A Preliminary Report of Existing Information on the Manding Languages of West Africa

Summary and Suggestions for Future Research

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References

Dyula
  Dyula: Technical linguistic
  Tutorial material
  Dictionaries, lexiques

Bambara
  Technical linguistic
  Tutorial material
  Dictionaries, lexiques, orthography

Manding (Malinké)
  Dictionaries, tutorial material
  Orthography, literacy national policies
  Literature

General articles

Material done with respect to one country, by country
  Gambia
  Guineau-Bissau
  Ivory Coast
  Mali
  Senegal

Material with respect to a particular language, by language
  Mandinka
  Maninka
  Mauka
  Marka
  Worodugu
Worodugu
Xassonke
Mande languages, in general
Bibliographies
General references regarding study of African languages
Sociolinguistic or survey related
1.0 Abstract

This report focuses on the Manding languages as they are found in Ivory Coast, Mali, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Gambia, and Guinea-Bissau. It summarizes existing work on many of these languages. The report catalogs various dialects in some countries. Linguistic characteristics are provided, as well as a varied list of references.

2.0 Preface

This study was done during May to July of 1983, in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. The purpose of the study is to summarize information I have obtained about the Manding family of languages, one of the most widespread language groups of West Africa. I am grateful to the Abidjan personnel of the Société International de Linguistique, and also to M. Pascal Kokora, M. Kalilou Tera, and M. Tanoh of the Institut de Linguistique Appliquée, of the Université d’Abidjan. They have been of great help during my time in Abidjan.

The paper contains five parts, as follows.

- Introduction (section 3.0)
- Listing of languages, with various information (4.0)
- Linguistic characteristics (5.0)
- Conclusion (6.0)
- Notes to text (7.0)
- Categorized list of references (8.0)
- Appendix, with information on scripture in certain languages (9.0)

The purpose of this report is to provide information so that it may be used by others interested in Manding languages.

Names of languages as they are normally referred to will be written with a capital letter for the first letter, for example, Bambara. Names of languages, as called by the speakers themselves, will be written with all noncapitalized letters, for example, bamanakan. Phonetic or phonological transcription will be generally the same as the source where the data was found. When explanation is needed or if there is some deviation, an accompanying note will be provided.

3.0 Introduction

Greenberg (1963) places the Manding languages in the Northern Mande group of the Northern-Western division of Mande. The Northern-Western division of Mande ranges over Ivory Coast, Upper Volta, Mali, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Gambia, and Guinea-Bissau. Figure 1 from Platiel (1978:43) provides a good sketch of the extent of the Northern-Western branch of Mande languages.

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1Other names which have been used as referring to Manding are Mandingo and Mandekan. Keita (1979:1) points out the advantage of the term “Mandenkan.” It reflects the distinctions deriving from (1) the name of the region – manden; (2) the inhabitants of the region – mandenka; (3) the language of the region – le mandekan. The term “Malinke” seems to be a poorly-defined cover term used (inconsistently) for Manding dialects in various areas in different countries. For example, Dylula of Ivory Coast is sometimes referred to as Malinke. (Manka speakers of Western Ivory Coast call Dyula speakers malinga.) The northwest region of Ivory Coast often appears on maps as the “malinke” region. “Malinke,” somewhat synonymous to Manding, is also used sometime for Manding dialects in other countries such as Gambia, Guinea, and Mali. I will generally try not to use the term “Malinke” for any of the language groups or dialects. However, when discussing certain data or references, the term may need to be used.
Figure 1. Carte linguistique de la famille Mandé (Suzanne Platiel 1978)
The Manding branch of languages has been characterized differently. Delafosse (1901) used the term “Mandingue” as representing these widespread dialects. He notes such regional terms as maning, maning, mandi, mani, mandeng, maneng, mandé, mané (Houis 1981:9). The terms “Mande Tan” and “Mande Fu” were Delafosse’s terms for internal classification of Manding, based on the morpheme for ten in various dialects. This put the Malinke-Bambara-Dyula complex together with Soninke, Khasonke, and Vai as the Mande Tan group. The Mande Fu group was comprised of Susu, Mande, Loko, Kpelle, Loma, Bandi, and Busa.

