

## CREISSELS'S MANDINKA GRAMMAR

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Mandinka, the westernmost dialect of the Manding cluster, is spoken in The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, and the adjacent areas of Senegal. Creissels's study mainly discusses the PREDICATE as a concept, and defines it within Mandinka as the verbal predicator (the time/aspect/mood/ + or - negation marker) + the verb. The verbal system is examined in some detail, and the meanings of the TAM markers reassessed. Some of them are unique to Mandinka or are used in ways different from other dialects. For stems which can equally have verbal or nominal functions, the term VERBO-NOMINAL is preferred to VERB, whereas nominal stems can never be used verbally. In the genitive/relational phrase, Creissels suggests that what determines the use or non-use of the *la* between the two NPs is the question of whether or not NP<sub>1</sub> has some degree of control or power over NP<sub>2</sub>.

Le mandinka, dialecte à l'extrême ouest de l'ensemble manding, se parle en Gambie, en Guinée-Bissao, et dans les parties limitrophes du Sénégal. Dans son étude, Creissels discute surtout la PREDICATION comme concept, et définit le prédicat mandinka comme formé du prédicatif verbal (marqueur de temps/aspect/mode/ + ou - négation) + le verbe. Il examine le système verbal en détail et réexamine le sens des marqueurs TAM. Certains sont spécifiques au mandinka, d'autres y ont une fonction autre que dans les autres parlers. Creissels préfère le terme VERBO-NOMINAL au simple VERBE pour décrire certaines bases, car tandis que celles qui ont des fonctions verbales en ont aussi des nominales, d'autres restent exclusivement nominales. Pour ce qui est du système nominal, dans le syntagme d'association (ou génitif) Creissels pense que ce qui détermine la présence ou l'absence du *la* entre les SN, c'est la question de si, oui ou non, le SN<sub>1</sub> a une certaine dominance ou puissance envers le SN<sub>2</sub>.

### 0. INTRODUCTION

The insightful description and discussion in *Eléments de grammaire de la langue mandinka* by Denis Creissels, with Sidia Jatta and Kalifa Jobarteh (1982), of the essential points of Mandinka grammar was somehow omitted from the Mandé bibliography in Dwyer (1989), but deserves to be better known. It has only recently been brought to my attention.<sup>1</sup> Having been fluent in Mandinka since 1953, I was delighted to see how well Creissels has captured the feel of the language, which he obviously enjoys. He clearly has good rapport with his informants, with whose help he produced a dictionary and phonological description in 1982, and he acknowledges the value of the 1959 grammar by my mentor, E. C. Rowlands. My one regret about this book is that the technical vocabulary and the more theoretical discussions are, in places, very hard to follow by one so untheoretical as myself. The lack of interlinear glosses, while justifiable, may be difficult for some, but Creissels has provided a glossary of all the Mandinka words he has used.

Mandinka is the westernmost dialect of what has been called Manding or Mandekan. Rather than the usual trichotomy into Malinke, Bambara, and Dioula, Creissels prefers a simple West/East division from a line approximately traversing Kita in Mali and Siguiré in Guinea Republic. Mandinka is confined to The Gambia and eastern Guinea-Bissau and the neighbouring parts of Senegal. Like others of the western dialects of Manding it has just five vowel qualities and vowel length, but is alone in having no *g*, *y*, or *x*; also one of its tense/aspect markers is unique and another is used in a distinctive way. In The Gambia and southern Senegal it is a lingua franca to non-Mandinkas, but in Guinea-Bissau this role is largely surrendered to the all pervasive Portuguese based Crioulo.

<sup>1</sup>I am grateful to Jacqueline Janse for doing so, via her very useful study of Mogofin (1998).

Creissels's main purpose is to explore what is meant by the PREDICATE or PREDICATION in language descriptions. He is particularly interested in Mandinka because, while it shares the characteristic Manding predicative system, it also has its own particular details which make it very suitable for this study. Creissels's second purpose is to study DETERMINATION, or the role of determiners and qualifiers. He sees predication and determination as providing the key to understanding the structure and function of the ENONCIATION, or sentence/utterance. He regards this aspect of his study as a sequel to his *Unités et catégories grammaticales* (1979).

Creissels insists (p.14) on making a distinction between

(a) predicative relationships, which the speaker selects according to a system which basically distinguishes statement, question and command; and

(b) determinative relationships, which the speaker chooses not to address directly, but presents as a means of pointing out some detail of one of the items involved in the predicative relationship he has selected.

Creissels stresses that whether a relationship is predicative or determinative depends not on objective reality, but solely on the speaker's choice in a given context of situation. Thus, in the sentences 'Mary's dress is new' and 'Mary has a new dress' there is an associative relationship between 'Mary' and 'dress' which is not at issue, while 'dress' and 'new' are in a qualifying relationship which the speaker chooses to point out. Neither of these relationships is inherently predicative or determinative. In 'Mary's dress is new' the associative relationship is presupposed. If the sentences are negated, and Mary does not, in fact, have a dress, then 'Mary does not have a new dress' is acceptable, while 'Mary's dress is not new' becomes meaningless.

Problems arise from defining the predicate semantically as 'what is said of the subject', and at the same time defining it by its grammatical features (p.11). (This criticism would seem to apply to the early TG rule  $S \rightarrow NP + VP$ , which the case grammar rule  $S \rightarrow Mod + Prop$  was designed to overcome.)

