

Clause chaining in Manding

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In all varieties of Manding (Bambara or Bamanan, Maninka, Jula, etc.), clause sequences referring to successive events linked between themselves in some way or other can be encoded by means of a sequential construction that leaves implicit the exact nature of the link between these events. In the sequential construction, the initial clause has the form of an independent clause, whereas non-initial clauses are reduced to VPs introduced by the infinitive marker kà.

The identification of kà as an infinitive marker follows from its use in other constructions in which its behavior is very similar to that of markers currently identified as infinitive markers by descriptive linguists (it is found in VP topicalization, marks the complement of modal or aspectual predicates, etc.), and therefore the use of the same marker in clause chaining calls for an explanation.

In my talk, I will discuss the following three points:

(1) The typological relevance of the sequential construction: since clause chains with a finite clause in initial position only are typical of SVO languages, whereas clause chains with a finite clause in final position only are common among verb-final languages, the Manding sequential construction confirms that, in spite of the position of O to the left of V in Manding verbal predication, the Manding pattern of linear order shows more affinities with the VO type than with the OV type.

(2) The existence of apparent exceptions to the same-subject constraint in Manding clause chains, and a possible explanation.

(3) The grammaticalization scenario(s) likely to account for the use of the same marker both in complementation structures and in a construction that could rather be described in terms of clause or VP coordination.