Westermann and Bryan (1952) also follow this distinction. However, Prost (1953) proposed a different classification scheme, which was distinguished by the three groups; Northern (which contained “Mande Tan” languages), Southern-Western, and Southern-Eastern (which contained “Mande Fu” languages). Greenberg (1963) and Welmers (1958) lexico-statistic studies also carry this three-way distinction of Northern, Southern-Western, and Southern-Eastern. Northern Mande and Southern-Western Mande are subgroups of Northern-Western Mande. Thus Southern-Eastern and Northern Western divisions are the first branches of Mande; as follows.

\[
\text{Mande} \\
\quad \text{NWM} \quad \text{SEM} \\
\quad \text{NM} \quad \text{SWM}
\]

Long (1971a) characterizes former proposed classifications of Mande languages by two periods: the Mande-Tan/Mande-Fu period, which was 1900–1950; and the Lexical period, which was 1950–1971. Since the advent of Long’s lexico-statistical reworking of the existing data and provision of new word lists, major revisions have continued to be made.

The modifications made since Welmers 1971 can be represented by the work of Long (1971a), Bimson 1978), and Galtier (1981). This could constitute another period in the history of Mande classification, which I will call the Revisionist period.

Taking the revisions in order, first Long changes the classification due to additional word lists, and using a four-way lexico-statistical distinction instead of the simple cognate/noncognate two-way distinction. The resulting modifications are that Soninke and Bozo are not included in the Northern subgroup at all; Xassonke (Khasonke) is included with Mandekan; Kuranko is added to the Northern subgroup with the Vai, Kono, Ligbi languages. (Sembla and Samogho are included in this group also.)

Bimson (1978) makes what seems to be more extensive calculation and analysis, and makes the following revisions: Kuranko is added to the Mandekan complex; Mandekan is distinguished into two groups, “M1” and “M2”; four divisions of the Northern subgroup are made, whereas previously there were three. This report will follow Bimson (1978) in his grouping for Mandekan languages. Therefore, the languages discussed will be: Mandinka, Xassonke, Maninka, Bambara, Dyula, Konyanka, Wassulunka, Diakhanka, Mauka, Bo (Marka), and Kuranko. (Bimson seems to have inadvertently left out Mandinka in his listing of Mandekan languages.)

Galtier (1981) makes the revision of including Susu (soussou) with Mandekan, based on his lexico-statistic calculations. He also rearranges divisions of the Mande branch into NW Mande, SW Mande, and “Center” (his “Center Sub-group” being equivalent to the traditional Northern Mande). Galtier also wishes to take into account more factors of language interaction and sociolinguistics, rather than be strictly limited to lexico-statistic calculations. In his article, he provides careful word studies across various Manding dialects. He also provides dialectological maps for the Manding dialects.

Galtier (1981) in general agrees with Long (1971a), yet wants to refine the internal classification of the Northern-Western division. Galtier points out that the strong influence of Malinke upon other dialects has biased the former classifications too much. Malinke has a very strong sociological effect, and many lexico-statistical similarities could

2Although Delafosse (1924) himself changes this classification scheme in his contribution to Meillet and Cohen (1952) Les Langues du Monde.

3Galtier (1981) divides the history of Mandé classification differently; as from 1901–1952 (characterized by Delafosse and Westermann) and from 1953–1972 (Prost, Welmers, and Long).

4Long (1971a) specifies four categories of judgment: (1) identical, (2) cognate based on regular sound correspondence, (3) forms which are “look-alikes” although not regular sound correspondence, and (4) not at all cognate.

5Bimson’s work benefits from much consultation with Welmers during the study, he providing the Southwestern Mande data.
be found comparing these languages with Malinke. But a proper comparison is not possible in a case where one language is very dominant, as the case is for Malinke.

Galtier therefore rearranges the classification of Long (1971a) by designating a “Central” subgroup which does not have either Bozo or Soninke, or Sembla or Samogo in it. This Central subgroup does contain Susu, although Galtier is reluctant to compare it with Manding languages because of Malinke’s strong influence. However, Kuranko is definitely not included with Mandekan, aligning with Long 1971a.

