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

Proto-Mande

SE Mande

W Mande

NW (NE)

Bobo & Samogo

Soninke-Bozo

SW-C

Jogo-Jeri

Greater Manding

Manding

Mokole

Vai-Kono
Basic phonology

- 2 tones: L vs H, L vs Ø, L vs Ø 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 TAMP₁ (aka PM ≈ AUX ) (O) V-TAMP₂ X TAMP₃
Transitivity status

- obligatory O ⇒ transitivity status is **obvious**
- positive $\text{PFV}_T$ vs $\text{PFV}_I$ in Greater Manding and Soninke:
  
  $\text{PFV}_{TR}: S \text{PFV} \ O \ V$  
  vs  
  $\text{PFV.NEG}: S \text{PFV.NEG} \ (O) \ V$
  
  $\text{PFV}_{ITR}: S \ V - \text{PFV}$

- Mande morphosyntax offers at least two **plausible sources** of the $\text{PFV}_{TR}$ vs $\text{PFV}_{ITR}$ distinction:
  - *agentive postposition > $\text{PFV}_T$, $\text{PFV}_I$ is the older PFV (Creissels 1997)
  - *insubordinated $\text{PFV.PTCP} > \text{PFV}_I$, $\text{PFV}_T$ 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>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>máŋ</td>
<td>máŋ²</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IPFV.NEG: _ + V-lá (INF)</th>
<th>PROG.NEG: _ + V-kàŋ (PROG)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>té ~ tí</td>
<td>té² ~ tí²</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **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) ŋ́máŋ síláfándá nààtı
    1SG PFV.NEG present bring
    ‘I did not bring a present’ (Creissels 2013:71)

I  (2) ŋ́máŋ †síláŋ fẹŋ 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 intrasitive L: Aux^L V
- some complications:
  - the tone of light Aux (CV) is “polar” to the following tone
  - light Aux can be analyzed as Ø^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] AuxØ 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>kání</td>
<td>kání(^L)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mání</td>
<td>mání(^L)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Intrantsitive 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 máPFV.NEG and AUX ntáIPFV.NEG

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PFV.NEG</th>
<th>má (O) V\L</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IPFV.NEG</td>
<td>ntá (O) V\L</td>
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Soninke pattern

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>PFV.NEG</th>
<th>má (O) V</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IPFV.NEG</td>
<td>té (O) V</td>
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Bamana (Manding) pattern

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PFV.NEG</th>
<th>má (O) V</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IPFV.NEG</td>
<td>té (O) V</td>
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</table>

Mandinka pattern

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PFV.NEG</th>
<th>máL V</th>
<th>má O V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IPFV.NEG</td>
<td>téL V</td>
<td>té O V</td>
</tr>
</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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<tbody>
<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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<tr>
<th>Mandinka pattern</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFV.NEG má\L V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPFV.NEG té\L V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFV.NEG má O V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPFV.NEG té O V</td>
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</tbody>
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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
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., ØL) 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)