as grammatical judgments, truth-conditions judgments and felicity conditions judgments. For semantic analysis, the truth-conditions judgment's goal is to verify whether the speaker accepts a sentence as true in a context and the felicity condition judgment's goal is to verify if the speaker accepts a sentence's utterance as natural in a given context (Matthewson, 2004; Krifka, 2011; Sanchez-Mendes, 2014). To do this, a context is presented, and it is checked whether a sentence is accepted or not in that context.

- (7) a. Na un kontestu nunde ku Fatu ka pudi ba brinka pabia sta ba duenti, ma gosi i san, bu na pudi uza frasi "Fatu pudi brinka gosi."?"¹⁰

Since the sentence 'Fatu pudi brinka gosi' was collected in a context with permission reading, one would already know in advance that the verb 'pudi' has this reading. Thus, placing this sentence in other contexts by testing whether speakers accept other readings (i.e. epistemic, deontic, bouletic, teleological and circumstantial) is a way of determining which readings this modal presents with — the positive data — and which readings it

⁹ Fatu can't find her fabric scrap bag. She has looked for it in the wardrobe, in the kitchen, in the balcony and it is not in those places. Wait! She hasn't looked in her brother's wardrobe yet, but Fatu isn't sure it is there. (Fatu's bag could be in her brother's wardrobe).

¹⁰ In a context where Fatu couldn't play because she was sick, but she is fine now, could you use the sentence 'Fatu can play now.'?"

does not have — the negative data. Hence, the advantage of this method is that it allows access to negative data (Bochnak; Matthewson, 2015), which is not possible when working only with translation or with naturalistic data from texts (Matthewson, 2004, p. 371).

The (semi)forced choice task presents the discursive context and two or more target words or sentences. The research consultant can choose a target word or sentence, more than one target word or sentence, or even none of the words or sentences presented in the alternatives if they do not consider them to be felicitous in the described context (Vander Klok, 2023, p.117). By enabling these options, the (semi)forced choice task is considered quite flexible, also allowing the consultant to make small modifications in the case of sentences (cf. Vander Klok 2023, p. 117). It is beneficial for research to use forced or semi-forced tasks as they provide response options for consultants; This feature allows the addition of information that can corroborate the target sentences. In (8), we present an example of our research in which this task, with target words, was applied.

- (8) Fatu sempri ta bai na kasa di sinhora Mansata pa bibi uarga na ora di sia. I ka obrigatoriu pa i bai, ma i ta bai la tudu dia na mesmu orariu. Gosi, i ora di sia. Ke ku Fatu sta na fasi?

Marka opson ku na prenxi adequadamenti lakuna di frazi ku sta bas.

Fatu _____ sta na bibi uarga na kasa di sinhora Mansata.¹¹

- () pudi
- () dibi di
- () ten ku

As it is a context of epistemic necessity, the expected response is the alternative with the modal verb 'dibi di' (Inlaté, 2023). The other options will evaluate which modals are acceptable when completing the sentence outside the given context.

Finally, in the Likert classification task, the consultant evaluates the degree of acceptability of the target sentence, considering the discursive context in which it is inserted.

An example of gradation on the Likert scale can be from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates that the sentence is not felicitous in the given context; and 5, which is completely felicitous.

- (9) Brinsan ta bai nada na ilha di Polon tudu dia apartir di seis oras. Matabidju sta sirbidu, i Brinsan ka sta na kasa. Aladji djubi pa orlodju, i fala: i 6 i meia. (Brinsan dibi di sta na nada na ilha di Polon.)¹²

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5

¹¹ Fatu always goes to Mrs Mansata's house to drink uarga for dinner. She is not obliged to go, but she goes there every day, at the same time. It's dinner time. What is Fatu doing?
Check the alternative which fills in appropriately the following sentence.
Fatu _____ be drinking uarga at Mrs. Mansata's house.

- () can
- () must
- () have to

¹² Brinsan swims in Poilão island every day, at 6. Breakfast is served and Brinsan is not home. Aladji looks at the clock: it's six and a half. (Brinsan must be swimming in Poilão island.)

Vander Klok (2023) notes that the modal questionnaire, conducted through elicitation or as a written questionnaire through various tasks, can assist eliciting modal items across languages and understanding their meaning, meeting the researcher's objectives. The most common tasks implemented in the questionnaire include the translation task, the felicity judgment or a combination of those, followed by (semi-) forced choice tasks and Likert classification tasks (Vander Klok, 2023, p 115).

