Explaining the intransitive L tone in Greater Manding:

a form with(out) a function

Mande languages


EAST - EASTERN-EASTERN
EAST - EASTERN-SOUTHERN
WEST - NORTHWEST
WEST - CENTRAL-SOUTHWEST
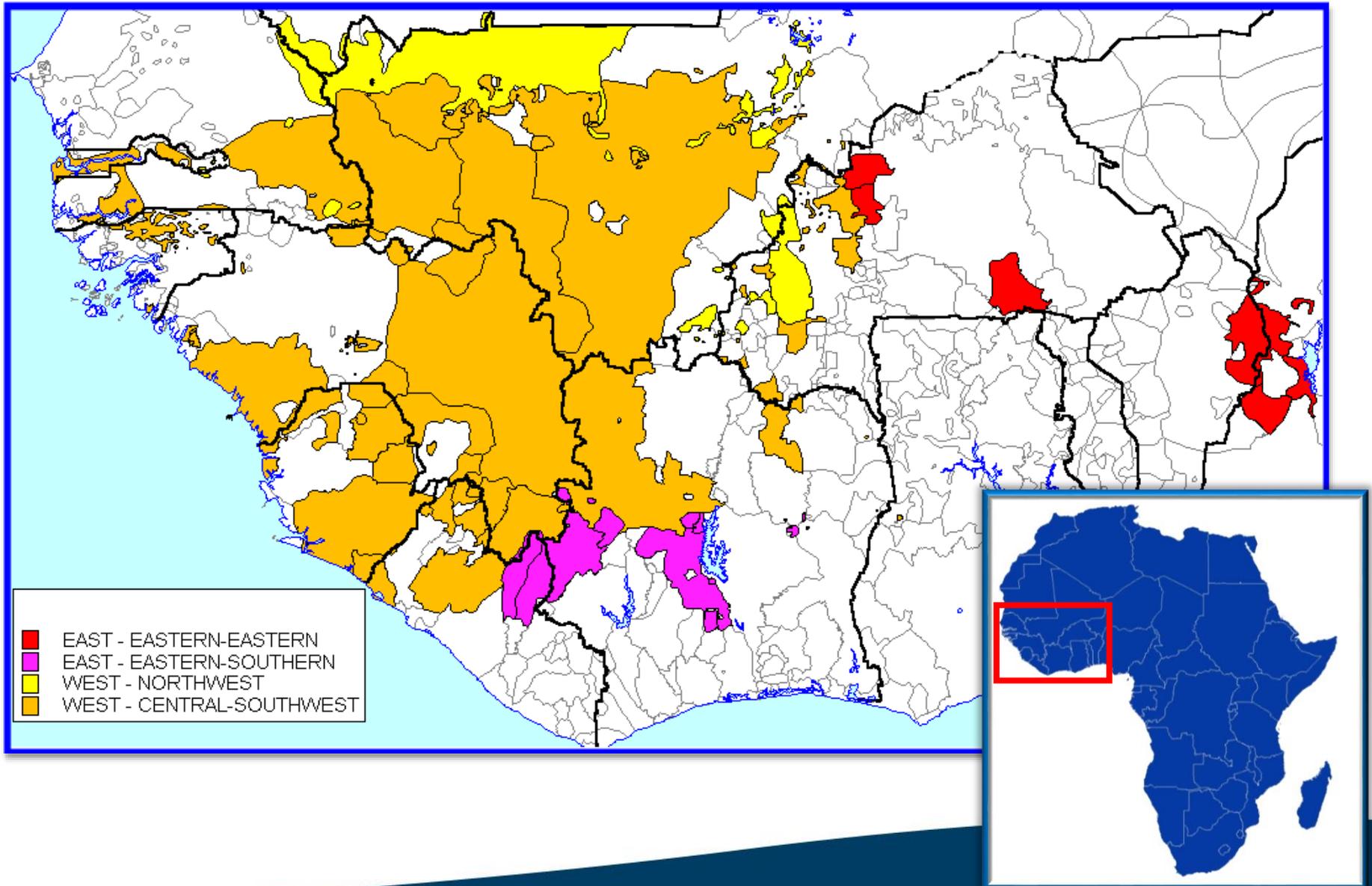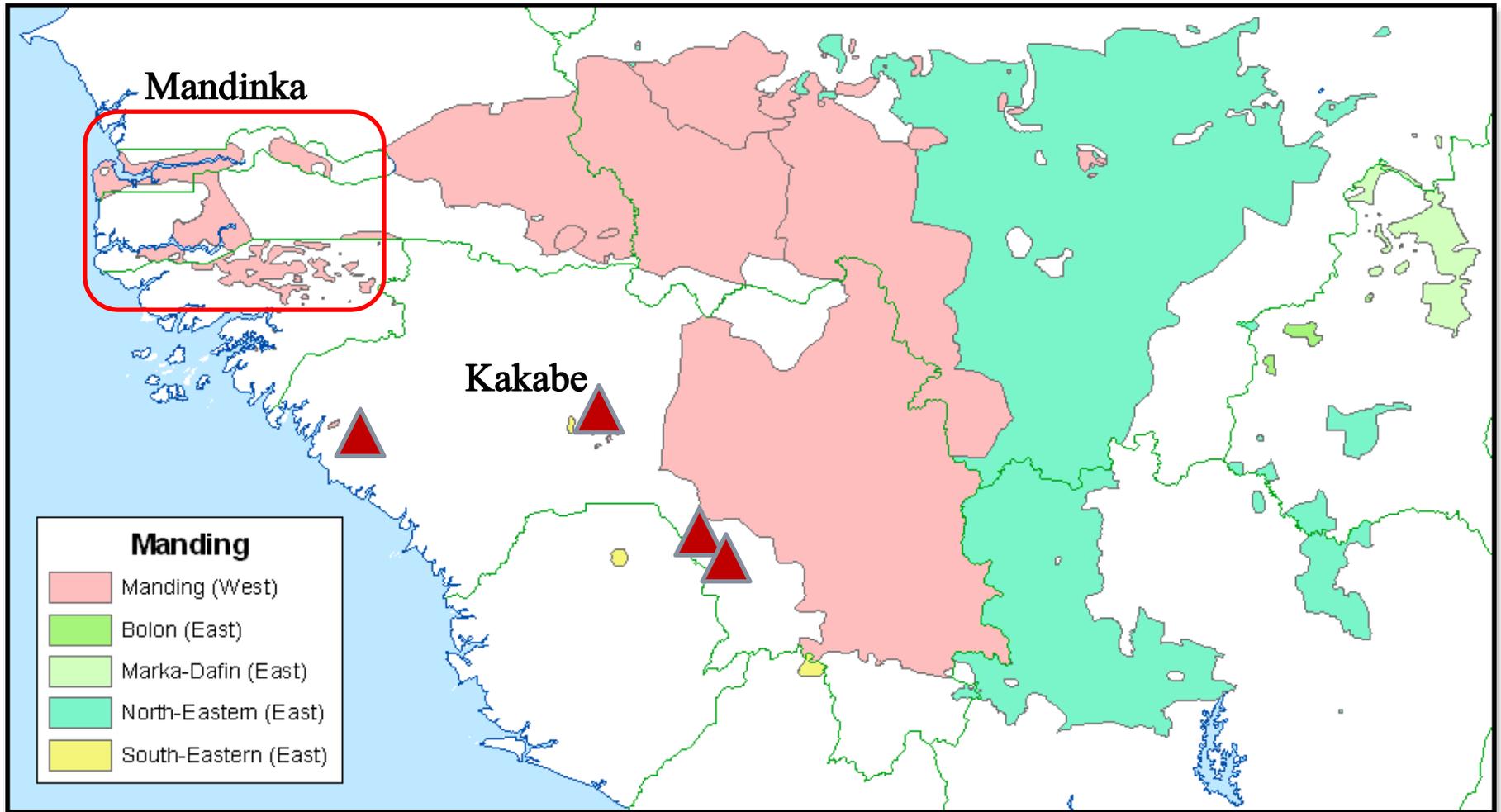
Manding   ▲ Mokole

