

### Vehicularization and Reflexive Marker Loss in Burkina Faso Jula

Manding is a language and dialect continuum stretching across West Africa from Senegal to Burkina Faso (BF). Manding lingua francas or *vehicular* varieties such as Burkina Faso Jula (BFJ) are particularly understudied and often considered to be a Bamanan-inspired L2 or “the spoken Manding of non-Mandings” (Dumestre & Retord, 1981, p. 3). Increasingly, however, urbanization is leading to the emergence of vehicular BFJ as a distinctly codified Manding variety and symbol of identity for an entire generation of urban youth in western BF (Sanogo, 2011). This paper explores a subtle but striking case of BFJ’s divergence from other Manding varieties: the loss of formally reflexive constructions in favor of semantically ambiguous intransitive constructions and more rarely lexicalized idiomatic transitive constructions.

Manding reflexive constructions parallel transitive constructions with overt objects in that the reflexive pronoun occurs in direct object position. The reflexive pronoun is typically identical to the subject pronoun for all except third person singular which often appears as *í* as opposed to *à* (examples (1) through (3) are standard Bamanan):

- (1) À yé í kò  
3SG PERF.AFF REFL wash  
‘He washed himself.’

The second person singular pronoun is also *í*. Thus (1) is formally identical to (2):

- (2) À yé í kò  
3SG PERF.AFF 2SG wash  
‘He washed you.’

Without the reflexive pronoun *í* or a direct object, the verb is intransitive, and interpreted as passive:

- (3) À kò-ra  
3SG wash-PERF.AFF  
‘He was washed.’

While this distinction between passive and reflexive is standard in Manding and in particular, Bamanan, Koné (1984) notes that certain speakers favor syntactically intransitive constructions which still remain semantically reflexive.

Data presented draws upon recent 2012 fieldwork on 76 reflexive verbs (RV) across Bamanan RV classes as defined by Vydrin (1994). The paper presents judgment distributions from BFJ speakers, demonstrating that BFJ is characterized by a near categorical absence of syntactically true reflexive constructions across RV classes. This avoidance of formal reflexive constructions is illustrated through the case of certain semantically true RVs (where agents act upon themselves), often utilized in idiomatic transitive constructions in BFJ that would be judged nonsensical in Bamanan and other Manding varieties:

- (4) À yé jí kò  
3SG PERF.AFF water wash  
\* ‘He washed water.’  
‘He bathed.’

To better interpret this distinction revealed by grammaticality/acceptability judgments, I draw upon ethnographic fieldwork and opt for a semiotically-informed account of *registers* (Agha, 2006) of BFJ that cut across the lines of Manding varieties. In doing so I suggest that just as we must question *language ideologies* of monolingualism to open up vehicular varieties like BFJ to analysis (Gal & Irvine, 2000), we must also attend to the ideologies that define the *indexical fields* (Eckert, 2008) of speakers across isomorphic boundaries.

## References

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