Explaining the intransitive L tone in Greater Manding: 
a form with(out) a function

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Manding & Mokole within Mande

Proto-Mande

SE Mande

W Mande

NW (NE)

Bobo & Samogo

Soninke-Bozo

SW-C

SW

C

Jogo-Jeri

Greater Manding

Manding

Mokole

Vai-Kono
Basic phonology

- 2 tones: L vs H, L vs ∅, L vs ∅ vs H
- downdrift, downstep, utterance-initial boundary L, different types of prosodic boundaries
- basic syllable structure: CV(N)
- only a few V-initial morphemes: pronouns, functional morphemes, borrowings
Basic morphosyntax

- limited inflectional morphology
- suffixing
- **rigid** S (O) V X order
- in a **transitive** construction: **obligatory** O, with minimally a **dummy 3SG** pronoun à present
- TAMP tend to be expressed syncretically but can be distributed across as many as 3 sites within the clause:
  
  S $TAMP_1$ (aka $PM \approx AUX$) (O) V-$TAMP_2$ X $TAMP_3$
Transitivity status

- obligatory O ⇒ transitivity status is **obvious**
- positive **PFV\textsubscript{T}** vs **PFV\textsubscript{I}** in Greater Manding and Soninke:
  
  PFV\textsubscript{TR}: S **PFV** O V
  
  PFV\textsubscript{ITR}: S V -PFV

  vs

  PFV.NEG: S **PFV.NEG** (O) V

- Mande morphosyntax offers at least two **plausible sources** of the PFV\textsubscript{TR} vs PFV\textsubscript{ITR} distinction:
  - *agentive postposition > PFV\textsubscript{T}, PFV\textsubscript{I} is the older PFV (Creissels 1997)
  - *insubordinated PFV.PTCP > PFV\textsubscript{I}, PFV\textsubscript{T} is the older PFV
Intrantisitive L in Mandinka (Creissels 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PFV.NEG</th>
<th>COPLOC.NEG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>IPFV.NEG: _ + V-lá (INF)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>PROG.NEG: _ + V-kàŋ (PROG)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>máŋ</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>máŋ́L</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>té ~ tí</td>
<td>té́L ~ tí́L</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- COPLOG.NEG **elsewhere** does not show the intransitive L:
  
  RES: \( _ + V-\text{rìn} \sim V-\text{rìn} \) (PTCP.PFV) or \( V-\text{rìn} \sim V-\text{rìn} + _ \)
  
  LOC: \( _ + X \)
Intrantsitive L in Mandinka (Creissels 2013)

T  (1) ʒ mäŋ sǐlafándá nààtti
1SG  PFV.NEG present  bring
‘I did not bring a present’ (Creissels 2013:71)

I  (2) ʒ mäŋ ˣsǐlǎŋ fêŋ ná jàŋ
1SG  PFV.NEG  fear  thing  OBL  here
‘I am not afraid of anything here’ (Creissels 2013:70)
Intrantisitive L in Manding

« … aucune des autres variétés de mandingue documentées jusqu’ici ne présente l’équivalent de la distinction tonale qui existe en mandinka à l’accompli négatif ainsi que dans l’usage de la copule négative en fonction de prédicatif d’inaccompli négatif. »

(Creissels 2013:60)
Intrantisitive L in Kakabe (Vydrina 2013)

- Kakabe is a Mokole language
- Vydrina (2013) reports that the tone of the verb can be “facultativement remplacé par un ton bas” in intransitive constructions where Aux “est suivi directement par le verbe”
- alternative analysis in terms of intransitive L: Aux\(^L\) V
- some complications:
  - the tone of light Aux (CV) is “polar” to the following tone
  - light Aux can be analyzed as \(\emptyset^L\) irrespective of the transitivity status of the predication (and one light Aux \(ka^L\) is PFVT)
  - that is, only heavy Aux show the alternation \([T]\) Aux\(\emptyset\) vs \([I]\) Aux\(^L\)
## Intrantisitive L in Kakabe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heavy Aux</th>
<th>Light Aux</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>T</strong></td>
<td><strong>I</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bélé</td>
<td>bélé$^L$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bátí</td>
<td>bátí$^L$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>báC</td>
<td>báC$^L$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>máá</td>
<td>máá$^L$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>téé</td>
<td>téé$^L$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kánî</td>
<td>kánî$^L$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mánî</td>
<td>mánî$^L$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Intrantisitive L puzzle

- Mande morphosyntax provides no natural pathway for the language-internal emergence of an intransitivity marker in this slot.
- No other language outside of the Manding-Mokole group in the region has been reported to have a comparable marker, which precludes any direct borrowing.
- In Mandinka, the intransitive L is conditioned not only by the transitivity status of the predication but also by its linear context, which is bidirectional: it requires both an AUX to its left and a V to its right.
- In Kakabe, there is some troubling relation between the intransitive L, tonal polarity and weight of the AUX.
Solution #1: language contact