Manding & Mokole within Mande

Proto-Mande
- SE Mande
- W Mande
  - NW (NE)
    - Bobo & Samogo
    - Soninke-Bozo
  - SW-C
    - SW
      - Jogo-Jeri
    - C
      - Greater Manding
        - Manding
        - Mokole
        - Vai-Kono
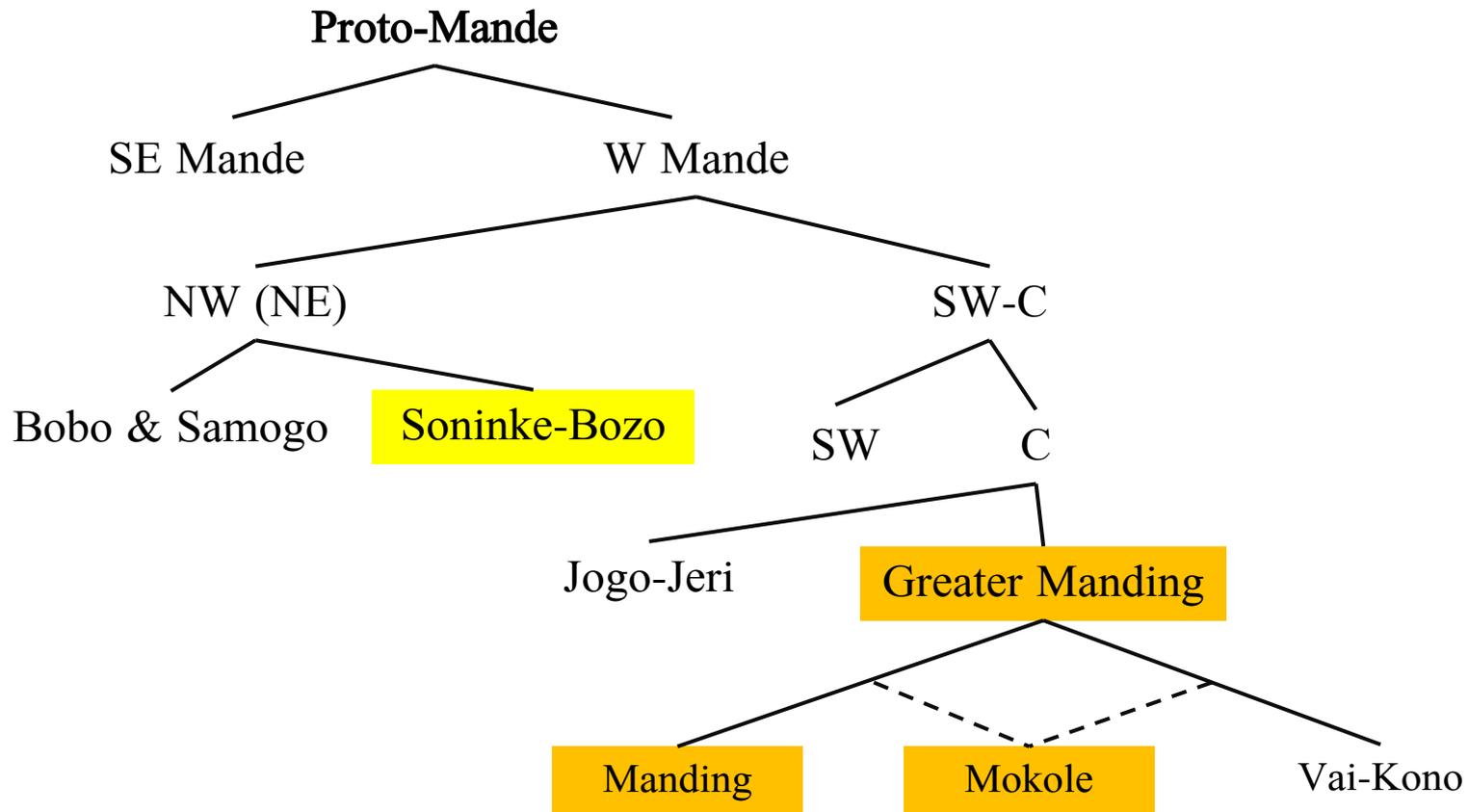
Basic phonology

