

# Deobliquative: a new valence-decreasing category

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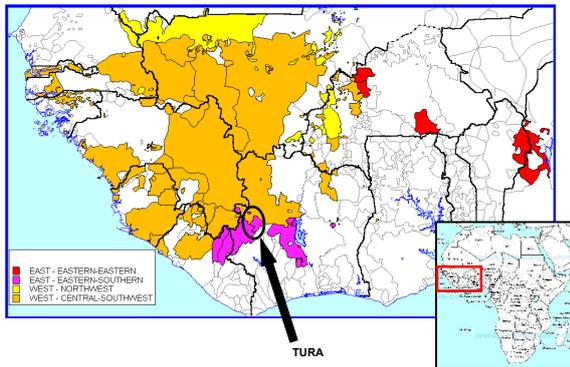
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## Tura and the Mande languages:



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## The object of study:

The semantics of the Tura verbal affix  $[-L\acute{A}]$  (*-lál -nál -lɔ*)

## The claim:

I argue that the primary function of the derivational affix  $[-L\acute{A}]$  is to mark on the verb the deletion (or sometimes facultativity) of the argument which is normally obligatorily expressed with the base verb as an indirect object or an adverbial.

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## Preliminaries:

- 24 of some 200 Tura end in  $[-L\acute{A}]$
- for 15 of these 24 verbs a similar verb without  $[-L\acute{A}]$  can be found
- 9 of the 15 pairs consist of (quasi-)synonyms (in the remaining 6 pairs the semantic relation between the two verbs are less obvious)

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## (Quasi-)synonymous pairs:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| (1) <i>bānná</i> 'fall (of a group, mass)' | <i>bān</i> 'fall (of a group, mass)'                     |
| <i>bhiilá</i> 'fall (fast)'                | <i>bhili</i> 'fall (fast)'                               |
| <i>dalá</i> 'fall'                         | <i>daa</i> 'enter; fall'                                 |
| <i>dɔlɔ</i> 'stop; wait'                   | <i>dɔ</i> 'stand; wait; stop'                            |
| <i>giinná</i> 'roll (up)'                  | <i>gini</i> 'roll'                                       |
| <i>gbielá</i> 'drag, trail'                | <i>gbie</i> 'pull, draw'                                 |
| <i>ma(a)ná</i> 'fall (with a blow)'        | <i>maa</i> 'hit, strike, beat; fall (of a bird of prey)' |
| <i>weinná</i> 'throw (here and there)'     | <i>wein</i> 'throw (away)'                               |
| <i>yalá</i> 'sit down'                     | <i>yaa</i> 'sit down'                                    |

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## Pairs without (quasi-)synonymous meanings:

- |                                      |                                    |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| (2) <i>bhúolá</i> 'turn upside-down' | <i>bhúo</i> 'cover'                |
| <i>gielá</i> 'send smb for smth'     | <i>gie</i> 'pass (by, through)'    |
| <i>gbaaná</i> 'bend, tilt; squat'    | <i>gbaan</i> 'fix, establish'      |
| <i>naaná</i> 'bow, stoop'            | <i>naa</i> 'stick (to), get stuck' |
| <i>walá</i> 'rise, get up'           | <i>waa</i> 'arrive'                |
| <i>zinná</i> 'get down'              | <i>zin</i> 'touch'                 |

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## Unpaired verbs:

- (3) a. *púolá* 'turn; coil; wring'
- seelá* 'move, change position; turn'
- yɔnná* 'squint (the eyes); become overcast with clouds (of the sky)'
- ywílá* 'crash down'
- |                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| b. <i>gálá</i> 'change, transform' | c. <i>kóló</i> 'educate, bring up, train' |
| <i>gbálá</i> 'thunder'             | <i>tálá</i> 'become black, blacken'       |
| <i>sálá</i> 'sweep'                | <i>zana</i> 'wake up'                     |
| <i>táná</i> 'lean against'         |   |
| <i>wálá</i> 'collapse'             |   |

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## Common morphosyntactic properties:

- the segmental verbal TAM-marking attaches to the right of  $[-L\acute{A}]$  before any postverbal constituents
- the non-segmental TAM-marking (i.e., tone change) affects only  $[-L\acute{A}]$  if the preceding syllable of the verb has a lower tone and both  $[-L\acute{A}]$  & the preceding syllable of the verb, if the latter has the same tone

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*dɔ́lɔ́* ‘stop’ & *lɔ́* ‘go’

- (4) *òò* *lɔ́* *kalaj* *lé*  
3SG.SUBJ.NEG.TAM go\TAM-TAM school to  
‘He did not go to school.’
- (5) *òò* *dɔ́-lɔ́* *yáálé*  
3SG.SUBJ.NEG.TAM stand-|LÁ|\TAM-TAM yesterday  
‘He did not stop yesterday.’