The 2023 version of the questionnaire illustrated in table 2 presents significant advances compared to the previous one, but it is still subject to some criticism.¹³ Schilling (2013) points out the inadequacy of written questionnaires, because this format makes the consultant pay attention to a standard variety of the language: "[...] to confound linguistic grammaticality with social acceptability or 'correctness', and corresponding rejection of well formed constructions". This criticism, in our view, could be extended to the questionnaire format proposed by Vander Klok (2014; 2023). As we discussed in the previous section, in a first attempt to apply the Vander Klok (2023)'s questionnaire, the contexts were presented in a written format but consultants found it strange to see written Guinean. We consider that their reaction was caused by the lack of writing experience with Guinean has conditioned them to think that their capacities of answering questionnaires in written form extend only to Portuguese, but not to Guinean. According to Inlaté¹⁴ (pc), Guinean people feel more comfortable in contact with written Portuguese than with written Guinean, what might happen because Guinean is not an official language and, because of it, not used in teaching.¹⁵ Therefore, Guinean does not have an official spelling. We argue this made the written questionnaire feel less natural for them. Our hypothesis is that by giving them the questionnaire in a written form creates a sense of formality as described by Schilling (2013) and they feel pressured to display writing competence in Guinean and fear of making mistakes when writing due to a lack of reference to use since they do not practice writing this language. Even though the researcher knows that the language does not have a standard orthography and that there is no right or wrong way to write words, that might be difficult for speakers that have already internalized that there is always a right way to write a word.

In the following section, we present the structure of the oral modal questionnaire, pointing out in which aspects it fits better to collect data in underdescribed languages without a standard writing.

4.2 Oral modal questionnaire

Based on the problems we had with the written presentation of contexts, our proposal is that contexts should be presented in an audio format when the written format is challenging. This proposal allows the informant to come into contact with a version of the language with which he is familiar and which is relevant to the research. We tested this proposal developing audios based on the written version proposed by Vander Klok (2023) and applying it with Guinean consultants. Below, we detail the process of the construction and application of this questionnaire.

¹³ The revised version questionnaire has a more even distribution across modal force/modal flavour with more contexts to teleological modality (see Vander Klok, 2023, p. 103).

¹⁴ Inlaté is a native speaker of Guinean and has lived in Guinea-Bissau until the age of twenty-nine and has published research and pedagogical materials to teach Portuguese and Guinean such as the books "Modalidade no português brasileiro e no guineense: uma proposta para o ensino de gramática e cultura africana" and "No rais/Nossas raízes".

¹⁵ The contact of the interviewed speakers with reading and writing Guinean is restricted to social media, whose language is closer to speech.

Following Vander Klok (2023), we employed 12 contexts of a specific modality — epistemic, opposing the modal forces of strong necessity, weak necessity and possibility. Our contexts also contrast in relation to the modal flavor, those who have one modal flavor in evidence are contrasted with others modal flavors.

The oral questionnaire was developed to study the epistemic modality in the Guinean language, but it is adaptable to any type of modality and languages. In the process of constructing the questionnaire, based on Vander Klok (2023), adaptations were made, considering mainly cultural aspects, proper names and names of places¹⁶. Another advantage of the oral questionnaire we are proposing is its structure, built in short contexts, “considering that long contexts can tire the consultant and/or make the task uninteresting.” (Louie, 2015, p. 49). Finally, in our view, the main advantage of the method we are proposing is its suitability for languages with very low written production, such as Guinean and most African and indigenous languages. (Cá, 2021, p. 17; Moseley, 2010, p. 89). The stages of constructing the questionnaire were arranged in table 3.

Table 3: Stages of constructing the Oral Questionnaire.

Step 1	Selection of the contexts from the Vander Klok Questionnaire (2023);
Step 2	Adaptation of the names of people, places and cultural aspects;
Step 3	Translation of the contact language contexts into the target language;
Step 4	Recording of the contexts by a native speaker of the target language ¹⁷ ;
Step 5	Verification of the recorded contexts by another native speaker;
Step 6	Re-recording of the contexts that needed to be corrected with a native speaker;
Step 7	Insertion of the recorded contexts on the YouTube;
Step 8	Insertion and randomization of the recorded contexts on the Google Forms platform.