- 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 $\Rightarrow$ transitivity status is **obvious**

- positive **PFV_T** vs **PFV_I** in Greater Manding and Soninke:

  PFV_{TR}: S **PFV** O V

  PFV_{ITR}: S V**-PFV**   vs   PFV.NEG: S **PFV.NEG** (O) V

- Mande morphosyntax offers at least two **plausible sources** of the PFV_{TR} vs PFV_{ITR} distinction:

  - *agentive postposition > PFV_T , PFV_I is the older PFV (Creissels 1997)

  - *insubordinated PFV.PTCP > PFV_I, PFV_T is the older PFV

Intransitive L in Mandinka (Creissels 2013)

PFV.NEG	
T	I
máŋ	máŋ^L

COPLOC.NEG	
IPFV.NEG: _ + V-lá (INF) PROG.NEG: _ + V-kàŋ (PROG)	
T	I
té ~ tí	té^L ~ tí^L

- COPLOG.NEG elsewhere does not show the intransitive L:

    RES: _ + V-rìŋ ~ V-ríŋ (PTCP.PFV) or V-rìŋ ~ V-ríŋ + _

    LOC: _ + X

Intrantisitive L in Mandinka (Creissels 2013)

T   (1)   ŋ́   máŋ   síláfándá   nààtì

                1SG   PFV.NEG   present   bring

                'I did not bring a present' (Creissels 2013:71)

I   (2)   ŋ́   máŋ   ꜜsíláŋ   féŋ   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 $\varnothing^{L}$ **irrespective of the transitivity** status of the predication (and one light Aux ka^{L} is PFV**T**)

  - that is, **only heavy Aux** show the alternation [**T**] $\text{Aux}^{\varnothing}$ vs [**I**] Aux^{L}

Intrantisitive L in Kakabe

Heavy Aux			Light Aux	
T	**I**			
bélé	bélé^L	PROG.NEG	bi^L	PROG
bátí	bátí^L	PRF	ti^L	PRF (short)
báC	báC^L	PRF (short)	ka^L	PFVT
máá	máá^L	PFV.NEG	ni^L	OPT
téé	téé^L	IPFV.NEG	si^L	IPFV
kání	kání^L	PROH		
mání	mání^L	COND		