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*sáálá* ‘sweep’ & *póló* ‘detach’

- (6) *òò* *à* *lé* *póló*  
3SG.SUBJ.NEG.TAM 3SG tip detach\TAM-TAM  
‘He did not open it.’
- (7) *òò* *kwíí* *gí* *sála*  
3SG.SUBJ.NEG.TAM house inside sweep\TAM-TAM  
‘He did not sweep the house.’

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### Common morphosyntactic properties:

- **transposition:** |-LÁ| can be detached from the verb and function as a kind of support verb to give the verb it is part of the combinatorial possibilities of a noun, e.g. for purposes of focalization (cf. Bearth 1971:171-176). I consider this to be an instance of (partial) antimorphologization (cf. Idiatov 2005:64-67, forthcoming).

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*gbáálá* ‘thunder’

- (8) *lá* *gbála*  
rain-TAM thunder\TAM-TAM  
‘It thundered.’

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*gbáálá* ‘thunder’ → ‘It thundered again.’

**wɔ́-transposition** (‘do’-periphrasis)

- (9) *lá* *gbáálá* *déé* *ké* *wɔ́*  
rain-TAM thunder new a.certain do\TAM-TAM  
‘It thundered again.’

**|LÁ]-transposition**

- (10) *lá* *gbá* *déé* *ké* *lɔ́*  
rain-TAM thunder<sub>1</sub> new a.certain thunder<sub>2</sub>\TAM-TAM  
‘It thundered again.’

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### The previous account of the semantics of |-LÁ|:

Bearth (1970:170) analyses |-LÁ| as a derivational suffix with an intensive meaning (“valeur intensive”)

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### (Quasi-)synonymous pairs:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| (1) <i>bánná</i> ‘fall (of a group, mass)’           | <i>bân</i> ‘fall (of a group, mass)’                     |
| <i>bhíilá</i> ‘fall (fast)’                          | <i>bhíli</i> ‘fall (fast)’                               |
| <i>dalá</i> ‘fall’                                   | <i>daa</i> ‘enter; fall’                                 |
| <i>dɔ́lɔ́</i> ‘stop; wait’                           | <i>dɔ́</i> ‘stand; wait; stop’                           |
| <i>gínná</i> ‘roll (up)’                             | <i>gini</i> ‘roll’                                       |
| <i>gbíelá</i> ‘drag, trail’                          | <i>gbíe</i> ‘pull, draw’                                 |
| <i>ma(a)ná</i> ‘fall (with a blow)’                  | <i>maa</i> ‘hit, strike, beat; fall (of a bird of prey)’ |
| <i>weinná</i> <i>weenná</i> ‘throw (here and there)’ | <i>wein</i> ‘throw (away)’                               |
| <i>yalá</i> ‘sit down’                               | <i>yaa</i> ‘sit down’                                    |

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### A new account of the semantics of |-LÁ|:

I argue that the primary function of the derivational affix |-LÁ| is to mark on the verb the deletion (or sometimes facultativity) of the argument which is normally obligatorily expressed with the base verb as an indirect object or an adverbial.

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- The derivation with  $|-L\acute{A}|$  in Tura concerns motion verbs and (change of) posture verbs.
- The suppressed indirect object or adverbial has locative semantics (typically, it is the goal).
- The argument may be suppressed because it is referentially indefinite, as with *yalá* ‘sit down’ and *bánná* ‘fall’.
- In a few cases, the argument may be suppressed because it is coreferential to the subject or the direct object, as with *dóló* in the meaning ‘wait’.