- The floating L intransitive marker is a result of an imperfect transfer of the L tone morphological operation used in Soninke on verbs, irrespective of their transitivity, in combination with AUX má PFV.NEG and AUX ntá IPFV.NEG

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PFV.NEG</th>
<th>má (O) V</th>
<th>IPFV.NEG</th>
<th>ntá (O) V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Soninke pattern</td>
<td>má (O) V</td>
<td>IPFV.NEG</td>
<td>ntá (O) V</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bamana (Manding) pattern</td>
<td>má (O) V</td>
<td>IPFV.NEG</td>
<td>té (O) V</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandinka pattern</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>PFV.NEG</td>
<td>máL V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IPFV.NEG</td>
<td>téL V</td>
<td>té O V</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Solution #1: language contact

- the transfer was triggered by **formal and semantic similarity** between the relevant Soninke and Manding constructions

- **reanalysis** of L as an intransitive marker: the relation between AUX and L on the verb in Soninke would arguably be most obvious to Manding speakers in the [AUX V] sequence, i.e. in intransitive constructions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Soninke pattern</th>
<th>Bamana (Manding) pattern</th>
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<tr>
<td>PFV.NEG má (O) V\L</td>
<td>PFV.NEG má (O) V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPFV.NEG ntá (O) V\L</td>
<td>IPFV.NEG té (O) V</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mandinka pattern</th>
<th></th>
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<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFV.NEG máL V má O V</td>
<td>IPFV.NEG téL V té O V</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Solution #1: language contact

- in Soninke, a language-internal explanation is possible for the L tone on the verb the two constructions
- historically, [Soninke → Mandinka] transfer is sociolinguistically plausible
- the solution #1 matches well with the distribution of the intransitive L in Mandinka
Solution #1: language contact

- **why** would the L tone be *borrowed* into Mandinka and Kakabe?
- **why** would it be *borrowed as a floating L* rather than as a replacive L?
- the **range of AUXs** with intransitive L in Kakabe is very big…
- given the geography, [Soninke → Kakabe] transfer is less evident ⇒ suggesting [Soninke → *Proto Greater Manding]*
- the relation between the **transitivity** status and the presence of a **floating L**, **tonal polarity** and **weight** of AUX in **Kakabe**
- a floating **L with AUX** (or a L on AUX) that is **not conditioned by transitivity** sporadically occurs elsewhere in Manding
Something’s not quite right here…
Solution #2: reframe the problem

- that a floating L accompanies AUX in an intransitive predication but is absent in the corresponding transitive predication does not necessarily mean that this L functions as an intransitive marker

- actually, it has no function:
  - a given AUX has two allomorphs, one with and one without a floating L, depending on what follows
  - the floating L is a part of the lexical tone of the AUX and the way it is realised (or deleted) depends on the type of boundary and the tone that follows it

- This completely changes the perspective on what the possible source of the “intransitive” L may be
**Solution #2: L is lexical**

- historically, the floating L is **from a non-floating lexical L** of the AUX (*L, *LH, *HL…)

- provided this floating L is there (unlike in Standard Bamana), various outcomes are possible:
  - it links to the right if followed by a H-initial verb, otherwise it is deleted (Mandinka)
  - it is deleted when followed by L, otherwise it links to the left when the preceding vowel has lost its tonal specification and can copy to the right when followed by a H-initial verb (Kakabe)
  - it is deleted when followed by L, it can link to the left when the preceding vowel has lost its tonal specification and otherwise it is deleted (Maninka of Kita)
  - it links to the right if followed by H, otherwise it may be deleted or link to the left (some Bamana varieties?)
  - …
Solution #2: supporting evidence

- for all the relevant AUXs, a reconstruction with a lexical L is possible (with a hedge about PFV.NEG)
- functional morphemes, such as AUX, especially the light ones, tend to lose their tonal specification (become realized as H)
- normally, only L can float
- there is independent evidence for the relevance of prosodic boundaries (such as V || X, Aux || O, Aux || (O) V) in Greater Manding
- polar tone on AUX (i.e., $\emptyset^L$) has been reported also for those Manding languages where the tone of the verb is not lowered
Solution #2: why intransitive constructions?

- better: why ° of the AUX tends to be deleted in transitive constructions?
- frequency effects: only in transitive constructions, AUX can be, and frequently is, followed by à 3SG
- compare, the frequent tendency in Manding for a split of the original AUX °maN PFV.NEG into ma PFV.NEG (which can be both I&T) vs. maN as QUAL.NEG (which can be only I)
- prosodically, the Aux || O border appears to be largely similar to the V || X border (recall Mandinka COP téL immediately followed by a verb vs COP té followed by X)