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

Soninke pattern

PFV.NEG	má (O) V\L
IPFV.NEG	ntá (O) V\L

Bamana (Manding) pattern

PFV.NEG	má (O) V
IPFV.NEG	té (O) V

Mandinka pattern

	I	T
PFV.NEG	má^L V	má O V
IPFV.NEG	té^L V	té O V
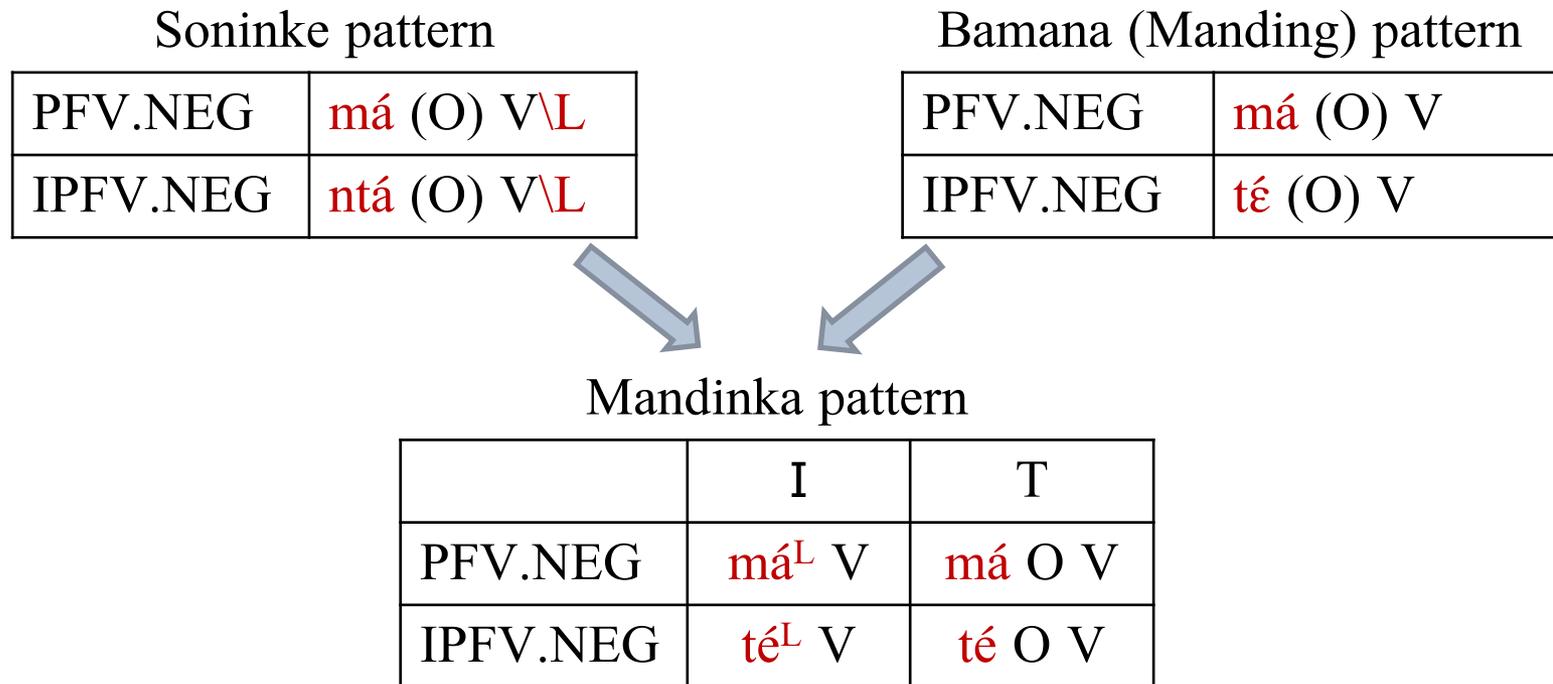
Solution #1: language contact