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### *yaa* vs. *yalá* ‘sit down’

- (11) a. *yalá!*  
b. *\*yaa!*  
‘Sit down!’
- (12) a. *yaa gbààné tà!*  
sit.down chair on  
b. *?yalá gbààné tà!*  
sit.down- $|-L\acute{A}|$  chair on  
‘Sit down on the chair!’

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### *bân* vs. *bánná* ‘fall (of a group, mass)’

- (13) *án gwee bân zúlú-lèè bhà*  
1SG.SUBJ.TAM stone let.fall\TAM-TAM wash-place\L on  
‘I dropped the stones in the washing place.’
- (14) *án gwee bánná zúlú-lèè bhà*  
1SG.SUBJ.TAM stone let.fall- $|-L\acute{A}|$ \TAM-TAM ~~zúlú-lèè~~ bhà  
‘I dropped the stones (somewhere, here and there, on the ground).’

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### *bân* vs. *bánná* ‘fall (of a group, mass)’

- (13) *án gwee bân zúlú-lèè bhà*  
1SG.SUBJ.TAM stone let.fall\TAM-TAM wash-place\L on  
‘I dropped the stones in the washing place.’
- (14) *án gwee bánná (séé tà)*  
1SG.SUBJ.TAM stone let.fall- $|-L\acute{A}|$ \TAM-TAM ground on  
‘I dropped the stones (somewhere, here and there, on the ground).’

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### *dó* vs. *dóló* in the meaning ‘wait’

- (15) *dó/\*dóló ò gòn, án nù-ì!*  
wait 1SG for 1SG.SUBJ.TAM come-PROG  
‘Wait for me, I’m coming.’
- (16) *ì dóló/\*dó, e nù-à*  
2SG.SUBJ.TAM wait\TAM-TAM 1SG.SUBJ.TAM come-FUT  
‘If you wait, he’ll come.’
- (17) *e dóló-ì/?dó-ì wééé gòn*  
3SG.SUBJ.TAM wait-PROG money for  
‘He’s waiting for the money.’

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### Why the proposed analysis of the semantics of $|-L\acute{A}|$ is better?

- It offers a straightforward account of the examples such as the ones just presented
- It squares well with the fact that the derivation with  $|-L\acute{A}|$  in Tura concerns motion verbs and (change of) posture verbs
- It suggests a plausible etymology for  $|-L\acute{A}|$ , viz. a demonstrative root *\*tá* ‘there’
- Similarly, the cognate affixes in Busa *-tɛ*, Boko *-(l)ɛ* and Bokobaru *-rɛ* can be brought back to another a demonstrative root *\*tɛ* ‘there’

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### A label for $|-L\acute{A}|$ :

- some terms used for comparable derivations: *deobjective*, *indefinite object deletion*, *absolutive*, *reflexive*, and sometimes more generally *suppressive*

**(locative) deobliquative/deoblique**

**(locative) oblique suppressive**

(with two subtypes: indefinite & coreferential)

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### $|-L\acute{A}|$ from a typological perspective:

- the kind of derivation expressed by  $|-L\acute{A}|$  appears to be typologically unique

“[valence changes involving] removal of an indirect object or an oblique argument [are] unattested”

(Haspelmath & Müller-Bardey 2004)

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### Is |-LÁ| really so unique?

#### YES...

- I know no exact analogues to the Tura derivation in |-LÁ|outside of Eastern Mande
- I know no languages with affixes whose main function would be mark on the verb the suppression of an indirect object or adverbial

#### BUT...

actually, some parallels can be found...

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### Some cross-linguistic parallels:

French

- (18) *Bon, moi, j'y vais*  
 well I I-there go  
 'Well, I'm leaving (lit.: 'Well, I, I go there').'

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### Some cross-linguistic parallels:

#### indirect object reflexives

Russian

- (19) a. *Ivan stroit sebe dom*  
 Ivan builds oneself.DAT house.ACC  
 b. *Ivan stroitsja*  
 Ivan builds-REFL  
 'Ivan is building a house for himself.'
- (20) a. *Ivan zadajot sebe vopros*  
 Ivan asks oneself.DAT question.ACC  
 b. *Ivan zadajotsja voprosom*  
 Ivan builds-REFL question.INST  
 'Ivan is asking himself a question.'

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