Source: the authors

Below, we illustrate each of the steps mentioned above, with examples taken from our research. The first step is to select the contexts we want to use. For example, one of the contexts chosen was context (6) of Vander Klok's written Questionnaire (2023) for epistemic modality (from the speaker's knowledge) of weak necessity. The second step is

¹⁶ To adapt the contexts of the questionnaire, we took as a basis the storyboards that are part of the book Nossas Raizes (Rech et al, 2023). Also, we had guidance from a native Guinean, Lucas Inlaté, to whom we are deeply grateful.

¹⁷ In the authors' research, the recording of the contexts was made in Guinean. This took place in a soundproof environment, at the Fonapli (Applied Phonetics Laboratory) at the Federal University of Santa Catarina.

to culturally adapt it considering the Guinean society. For example, for this adaptation we have changed the activities described in the contexts, the names of characters and names of places as illustrated in (10). In this context, we note the use of a Guinean name, Sunkar, as well as the use of the term *blanha* — land used for rice cultivation.

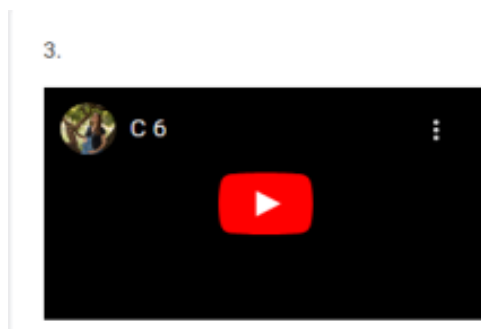
- (10) You know that Sunkar works at the *blanha* in the morning. Most mornings she goes to the *blanha*, but you know there are a few mornings she stays at home.

The third step was translating this adapted version to Guinean. For the second and third step, it is necessary to have access to a native speaker that can check the cultural adaptation and do the translation. Then, the fourth step is recording the audio version of these contexts. It is important to record the audios with a native speaker since they must sound as natural to the consultant as possible. By recording with a person who is not a native speaker, there is the risk of the accent, an incorrect intonation or stressing the syllable triggering the same awkward feeling. In our case, the recordings were done with the same speaker who translated the contexts. This is beneficial since the person who translated is already familiar with the contexts.

After recording, the next step is the assessment of the recordings. This can be done showing the recordings to a second native speaker and asking if they sound natural. Because of this verification process, the implementation of audios requires at least two native speakers. In our case, re-recordings needed to be carried out, as some audios were too quiet and also due to the necessity to make adjustments indicated by the native Guinean-speaking collaborator.

After all those steps, the researcher has all contexts in audio and can develop the questionnaire to be applied orally. This can be done using any kind of equipment that reproduces audio, even a cellphone. In order to facilitate the elicitation process, data storage and analysis, we recommend the development of this questionnaire in a platform. In our case, we used Google Forms, following Vander Klok; Rech; Guesser (2023). Google Forms offers good resources such as stipulating the order of the contexts or randomizing them, storage of the data collected in Google Drive and giving an initial analysis showing the percentage of consultants who chose each alternative. The interface allows for the researcher or collaborator to click on the button to listen to the audio as illustrated below.

Figure 2: Questionnaire's example of oral presentation of context through YouTube's video.



Source: the authors

After clicking the button, the audio starts with the presentation of a context in Guinean. After that, there is an audio instruction, also in Guinean, for the consultant to choose one among three written alternatives of modal verbs to fill a blank in a sentence (see 11 below). Then, the sentence is played with the word 'blank' in the place that would be appropriate for a modal verb in this language. Thus, this is a (semi)forced choice task. The consultant's task is to choose just one of the three options presented, the most felicitous in this context, to fill the gap in the target sentence.

- (11) Marka opson ku na prenxi adequadamenti lakuna di frazi ku sta bas. Sunkar _____ sta na blanha gosi.¹⁸
- () pudi
 - () dibi di
 - () ten ku

One problem with the implementation in *Google Forms* was that we could use an audio format for the presentation of the context by uploading our audio files on the *YouTube* platform and then inserting the *YouTube* links for the audios directly in the questionnaire. Then our consultant could just touch play to hear the context as illustrated in figure 2. However, the same could not be done for the alternatives which had to be inserted in the written format. Therefore, during the application, it was necessary the presence of a native speaker of Guinean to read these alternatives out loud.