Creissels's predicate is in the end restricted to either the VERBAL COMPONENT of a sentence, consisting of a VERBAL PREDICATOR (VPR) (a time/aspect/mood marker with or without negativity) and a verbo-nominal stem<sup>2</sup>, or else a NON-VERBAL PREDICATOR (NONVPR), substitutable with a verbal component in a given frame. The patterns are thus:

Subject V-pred (Object) Verbo-Nom (Circumstantial); or

Subject Non-verbal predicator (Circumstantial).

The latter is shown in (1).

- |     |   |                       |                       |
|-----|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| (1) | Subject                                 | Non-verbal predicator | (Circumstantial)      |
| a.  | <b>dindingo</b>                         | <b>ye mbuuroo</b>     | <b>domo bugo kono</b> |
|     | child                                   | VPR bread (Oj)        | eat house in          |
|     | The child has eaten bread in the house. |                       |                       |
| b.  | <b>dindingo</b>                         | <b>mag</b>            | <b>bo bugo kono</b>   |
|     | child                                   | VPR                   | go.out house in       |
|     | The child has not left the house.       |                       |                       |

<sup>2</sup>Creissels distinguishes nominal stems and verbo-nominal stems, since he finds that stems that can follow the verbal predicators can also be found in subject and object slots, for instance, but other stems that can occupy the latter cannot follow verbal predicators (pp. 23-25).

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| c. <b>dindigo</b><br>child<br>The child is in the house. | <b>be</b> <b>bugo</b> <b>kono</b><br>NONVPR   house   in |
|--|--|

In the absence of an object NP the verb is necessarily intransitive, and if it is one that can be transitive it usually acquires passive meaning. Compare the examples in (2).

- (2)    **a**    **ka**   **ninsoo**   **biti**  
3s   VPR   cow    milk (vb)  
He milks the cow.

**a**    **ka**   **biti**  
3s   VPR   milk  
It gets milked.

**ninsoo**   **ka**   **biti**  
cow    VPR   milk  
The cow gets milked.

Creissels's caution about the topic/comment dichotomy in Mandinka is due to its rigid sentence order, which does not allow any frontshifting. Instead a postposition I~n is used as an emphatic, as in (3). Then compare (3) with (4).

- (3)    **dindigo**   **le**      **be**   **bugo**   **kono**  
child      EMPH   is    house   in  
The *child* is in the house.

**dindigo**   **be**   **bugo**   **le**      **kono**  
child      is    house   EMPH   in  
The child is in the *house*.

- (4)    **dindigo**   **be**   **bugo**   **kono**  
child      is    house   in  
The child is in the house.

A NP can be suspended before a clause for focus purposes, but then has to be represented by a pronoun occupying the appropriate slot in the clause, whether Subject, Object, or Circumstantial.

### 1. VERBAL PREDICATORS

What Creissels calls the verbal predicators are markers which combine tense, aspect, mood, and affirmation/negation in their meanings. Those discussed by Creissels are shown in (5).

- |                      |                    |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| (5)    Affirmative   | Negative           |
| <b>ye ~ ɲa ~ -ta</b> | <b>maɲ</b>         |
| <b>ye ~ ɲa</b>       | <b>kana</b>        |
| <b>∅</b>             | <b>kana</b>        |
| <b>ka</b>            | <b>buka</b>        |
| <b>si</b>            | (a) <b>kana</b>    |
|                      | (b) <b>te...la</b> |

1.1 *ye ~ ŋa ~ -ta* Neg: *maŋ*

- |      |                            |                |                |                       |                                |            |                |            |
|------|----------------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|------------|----------------|------------|
| (6)  | <b>siisewo<sup>3</sup></b> | <b>ye</b>      | <b>kiloo</b>   | <b>laa</b>            | <b>siisewo</b>                 | <b>maŋ</b> | <b>kiloo</b>   | <b>laa</b> |
|      | chicken                    | VPR            | egg            | lay                   | chicken                        | VPR        | egg            | lay        |
|      | The chicken laid an egg.   |                |                |                       | The chicken didn't lay an egg. |            |                |            |
| (7)  | <b>n</b>                   | <b>ŋa</b>      | <b>dindiŋo</b> | <b>je<sup>4</sup></b> | <b>m</b>                       | <b>maŋ</b> | <b>dindiŋo</b> | <b>je</b>  |
|      | 1s                         | VPR            | child          | see                   | 1s                             | VPR        | child          | see        |
|      | I saw the child.           |                |                |                       | I didn't see the child.        |            |                |            |
| (8)  | <b>dindiŋo</b>             | <b>taa-ta</b>  |                |                       | <b>dindiŋo</b>                 | <b>maŋ</b> | <b>taa</b>     |            |
|      | child                      | go-VPR         |                |                       | child                          | VPR        | go             |            |
|      | The child has gone.        |                |                |                       | The child hasn't gone.         |            |                |            |
| (9)  | <b>buŋo</b>                | <b>wara-ta</b> |                |                       | <b>buŋo</b>                    | <b>maŋ</b> | <b>wara</b>    |            |
|      | house                      | be.big-VPR     |                |                       | house                          | VPR        | be.big         |            |
|      | The house is big.          |                |                |                       | The house isn't big.           |            |                |            |
| (10) | <b>niŋ</b>                 | <b>a</b>       | <b>taa-ta</b>  |                       | <b>niŋ</b>                     | <b>a</b>   | <b>maŋ</b>     | <b>taa</b> |
|      | if                         | 3s             | go-VPR         |                       | if                             | 3s         | VPR            | go         |
|      | if he goes                 |                |                |                       | if he doesn't go               |            |                |            |

Examples (6)–(10) illustrate the variants and the range of meanings of these verbal predicators (VPR).