- 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

Soninke pattern

PFV.NEG	má (O) V\L
IPFV.NEG	ntá (O) V\L

Bamana (Manding) pattern

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Mandinka pattern

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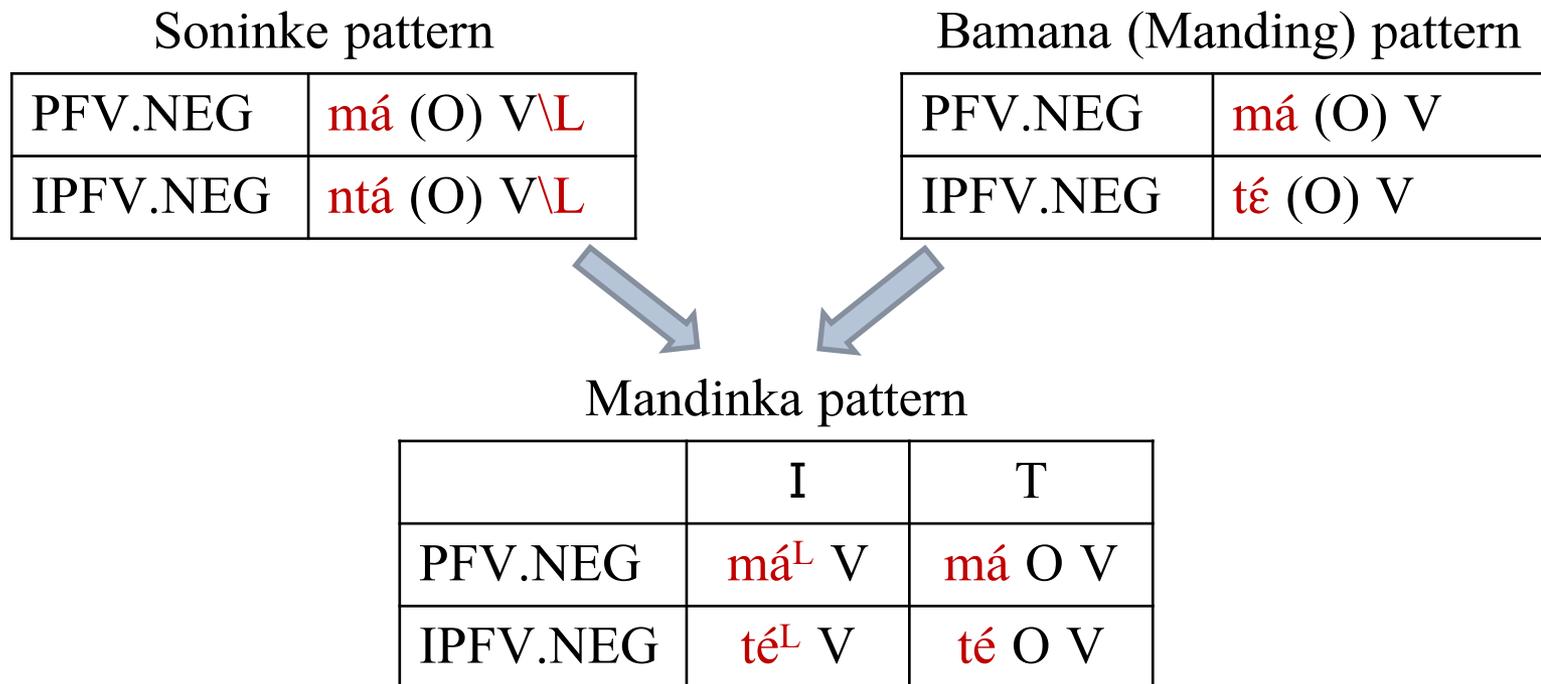
Solution #1: language contact

- 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
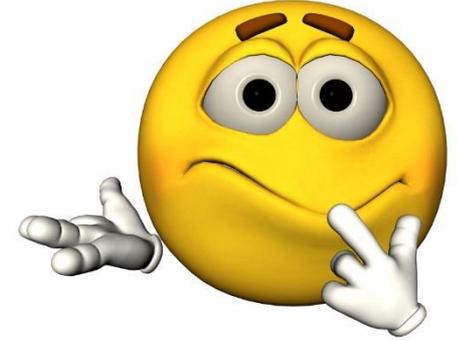
- **why** would the L tone be **borrowed** into Mandinka and Kakabe?

- **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
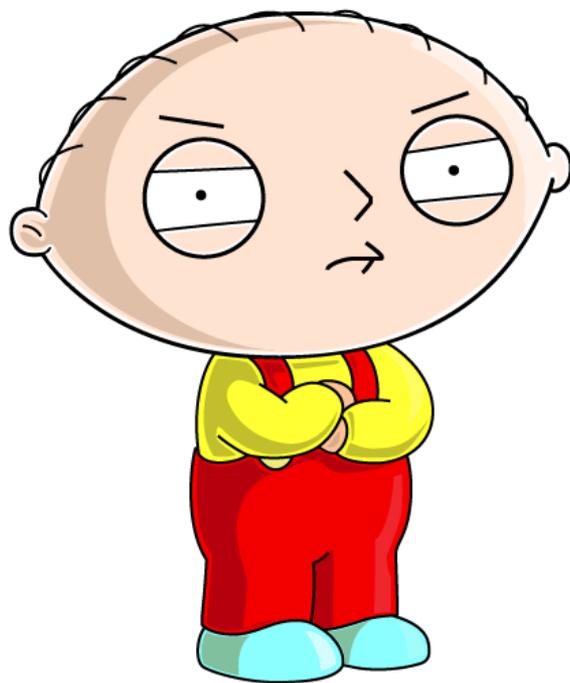
Solution #2: reframe the problem

- 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 ^{L} 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 *té* ^{L} immediately followed by a verb vs COP *té* followed by X)