In order to identify problems in executing the questionnaire, a pilot was carried out with only two participants who were native speakers of Guinean. The low number of participants to carry out the pilot was due to the difficulty in finding native Guinean

¹⁸ Check the alternative which fills in appropriately the following sentence.
Sunkar _____ be in the blanha right now.

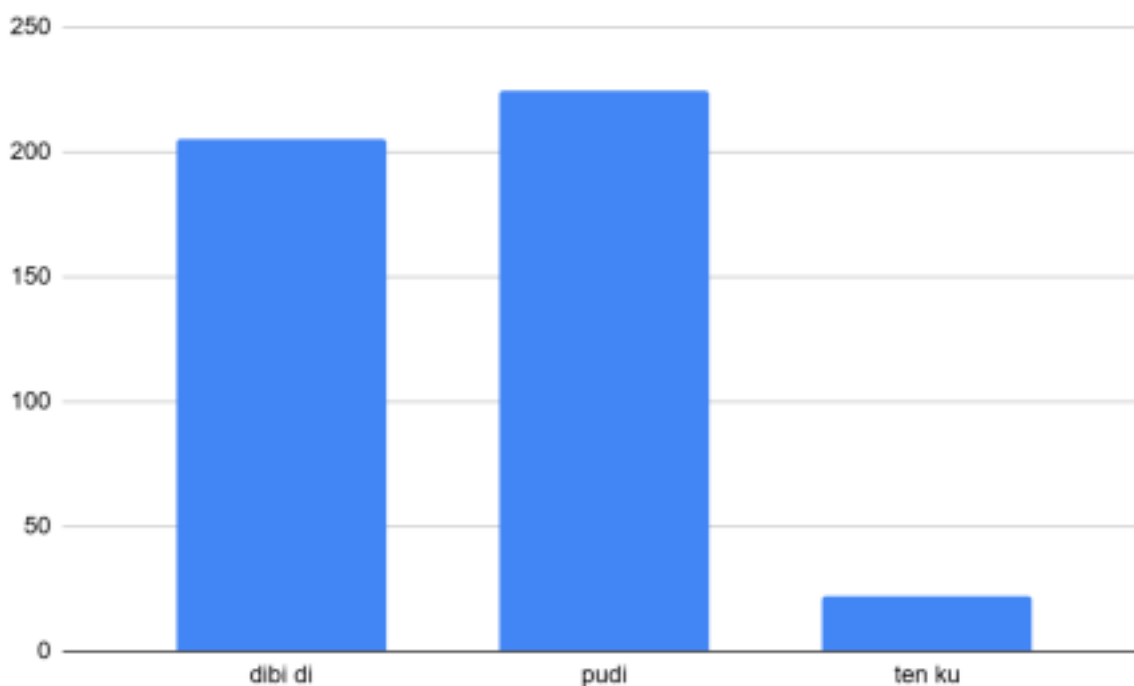
speakers in the city of Florianópolis, Brazil, who have recently arrived from Guinea-Bissau and have had little contact with Brazilian Portuguese to avoid Portuguese influence as discussed in the previous section. The pilot allowed us to assess the consultants' response to the design of the task (i.e. listening to an audio with a context, followed by an instruction and a sentence with a blank). From the answers given, it was found that the dynamics of the test were perfectly understood by both participants, with the quick choice of a single answer, among the alternatives offered.

One point we identified needed improving in the pilot was the need for randomization. Since contexts were present in the pilot in a non-randomized order, consultants first heard all strong necessity contexts, followed by contexts of weak necessity and, finally, contexts of possibility. Since this sequence could generate conditioning of the participants' responses, we chose to randomize them in the final version of the questionnaire.

The final version of this oral questionnaire was administered in person in the Bafatá region, more specifically in the Bambadinca sector located in the east of Guinea-Bissau, by one collaborator who is a native speaker. This collaborator applied the questionnaire with 41 participants. He activated the audio, read the alternatives and marked the alternative chosen by the consultant on the form. According to our collaborator in Guinea, it took each participant around 20 minutes to answer the questionnaire. Of these 41 participants, the responses of 38 were considered. Two responses were eliminated because the consultants had spent a considerable amount of time outside Guinea-Bissau — in Portugal — and their answers could have been influenced by European Portuguese. Thus, the data elicited are from people who have never spent a long time outside of Guinea-Bissau and who use Guinean in everyday situations, with 7 of them not speaking any variant of Portuguese.