*ye* is the usual affirmative transitive marker.

*ŋa* is the form that follows the 1s pronoun *n* and 1p *ñ*, and, for some speakers, the relative marker *meŋ* (see end of §4).

*-ta* is suffixed to a verb used intransitively.

*maŋ* is the corresponding negative in all contexts.

These VPR can apply to both present and past time, but also, as in a condition, to a future eventuality, and, as in *buŋo wara-ta*, to an ongoing state. Creissels proposes that all of these be subsumed under the label *STATIVE*. The exact nuances, such as state, or completed action, depend on the semantics of the verb in question.

1.2 *ye ~ ŋa* Neg: *kana*

- |      |                                  |           |            |          |                                    |               |            |             |
|------|----------------------------------|-----------|------------|----------|------------------------------------|---------------|------------|-------------|
| (11) | <b>ñ</b>                         | <b>ŋa</b> | <b>taa</b> |          | <b>ñ</b>                           | <b>kana</b>   | <b>taa</b> |             |
|      | 1p                               | VPR       | go         |          | 1p                                 | VPR           | go         |             |
|      | Let's go.                        |           |            |          | Let's not go.                      |               |            |             |
| (12) | <b>(sii jaŋ)</b>                 | <b>i</b>  | <b>ye</b>  | <b>m</b> | <b>batu</b>                        |               |            |             |
|      | (sit here)                       | 2s        | VPR        | 1s       | await                              |               |            |             |
|      | (Sit here) and wait for me.      |           |            |          |                                    |               |            |             |
| (13) | <b>(a ko)</b>                    | <b>i</b>  | <b>ye</b>  | <b>m</b> | <b>batu</b>                        | <b>(a ko)</b> | <b>i</b>   | <b>kana</b> |
|      | (3s quote)                       | 2s        | VPR        | 1s       | await                              | (3s quote)    | 2s         | VPR         |
|      | (He says) you're to wait for me. |           |            |          | He says you're not to wait for me. |               |            |             |

<sup>3</sup>I am following the official orthography adopted for Mandinka in The Gambia in 1998.

<sup>4</sup>The simple pronouns are: 1s *n*, 2s *i*, 3s *a*, 1p *ñ*, 2p *ali*, 3p *ì*. The strong forms add *-te* in the singular and *-te-lu* in the plural. *n* and *ñ*, *i* and *ì*, respectively, are tonally distinct; *n* and *ñ* are homorganic with a following consonant, being spelt *m* and *m̃* where relevant.

These markers may be termed subjunctive, having injunctive, optative, suggestive, or purposive meaning. Creissels calls this set PROJECTIVE in the affirmative and PROHIBITIVE in the negative.

Unlike the *ye* and *ŋa* variants of the previous VPR set, these are used with intransitives as well as with transitives. In case of ambiguity in a transitive context, as with a *ye m batu*, which could mean 'he waited for me' as well as 'he is to wait for me', the injunction could be made explicit by preceding it with *fo*, a particle which can imply obligation, as in *fo a ye m batu*.

### 1.3 Ø Neg: *kana*

- |      |                             |                                     |
|------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| (14) | <b>naa</b> (<Ø Ø naa)       | <b>kana naa</b> (<Ø kana naa)       |
|      | 2s VPR come                 | 2s VPR come                         |
|      | Come!                       | Don't come!                         |
| (15) | <b>ali naa</b> (<ali Ø naa) | <b>ali kana naa</b>                 |
|      | 2p VPR come                 | 2p VPR come                         |
|      | Come! (pl)                  | Don't come! (pl)                    |
| (16) | <b>m batu</b> (<Ø m batu)   | <b>kana m batu</b> (<Ø kana m batu) |
|      | 2s VPR 1s await             | 2s VPR 1s await                     |
|      | Wait for me!                | Don't wait for me!                  |
| (17) | <b>ali m batu</b>           | <b>ali kana m batu</b>              |
|      | (< ali Ø m batu)            |                                     |
|      | 2p VPR 1s await             | 2p VPR 1s await                     |
|      | Wait for me! (pl)           | Don't wait for me! (pl)             |

This is the imperative. The affirmative VPR is zero, and the negative *kana*, as in the subjunctive or projective above.

A 2s simple pronoun subject is deleted, while a 2p pronoun and an emphatic 2s are retained as in (18).

- |      |                       |                             |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| (18) | <b>taa</b> (<Ø Ø taa) | <b>ite taa</b> (<ite Ø taa) |
|      | 2s VPR go             | 2s.EMPH VPR go              |
|      | Go!                   | You go!                     |

There is a special 1p inclusive construction, in which a 2p pronoun co-occurs with a 1p *ñ* or *ṁ*, and a projective VPR as in (19).