Figure 2 shows a comparison of the classifications for Welmers, Long, Bimson, and Galtier.

Welmers 1971
Northern Mande
Susu-Yalunka Soninke
Hwela-Numu
Ligbi
Vai, Kono
Khasone
Malinke-Bambara-Dyula

Long 1971a
Northern Mande
Susu-Yalunka Mandekan
Mandinka
Xassonke
Maninka
Bambara
Dyula
Konyanka
Wassulunka
Diakhanka
Mauka
Bo (Marka)

Ligbi (Hwela-Numu)
Vai, Kono
Kuranko
Samogo-Gouan
Sembla

Bimson 1978
Northern Mande
Susu-Yalunka Mandekan
M1
M2
Xassonke Konyanka
Maninka Wassulunka
Bambara Diakhanka
Dyula Mauka
Bo (Marka)
Kuranko

Hwela Kono
At this “lower” level of classification, for example 80 to 90 percent cognate percentages for the Mandekan languages (Bimson 1978:64), there seem to be no serious classification problems. (However, see footnote 6 regarding the different approaches to grouping Manding languages.) What is of interest is the distinctiveness of the many subdialects falling within the eleven languages of the Manding complex. For Mali, Senegal, and Guinea Bissau, the most recent studies, which are quite comprehensive, are DNAFLA 1980, Balde 1981, and MAPE 1980, respectively. These dialects cover nine West Africa countries and represent approximately four to five million speakers (Platiel 1978). Interlanguage intelligibility is hard to measure due to the widespread use of trade languages such as Dyula (in Ivory Coast) and Bambara (in Mali). Further work in the area of Manding languages could be directed towards the sorting out of cognate percentages, degree of intelligibility, and bilingualism. All of these three factors are “high” within the Manding complex. More on this will be discussed in section 6.0, “Conclusion.”

4.0 Language Listings

This section is a listing of dialects within each of the eleven Mandekan (Manding) language groups designated by Bimson 1978. These are Bambara, Dyula, Diakhanka, Konyanka, Kuranko, Mandinka, Maninka, Marka, Mauka, Wassulunka, and Xassonke. Maps will be provided denoting general areas of these language groups. Data seemed to be more plentiful in some areas, such as for dialects in Ivory Coast and Mali, than in other areas. Most of the data found seemed to be of a strictly linguistic nature, with little in the way of sociolinguistic characterization.

It is useful here to note the work of Galtier (1981) which divides Manding languages into two major groups, Eastern Manding and Western Manding. This distinction, and further subgrouping of these two Eastern and Western divisions, are a basis for linguistic characterization according to dialect.

Figure 4.0 provides a general diagram of the scheme of Galtier 1981.

**Figure 4.0 Basic divisions of Manding according to Galtier 1981**

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*Galtier 1981 (and Creissels, also) represents a significantly different approach—dialectology—than the strict lexicostatistic approach of the work of Bimson 1978 and Long 1971a, for example. For this paper, I have relied upon both types of research in order to estimate the general areas of the Manding languages, especially Bimson 1978, Creissels 1980a and 1980b, Derive 1981, Galtier 1981, and Long 1971a.*
4.1 Dyula

Two Manding language groups are accounted for mainly in Ivory Coast, Dyula and Mauka. Dyula is much more widespread. Those speakers of these two groups (approximately 776,000) comprise about 15 percent of the population (Kokora 1979). This number includes approximately 75,000 Mauka speakers.

Figure 4.1 provides a general map of the region where the languages are spoken (Dyula and Mauka).

Dyula is a language which is very widespread, and it is a term which is used in different ways. It is not obvious nor completely uniform how the term Dyula (dioula in French) is used. Four ways in which it is used are:

1. For speakers in the region of the sous-prefecture of Kong, in the area of Kong to Dabakala. This area is said to be the “origin” area, where speakers of Bambara (from Bamako, Mali) settled here in the thirteenth century. The administrative term Dyula, applies to this.

2. For the pervasive trade language, or “commercial Dyula” (tabusikan), widespread throughout Ivory Coast. It is said to be linguistically different from the Dyula of Kong (Frick and Bolli 1969). There are also tutorial materials in this Dyula (Dumestre 1981, Long and Diomande 1971).

