

Clause-final negative markers in Bamana dialects: a contact-induced evolution

As is common in Mande, polarity in Bamana is expressed cumulatively with TAM categories by means of auxiliary-like elements that immediately follow the subject and that are traditionally referred to as “predicative markers” in the literature. However, a geographically concise group of Bamana dialects, viz. southern dialects of the Baninko area and dialects of the neighbouring Gwandugu, Shendugu and Ganadugu areas, is reported to use an additional clause-final negative marker *ni(n)/(y)i* (Bird 1982). The range of TAM constructions where a clause-final negative marker is allowed varies among the dialects. A comparison with other Bamana dialects and a range of closely related Mande languages suggests that the clause-final negative marker *ni(n)/(y)i* is an innovation specific to the dialects in question. I argue that although both the form and the negative polarity semantics of this marker can be offered a straightforward language-internal account, its innovative pattern of use and ongoing grammaticalization in these dialects are best analyzed as a case of contact-induced evolution modelled on the neighbouring Senufo languages.

References:

Bird, Charles S. (ed.). 1982. The dialects of Mandekan. Bloomington: Indiana University.