- |      |                     |                         |
|------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| (19) | <b>ali ñ ŋa taa</b> | <b>ali ṁ bee ŋa taa</b> |
|      | 2p 1p VPR go        | 2p 1p all VPR go        |
|      | Let's go!           | Let's all go!           |

These are intended to urge both hearer (s) and speaker to act together.

### 1.4 *ka* Neg: *buka*

- |      |                              |
|------|------------------------------|
| (20) | <b>musoolu ka tabiroo ke</b> |
|      | women VPR cooking do         |
|      | Women do the cooking.        |

- (21) **mooroolu buka seewoo domo**  
 marabouts VPR pig eat  
 Marabouts don't eat pork.
- (22) **n ka ite le batu**  
 1s VPR 2s.EMPH EMPH await  
 It's you I'm waiting for.
- (23) **n kugo le ka n diminj**  
 1s head EMPH VPR 1s hurt  
 My head is hurting me.

These VPR are unique to Mandinka. Examples (20) and (21) are typical habituals, and (22) and (23) show durative processes.

Creissels suggests that **ka** and **buka** serve to mark a process whose boundaries are in some way out of the subject's control, and not linked to any given moment. This would help account for the use of **ka** to mark the 'infinitive' or citation form of a verb, or the GERUND, as in (24).

- (24) **ka taama**  
 VPR walk  
 to walk
- ka Suruwaa-kapo fo wo koleyaa-ta baake**  
 VPR Wolof-language speak DEM be.difficult-VPR very  
 Speaking Wolof is very difficult.

**ka** has by-forms **kari**, **kara**, and **kali** used selectively by certain speakers. Where **ka** occurs in other dialects, it has past/present value. This, rather than habitual, tends to be its meaning in Guinea-Bissau. **buka** does not occur outside Mandinka. The habitual in other dialects is expressed by **si**.

### 1.5 **si** Neg: **kana** / **te...la**

- (25) a. **a si taa suu**                      **a kana taa suu**  
 3s VPR go home                      3s VPR go home  
 He is to go home.                      He isn't to go home.
- b. **i si taa bulubaa la i kana taa maraa la**  
 2s VPR go right LOC 2s VPR go left LOC  
 You should go to the right, not to the left.
- (26) a. **(nij a naa-ta) n si a je ...n te a je la**  
 (if 3s come-VPR) 1s VPR 3s see                      1s NONVPR 3s see LOC  
 (If he comes) I'll see him.                      ...I'll not see him.
- b. **siniŋ n si taa**                      **siniŋ n te taa (la)**  
 tomorrow 1s VPR go                      tomorrow 1s NONVPR go (LOC)  
 Tomorrow I'll go.                      Tomorrow I won't go.
- c. **n si wo ke noo**                      **n te wo ke noo la**  
 1s VPR DEM do be.able                      1s NONVPR DEM do be.able LOC  
 I can do that.                      I can't do that.

The uses of **si** are unique to Mandinka. In other dialects that have a **si** it is equivalent to this **si** in some ways, and has a negative **mee**. **si** is the VPR with the widest spread of meaning. It marks what Creissels calls an EVENTUALITY, an event which could or should apply. Its negative counterparts cover different aspects of its use. Those marked (a) cover oblique commands, suggestions and the like, while (b) uses cover such things as futurity, probability, and potentiality.

The syntax of **te...la** will be considered below. The **la** is usually omitted after **taa** 'go' and **naa** 'come'.

There is one use of **si** which reflects its use in other dialects, namely where examples of a routine are described in stages, much as English will use the future (as in this sentence!).

- (27) **nij fiyiroo ban-ta moolu si bindewo dati**  
 if/when sowing end-VPR people VPR weeding start  
 When the sowing is over, people (will) start the weeding.

In this situation, context will make clear whether reference is to a particular occasion or to a customary procedure.

## 2. NON-VERBAL PREDICATORS (NONVPR)

Creissels lists three items under this term: **be**, **mu**, and their negative counterpart **te**. Each of them can be regarded as a copula (Wilson 1995). He later mentions the exceptional predicator **ko**.

### 2.1 **be** Neg: **te**

The basic function of **be** is to relate a subject to a circumstantial indicating place or state. Before a locative phrase it is substitutable with a VPR + verb, as in (28).

- (28) a. **musoolu taa-ta / maŋ taa buŋo la**  
 women go-VPR / VPR go house LOC  
 The women went / didn't go to the house.
- b. **musoolu buŋo la**  
 women house LOC  
 The women are / aren't at the house.
- c. **musoolu be / te buŋo la**  
 women NONVPR / NONVPR house LOC

Mandinka is among many languages which express a progressive by means of a construction derived from a copula with a locative as in (29) and (30).

- (29) a. **be dookuwo la/kaŋ**  
 3s NONVPR work LOC/on  
 He is at work. / He is working.
- (30) a. **be domoroo la/kaŋ**  
 3s NONVPR eating LOC/on  
 He is eating.

The use of **kaŋ** 'on' is more immediate than **la**, indicating an action in progress at the time of mention as in (31) and (32).

- (31) **a be bala-kosoo la**  
 3s NONVPR xylophone-hitting LOC  
 He is playing the xylophone.
- (32) **a be baloo kosi la**  
 3s NONVPR xylophone hit LOC  
 He is playing / will play the xylophone.