From this point, we present some of the results of our research. In graph 1, below, we present the general use of modals *pudi*, *dibi di* and *ten ku* in strong, weak necessity and possibility epistemic contexts.

Graph 1: Frequency of the use of modals *pudi*, *dibi di* and *ten ku* in epistemic contexts.



Source: the authors

The graph 1 shows preference for *dibi di* and *pudi* in epistemic contexts, in relation to *ten ku*, displaying percentages of 45,4%, 49,8% and 4,9%, respectively. Note that *ten ku* exhibits a very low percentage, suggesting strong restrictions to epistemic contexts. Brazilian Portuguese necessity modal *tem que* (have to) also has a restriction with epistemic contexts (see Pessotto, 2015). Since Guinean *ten ku* and Brazilian Portuguese *tem que* (have to) have the same origin, this shows that in the process of Guinean formation, the semantics of the modal were preserved.

Thus, we consider that the oral Questionnaire developed for this research was effective because it pointed out that *ten ku* does not prevail in epistemic contexts and that *pudi* and *dibi di* appear in equal proportions in these contexts. An interesting aspect of this questionnaire is that it does not pass through the scrutiny of traditional norms, unlike its written version (Schilling, 2013). To this research, specifically, using the oral language was crucial for the presentation of contexts, because it does not impose difficulties of comprehension. Finally, it is important to point out that the implementation of the questionnaire with audios helped our Guinean consultants to feel more comfortable when doing the task.

One point to be improved in the design of the oral Questionnaire presented in this paper is that it displays the answer options in written form. Based on its application, we evaluate that a better design would be with the options also included in the audio recordings, and ask the consultant to select from the stated options. However, *Google Forms* does not have this feature and another platform would have to be used.

In this paper, we demonstrated the application of the oral questionnaire with a (semi)forced choice task, however, this oral presentation of contexts is also compatible with other types of tasks such as translation; felicity judgment; and Likert classification, similarly to the written versions by Vander Klok (2014, 2023).

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this paper, we have presented an oral version of the modal questionnaire, developed based on Vander Klok's questionnaire (2014; 2023). The innovation of this work is to propose a modal questionnaire elicitation method presenting the contexts with audios. We argue that this design allows for the application of the questionnaire with the same tasks that are usually conducted with the written questionnaire. The oral version of the questionnaire is, in our opinion, more suitable for understanding modal marks in undescribed languages that are not in the education system and do not have an official written form. This is because these languages are not taught in schools and, consequently, their speakers have no contact with their writing. For this reason, speakers might feel awkward in contact with the written form of the language in a questionnaire and, as we have already mentioned, an examination of the language from the perspective of the educational standard, which is not desirable.

Furthermore, the oral application allows the number of consultants who respond to the questionnaire to be increased and the interaction being only in Guinean at the time of collection prevents the Portuguese language from exerting any type of influence on the consultants' judgments. Moreover, we have also mentioned how using audios might help with subtle prosodic features which could be erased in the written form and that it makes questionnaires more dynamic and less tiring for consultants.

There are, however, some disadvantages to the technique of developing our oral modal questionnaire. One of them is that its construction process is very laborious compared to the written questionnaire version following many steps. To construct the oral questionnaire, after adapting the contexts, it was necessary to record, check and correct them, which involved the participation of two native speakers and two recording moments. Once the recordings are completed, the implementation still needs to be planned as illustrated in our case with the Google Forms form implementation.

In spite of those disadvantages, we had a positive response from consultants¹⁹. Thus, the linguistic conditions of the fieldwork makes the benefits compensate for the disadvantages to collect data in Guinean and that can be also the case for other languages with no written tradition.

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¹⁹ According to one of the anonymous reviewers, to determine whether one of the questionnaires (oral vs. written) is methodologically and statistically more efficient than the other for a given phenomenon, language, and population, it would be necessary to conduct an experiment with the type of format as the independent variable. We fully agree with this suggestion and are grateful for the reviewer's valuable input, but our point in this paper was not to prove that oral questionnaires are more efficient than written questionnaires, but to discuss an alternative for languages in which the application of a written questionnaire is very difficult or even impossible. Conducting this kind of experiment imposes many challenges. For instance, it would only be possible to be applied for languages with consultants already familiarized with the written form since it could cause great discomfort to ask for consultants with little or no literacy to answer a written questionnaire and selecting for consultants which are literate defeats the purpose of the oral questionnaire which should be aimed at consultants not familiarized with the written form of the language.

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