

On the emergence of the 'split predicate structure' in Manding (West-Mande)

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The members of the Manding dialect cluster (including the well-known local varieties Bambara, Dyula, Maninka, Mandinka) are closely related and show great similarities regarding their lexicon and morphosyntax. They are well known for their "split predicate syntax" [S-AUX-O-V-Other] or [S-AUX-O_{direct}-V-O_{indirect}-Pp] in verbal clauses. The involved auxiliaries are often called "Predicative markers". They are free, invariable portmanteau morphemes occurring immediately after the Subject NP. They are exponents of both the tense-aspect-modality system and of the affirmative-negative polarity. The term "split predicate syntax" thus relates to the fact that the verb is separated from the auxiliary expressing inflectional categories such as tense, aspect and modality by the direct object.

Drawing on grammaticalization theory as well as the functional-typological approach, this paper deals with the evolution of the "split predicate structure" in Manding and the emergence of the fixed position of the auxiliaries after the subject NP. I shall argue that the interaction of two competing parameters, that is "patient-orientation" and "viewpoint" (DeLancey 1982), is responsible for the development of the "split predicate syntax" in Manding. Moreover, I shall suggest that originally, the function of the auxiliaries was to mark the centrality (imperfective) or de-centrality (perfect/perfective) respectively of actants in the context of expressing "fundamental relations" (Bossong 1980).