Creissels closely examines the difference between these two synonymous constructions. In the first, **bala-kosoo** is an object + verb compound noun, where the **-o** noun suffix is on the verbo-nominal stem and the object is in the bare stem form. We have thus the equivalent of a name of action such as **domoroo** 'eating' seen in (30). In **a be baloo kosi**, however, we have the usual object + verb sequence, with the **-o** suffix on the noun and not on the verb. Creissels, therefore, sees **baloo kosi** as an object + verb sequence rank-shifted to serve as NP in the **a be...la** frame. Creissels hyphenates **la** to rank-shifted verbs, suggesting that its closeness to the verb is such as to exclude the use of emphatic **le** between the two.

Creissels points out that this object + verb rank-shifting also occurs after a number of verbs, some of which take a circumstantial in place of an object. Compare (33)–(35).

- (33) **a lafi-ta / maŋ lafi kodoo la**  
 3s want-VPR / VPR want money LOC  
 He wants/doesn't want money.
- (34) **a lafi-ta / maŋ lafi baloo kosi la**  
 3s want-VPR / VPR want xylophone hit LOC  
 He wants/doesn't want to play the xylophone.
- (35) **a ñaŋta / maŋ ñaŋ baloo kosi la**  
 3s ought-VPR / VPR ought xylophone hit LOC  
 He ought/oughtn't to play the xylophone.

A stative participle can follow **be/te** in the circumstantial slot, and this again is a component that occurs in a verbal clause. Compare (36)–(38).

- (36) **a be siiriŋ**  
 3s NONVPR seated  
 He is seated.
- (37) **a mee-ta siiriŋ**  
 3s be.long.time-VPR seated  
 He was seated for a long time.
- (38) **ì ye a tara siiriŋ**  
 3p VPR 3s find seated  
 They found him seated.

When the verb is stative in meaning the participle with **be** and the stem with **-ta** can be synonymous, as in (39).

- (39) **a be kuurandiŋ a kuuran-ta**  
 3s NONVPR being.ill = 3s be.ill-VPR  
 He is ill.



With a verb of action the two constructions are partly synonymous, but the use of *-ta* recalls the inception of the state concerned, as in (40).

- (40) **a be teerij a tee-ta**  
 3s NONVPR broken 3s break-vpr  
 It's broken. It's (got) broken.

## 2.2 *mu* Neg: *te*

The non-verbal predicator *mu* and its negative *te* are markers of an identifying sentence. When occurring only with a subject, *mu* is almost obligatorily preceded by the emphatic *le* (which cannot be used in the negative). Pronouns in a *mu* clause are usually in the strong form.

- (41) **tubaaboo le mu tubaaboo te**  
 whiteman EMPH NONVPR whiteman NONVPR  
 It's a white man. It's not a white man.
- (42) **nle le mu nte te**  
 1s EMPH NONVPR 1s NONVPR  
 It's me. It's not me.

*mu/te* can be followed by a NP with the postposition *ti*, which marks a role or identity, as in (43).

- (43) **ate le mu mansoo ti**  
 3s EMPH NONVPR chief *ti*  
*He is the chief.*

The *mu* here is substitutable with a verb of becoming, as in (41).

- (44) **ate le toloo-ta mansoo ti**  
 3s EMPH install-VPR chief *ti*  
*He was installed as chief.*

With *mu*, however, the order of the two NPs (subject and + *ti*) is reversible, while remaining synonymous, and furthermore the emphatic *le* can accompany either NP in either position. In addition to *ate le mu mansoo ti*, cited above, one can say the variations in (45).

- (45) **ate mu mansoo le ti** He is the chief.  
**mansoo le mu ate ti** He is the *chief*.

Questions can similarly be reversible, depending on the point or focus of what is being asked, as in (46) and (47).

- (46) **ate mu jumaa le ti = jumaa le mu ate ti**  
 3s NONVPR who? EMPH *ti*  
 Who is he?
- (47) **ñiŋ mu muŋ ne ti = muŋ ne mu ñiŋ ti (muŋ + ne > [mune])**  
 this NONVPR what? EMPH *ti*  
 What is this?

(Note incidentally that interrogatives need not head questions.)

As Creissels points out, one cannot just say that NP **le mu** can be optionally expanded to NP **le mu NP ti**, since not only the NPs are transposable, but the **le** too can be placed where required, allowing NP **mu NP le ti**. One should rather say that **mu** has a special semantic value which enables NP **mu NP ti** sequences to be synonymous, irrespective of the order of the NPs and of which NP is marked with **le**.

### 2.3 ko

This is a unique predicator which, while it is indeed non-verbal, is not fully substitutable with a verbal predicate, and has no negative counterpart.

**ko** may usually be glossed as 'said' or 'quote'. It introduces a citation or an opinion, and is then accompanied by a subject NP designating the speaker and optionally by a circumstantial marked with **ye**, designating the hearer. To that extent it resembles the verbo-nominal **fo** 'say', provided this is accompanied by the predicator **ye ~ ŋa** (stative, see §1.1 above).

- (48) a ko (n ye)... = a ye a fo (n ye)...  
 3s ko (1s to) 3s VPR 3s say (1s to)  
 He said (to me)....

**fo** is, as here, usually preceded by a 3s pronoun object which refers to the citation.

When the hearer is mentioned after **ko** an additional **ko** can occur as in (49).

- (49) a ko n ye ko...  
 He said to me quote....

