

Fulfulde and Bambara syllabic and lexical structures in typology and universal perspectives

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Our ongoing research seeks to analyze the syllabic and lexical structures of Fulfulde (Niger-Congo, Atlantic) and Bambara (Niger-Congo, Mande) from a typological perspective. Using two published dictionaries on Fulfulde and Bambara, we have developed a syllabified dictionary for each of the two languages. As regards Fulfulde (DNAFLA, 1995) we had a native speaker of that language from Douentza (Central Mali) to cut all the words of the dictionary into their syllable boundaries. For Bambara (Bailleul, 2000) we got a second language speaker of Bambara to work closely with a native speaker from Bamako (Mali) to cut all the words into their syllable boundaries. We have followed the conventions established and used in Rousset (2004). Basing ourselves on the data (14603 words cut into syllables) and using the ULSID platform which has been developed by Vallée and her colleagues exclusively for the purpose of typological studies on natural languages (Vallée & Rousset, 2004 and Vallée et al, to appear) we will (1) test the Menzerath law (1954) throughout Altman (1980) statement according to which “the longer a language constructs, the shorter its components”. (2) Compare our results with those in MacNeilage & Davis (2000). We will, particularly, analyze the “LC effect” according to which there is a strong tendency in the syllabic structures of languages to have in CVCV sequencing constructions a preference for Labial-V-Coronal-V rather than Coronal-V-Labial-V. (3) As far as favored syllabic patterns and sensori-motor constraints are concerned, we will analyze and compare all the intrasyllabic combinations favored between consonant and vowel, between onset and nucleus and between coda and nucleus and compare our findings with those in Vallée et al (to appear). (4) Finally, we will analyze nasality in Bambara and compare our results with those in Rossato & Vallée (2006) who found that the place of a nasal consonant within a sequence of consonants is dependent on strong aerodynamic constraints in the vocal tract which explains the fact that sequences with nasals do not respect in general the sonority sequencing principle.