With a verb of thought or expression **ko** can likewise follow, but the hearer need not be mentioned as in (50).<sup>5</sup>

- (50) a ye a fo (n ye) ko... He said (to me) quote....  
 n ŋa a miira (ko)... I thought (quote)....  
 a ye n safee (ko)... He wrote me (quote)....

Whereas what is said can be referred to by the 3s pronoun object of such verbs, and in a question is elicited by **muŋ ne** 'what EMPH?', **ko** cannot take an object, so in a question what is said is asked about by **dii** 'how?', and in a statement is referred to by **teŋ** 'thus'.

- (51) a ye muŋ ne fo = a ko dii a ko teŋ  
 3s VPR what? EMPH say 3s ko how? 3s ko thus  
 What did he say? He said this/that.

## 3. THE NOMINAL SYSTEM

Mandinka nominals are distinguished by the suffix **-o** which is present in most contexts, including isolation. Its absence implies a general or non-specific reference, or the stem's collocation with a following qualifier or verbo-nominal, for instance.

The general or non-specific use without **-o** is clearest in a negative context as in (52).

<sup>5</sup>It is hard to agree with Creissels's idea that this use of **ko** has given rise to the **ko** meaning 'like', which introduces similes such as in **a ka diyaamu ko kacoo** 'he talks (= is talkative) like a weaver-bird' or **a ka diyaamu ko niŋ a cafari-ta le** 'he talks like he is insane'.

- (52) **mur** **te** **jaŋ**                      **muroo** **te** **jaŋ**  
 knife is.not here                      knife is. not here  
 There's no knife here.                      The knife isn't here.

Note: **i, e, a, o, u + -o > oo**  
**ii, ee, uu + -o > io, eo, uo** (spelt **iyo, ewo, uwo**)  
**aa, oo + -o > aa, oo**

There are tonal implications in the use of **-o**, which apply even where it is assimilated with **aa** and **oo**.

The plural suffix is **-lu**, which is added to the **-o** form of a nominal, in all but a few contexts.

In compounds and in other collocations the **-o** suffix is only on the last item. With cardinal numbers the **-o** suffix implies definiteness or specificity.

- (53) **jata kuloo**                      **fata fiŋo**  
 lion hide                      skin black  
 lionskin                      blackskin = African
- dendika fula**                      **dendika fuloo (lu)**  
 garment two                      garment two  
 two garments                      both garments

### 3.1 NP COMPONENTS

Creissels is much exercised by the fact that the head of a NP such as **wo ninsoo** 'that cow' cannot be established by grammatical agreement, unknown in Mandinka, nor by deletion, since either word can occupy the NP slot alone, as shown in (54).

- (54) **a ye wo ninsoo biti**                      He milked that cow.  
**a ye ninsoo biti**                      He milked the cow.  
**a ye wo biti**                      He milked it/that one.

One therefore has to conclude that the key word is the lexical item chosen by the speaker to refer to the concept he has in mind, and the additional components are those selected to refer in more detail to the lexical item concerned.

#### 3.1.1 Determiners

The two determiners are **ñiŋ** 'this' and **wo** 'that'.

**ñiŋ** is unique in having a different meaning according to whether it precedes or follows the noun it accompanies, being deictic if it precedes and anaphoric if it follows: **ñiŋ ninsoo** 'this cow (here)' but **ninsoo ñiŋ** 'this cow (in question)'. **wo** can be deictic, but is nearly always anaphoric, and, unlike **ñiŋ**, never follows the noun. Its main use, either with a noun or alone as a pronoun, is to recall or echo a previous NP. A typical example of this is (55).

- (55) **a** **be** **diŋ ne** **wuluu la** **wo** **diŋo** **wo** **le**  
 3s NONVPR child EMPH bear LOC DET child DET EMPH
- be** **ke la** **mansoo** **ti**  
 NONVPR become chief ti  
 She will bear a child, and that child, he will become a chief.

While **wo** used alone refers back, **ñiŋ** used alone refers forward. Compare the two forms in (56).

- (56)    **a**    **ye**    **wo**    **le**    **fo**                      **a**    **ye**    **ñiŋ**    **ne**    **fo**  
           3s   VPR   DET   EMPH   say                      3s   VPR   DET   EMPH   say  
           That's what he said.                                      This is what he said....

These two uses meet in the typical context of (57) where **wo** represents the previous clause as subject of the second, and **ñiŋ** anticipates the next information.

- (57)    (**meŋ ka X niŋ Y fata**) **wo**    **le**            **mu ñiŋ ti**....  
           (what vpr X and Y differ)    DET   EMPH    is    DET   *ti*  
           (what makes X and Y different) is this....

**wo** is commonly used as an additional 3s pronoun; its plural form **wolu** is then 3p. Less commonly **ñiŋ** (plural forms **ñinnu** or **ñilu**) is so used.

Creissels wonders what difference there is between **a** and **wo** as pronouns. I would say that of the two **wo** gives the more immediate recall, being in constant use as such, as in the above examples.

Another use of **wo** implies 'the latter', where two 3s references are in contention. In (58), the natural discourse assumption is that the first named person is the speaker referred to by **a**, the two clauses having the same subject referent. Were **wo** to be used in the second clause this would imply a change to the second participant, the latter one.

- (58)    **deseto**    **futa-ta**    **mansa ma**    **a**    **ko**....  
           Deseto    arrive-VPR    chief    LOC    3s    quote...  
           Deseto went up to the chief and said...

Creissels muses on the anaphoric difference between **ninsoo ñiŋ** and **wo ninsoo**, both meaning 'the cow concerned'. I suspect the difference may at least partly be regional, for during my time up river, and in the texts I studied, preposed **ñiŋ** was both deictic and anaphoric. I first met postposed **ñiŋ** quite recently in texts received from the coastal part of The Gambia.

### 3.1.2 Qualified + Qualifier (Qd + Qr)

When accompanied by an attributive Qr, a noun appears in its stem form, and the Qr takes the **-o** suffix. The Qr may be a form of a stative verb such as **koyi** 'be white', or a stative participle derived from an action verb such as **tee** 'break', or a nominal stem such as **musoo** 'woman, female'.

- (59)    **ninsi**    **koyoo**                                      white cow  
           cow    white  
           **daba**    **teerigo**                                      broken hoe  
           hoe    broken  
           **jata**    **musoo**                                      lioness  
           lion    woman

Ethnic names such as Fula or Mandinka appear first in such sequences, so that **Fula musoo** may be seen as meaning not so much 'Fula woman' as 'female Fula'. When, however, it comes to **Mandinka kajo** 'Mandinka language', Creissels feels it

best to call this an associative qualification similar to a genitive, though a true genitive, as will be seen below, would have an *-o* on both nouns.

Each of these sequences forms a NP which is substitutable with a 3s (or 3p) pronoun, as context may require. There are, however, qualifying sequences which are not wholly substitutable with a pronoun. Compare the examples in (60) and (61).

- (60) **musu konomaa taa-ta**                    The pregnant woman went.  
**musoo konomaa taa-ta**                    The woman went, (being) pregnant.  
 woman pregnant            go-VPR
- (61) **a ye subu keroo domo**                    He ate raw meat.  
**a ye suboo keroo domo**                    He ate the meat raw.  
 3s VPR meat raw eat

In each instance the noun in the stem form is followed by an attributive Qr with which it forms a NP. Where the noun has the *-o* suffix the following attributive is outside the NP, as may be seen from these sentences where the NPs in question are replaced by the 3s pronoun.

- (62) **a taa-ta**                                    She went.  
**a konomaa taa-ta**                            She went, (being) pregnant.
- (63) **a ye a domo**                                He ate it.  
**a ye a keroo domo**                            He ate it raw.

Where an attributive follows a NP in this way Creissels terms it an attributive extension. Such an extension can itself have the form of a Qr + Qd, as in (64).

- (64) **i siŋ-kensgo taa-ta**  
 3p foot-naked go-VPR  
 They went barefoot.

Analogous to this type of sequence is NP + associative extension. This latter component consists of (a)niŋ 'and/with' + a noun, which may be abstract or concrete.

- (65) **sunkutoo niŋ kumboo/boroo/kodoo na-ta**  
 girl with crying/running/money come-VPR  
 The girl came crying/running/with some money.

In each instance the word **sunkutoo** can be replaced by a 3s pronoun, as in **a niŋ kumboo naa-ta**, but there is also here a possible transformation, with the extension postposed, as an afterthought, as in (66) (using the strong form **aniŋ**).

- (66) **sunkutoo naa-ta aniŋ kumboo/boroo/kodoo**  
 The girl came, crying/running/with some money.

These constructions can equally apply to an object NP, as in (67) and (68).

- (67) **i ye findoo niŋ maanoo waafi m ma**  
 3p VPR grain.type and rice hawk ls LOC  
 They offered me findo and rice for sale.
- (68) **i ye findoo waafi m ma aniŋ maanoo**  
 They offered me findo, and rice, for sale.

(Note: **findoo** (*Digitaria exilis*) is a very fine grain, known elsewhere in Manding as **foño** and in French as **fonio**.)

### 3.1.3 Qualifier + Qualified (Qr + Qd)

In compound nouns the head noun, which is qualified, is placed last. One must then distinguish **jata musoo** 'lioness' (Qd + Qr), where one is designating a type of **jata** 'lion' from **jata kuloo** 'lion-skin' (Qr + Qd), in which one is designating a type of **kuloo** 'skin'. In the example **Fula musoo**, discussed earlier, it may be a moot point in a given context whether one is designating a Fula person who happens to be a woman or a woman who is a Fula. The latter would be a Qr + Qd compound. As to **Mandinka kajo**, since one is designating a 'language', this again is a Qr + Qd compound.

Among compound nouns are many which incorporate a postpositional phrase, or some other complex Qr. Whatever their make-up it is only the final stem that takes the nominal suffix. Example (69) lists some that I collected—one or two are probably antiques that have now given way to a loan word!

(69)	<b>jii-kono-motoo</b> water-in-car	motor launch
	<b>banku-koto-tereño</b> ground-under-train	underground train
	<b>jii-kandi-pootoo</b> water-hot-can	thermos flask
	<b>santo-siisii-kuluno</b> up.country-smoke-boat	steam train

With the last compare (70), which is Qd + Qr.

(70)	<b>kulun-tiilaa</b> boat-flier	aeroplane
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A major source of Qr + Qd NPs is the genitive construction, which will now be considered.

### 3.1.4 Genitive/relational phrase

In such a phrase two NPs occur in a sequence such that the first qualifies the second: (Qr + Qd). Mandinka, as is found in all Manding, distinguishes NP + **la** + NP from NP + NP sequences. Compare **kewo la kodoo** 'the man's money' and **kewo kuño** 'the man's head'.

Since the latter pattern applies to most kinship terms, and parts of a whole, the labels alienable versus inalienable are often used. Creissels points out, however, that there are many instances where such labels do not apply. Compare (71) (in which **n** is **ls** and **na** is the postnasal form of **la**).

(71)	<b>n na kodoo</b>	my money	<b>buño kodoo</b>	the house's value
	<b>n na moolu</b>	my family	<b>saatewo moolu</b>	the townsfolk
	<b>n na saatewo</b>	my town		
	<b>n na kumoolu</b>	my words	<b>donkiloo kumoolu</b>	the song's words
	<b>kaabiiloo la bankoo</b>	the clan's land	<b>donikiloo tiyolu</b>	the land's owners

Creissels suggests that **la/na** is used when NP<sub>1</sub> is in some way 'powerful' or has some sort of control over NP<sub>2</sub>, otherwise no link is used. Compare again the examples in (72).

- (72) **n na jongo**                      my slave                      **m maariyo**                      my master  
**n na karandiŋo**                      my pupil                      **n kammoo**                      my teacher

Where NP<sub>2</sub> is a verbo-nominal, NP<sub>1</sub> takes **la** if subjectival, but takes no link otherwise, as in (73).

- (73) **wuluulaalu la kanoo**      parental love                      **dindingolu kanoo**      love for children  
**a la fiyiroo**                      his sowing                      **a fiyoo**                      its sowing  
**London na waroo**              London's bigness              **boosoo loo-dulaa**      bus stop (-place)

Underlying these last two are the propositions that 'London is big' and 'the driver stops the bus'.

#### 4. RELATIVE CLAUSES

Mandinka uses the distinctive Manding relative construction, involving the marker **meŋ** (**miŋ** in other dialects). **meŋ** either accompanies the antecedent NP or stands alone, and in either case is found in the slot the context requires, whether subject, object, or circumstantial. Since Mandinka word order is rigid, no frontshifting of **meŋ** or NP + **meŋ** can occur within the relative clause. A relative clause is never embedded within a matrix clause, but frequently a relative clause is suspended before its associated clause, being linked thereto by a recall pronoun within it. Creissels calls this pseudo-embedding.

- (74) **n    ɲa    duntuno    je**                      **duntuno    bo-ta    jee**  
       1s    VPR    cockerel    see                      cockerel    exit-VPR    there  
       I saw the cockerel.                      The cockerel came (out) from there.

The four combinations in (75) are possible, making use of relative clauses, each alternative being selected according to discourse needs. The emphatic **le**, absent from these examples, can occur in the main clause as and where required, but never in a subordinate clause.

- (75) **n ɲa duntuno je meŋ bota jee**  
       I've seen the cockerel which came from there.
- duntuno meŋ bota jee n ɲa a je**  
       The cockerel which came from there, I've seen it.
- duntuno bota jee n ɲa meŋ je**  
       The cockerel came from there, which I saw.
- n ɲa duntuno meŋ je a bota jee**  
       The cockerel which I saw, it came from there.

Since true embedding does not occur, such a sentence as **\*n ɲa duntuno meŋ bota jee je** is impossible, with its main clause verb **je** held over till after the relative clause, **meŋ bota jee**, which qualifies its object NP. In the second and fourth of the above alternatives, the rather literal gloss draws attention to the suspension of the relative clause, and its recall by the pronoun **a** in the next clause. (**wo** could equally be used for recall, and, in the context of a locative antecedent, **jee**.)

I suggest the suspended construction is mostly used when the information in the relative clause is known or old or in focus. A relative clause following its superordinate clause, on the other hand, often conveys new or unexpected information, or is out of focus.

In (76), the order of the clauses can be reversed, according to the emphasis/focus required, much as in the corresponding English. (Note that here the *meŋ* has no expressed antecedent and that the *mu* in the dependent clause has no *le/ne* before it.)

(76) **m meŋ a loŋ meŋ mu**  
 1s VPR.NEG 3s know REL NONVPR  
 I don't know what it is.

**meŋ mu m maŋ a loŋ**  
 What it is, I don't know.

(The sequence **m maŋ a loŋ** is pronounced [mmaaloŋ].)

After *meŋ*, Creissels's informants use the variant *ŋa* of the verbal predicators having the more usual form *ye* (see §1.1). I have never met *meŋ ŋa...* either in speech or in writing, but only *meŋ ye*.

## 5. CONCLUSION

These, then, are the main topics raised by Creissels. His comments are perceptive and show an excellent grasp and feel for the language. One fears, however, that his very enthusiasm has led him to present examples rather more complex than he needs to illustrate some points. Also his lengthy examples from running text with no literal gloss may, enjoyable as they are, leave some readers behind. He here says nothing of phonology, having dealt with this fully, one gathers, in his 1982 *Lexique*. As said earlier, one needs persistence and a good command of technical French to follow his lengthier discussions, but this is a most useful grammar, though not, as Creissels himself admits, aimed at teaching the language. One could hope that somehow Creissels's material and his comments on it could be made available to speakers of English and Portuguese who are interested in the details of Mandinka.

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