3. For Manding dialects in Ivory Coast. (It is used in this way by Derive 1981). In this manner it would include Mauka; whereas for Bimson (1978) Mauka and Dyula are two separate dialects.

4. Similar to a designation like 3, this is used by speakers of Dyula outside Manding-speaking areas (Kokora 1979).

With respect to some usage of the term Dyula, Keita 1979 points out that for Derive and Partmann, Dyula is a synonym for Manding. And for Delafosse, Dyula refers to one dialect of Mandekan. It is in this latter sense that recent studies from the Institut de Linguistique Appliquee in Abidjan that Dyula (dioula) is used (Keita 1971).

In addition, there are various areas outside of the main Ivory Coast areas, where Dyula is spoken. For example, there is a dialect known as Ble, (less than one thousand speakers) in a small area in Upper Volta, southwest of Banfora (Houis 1981). Also Dyula is known and used in some parts of Mali, although the dominant dialect in Mali is, of course, Bambara.
Figure 4.1. Region of Dyula and Mauka
4.2 Mauka

In the region of Touba to Seguela, in west-central Ivory Coast, the Manding dialect is known as Mauka (or Maou, maukakan). At least thirty to thirty-five thousand speakers are in this group. This adjacent Manding dialect immediately to the west is Konyanka.

Gingiss (1873) has done a detailed study of this area and suggests that the Manding dialects in this area should be subdivided into three groups: (1) Mauka dialect, around Touba, (2) Koyaga dialect, around Mankano, and (3) Worodugan dialects around Seguela, to Worofla, to Kani. In his study he focuses on Worodugakan and compares this dialect with Maninka of Guinea (Faranah area), Mandinka of Gambia, Kuranko of Sierra Leone, Eastern Dyula (N.E. Ivory Coast), and trade Dyula. On the basis of his work he suggests a further Manding branching as follows:

```
  Proto Manding
  /         \
/             \
Proto-Koyaga  \
|            |\   \
|           |\    \
       Worodugukan Maukakan Koyagakan
```

When talking about Dyula and Mauka, it is helpful to mention the article by Derive (1981) on dialect variations with respect to *marques predicatifs*. Derive discusses this aspect for twenty-three dialects of Manding languages in Ivory Coast. The areas covered by this study are reflected in figure 4.2 (taken from Derive 1981).

Figure 4.2. Dyula dialects studied by Derive (1981)
4.3 Bambara

Bambara is probably the most widespread, dominant language in West Africa. It is the principal language of Mali and is a second language for many. An estimate of the number of speakers is 1.5 million (Platiel 1978). Those who understand some Bambara are between four and five million. Bambara speakers call themselves banmana, and their language bamanakan. The general region of Bambara (see figure 4.3) is from Djenne, to Segou, to Bamako (the acknowledged center of the language); north to Kaarta region (150 kilometers east of Bafoulabe). There is also a Bambara dialect in eastern Senegal. There is also a “trade” version of Bambara, having a similar role in Mali as Dyula has in Ivory Coast. There is a “standard” version of Bambara, which Radio Mali uses, as well as established primers, orthography, newspapers, adult literacy, lexiques, dictionaries, and many guides for Bambara instruction. There is a Bible (1961), and much technical work has been carried out, notably by Charles Bird and also by Maurice Houis.

Figure 4.3. Region of Bambara
4.4 Marka

Marka is a Manding dialect in the region of the Upper Volta-Mali border, in a northwesterly direction from Degougou, Upper Volta. Platiel (1978) estimates a population of 320,000. Marka is also known as Dafing, and as Bô. Marka speakers are sometimes called soninkes by Bambaras, but Soninke is not in the Manding group of languages. Figure 4.4 shows the general area of this dialect.

![Figure 4.4. Region of Marka](image-url)
4.5 Konyanka

In Guinea, in the region of Beyla to the Ivory Coast Border, the Konyanka dialect of Manding is known. There are approximately 70,000 speakers (Platiel 1978) of this dialect. I have not been able to find much information on this dialect of Manding. Maninka (section 4.7) is the dominant Manding dialect in Guinea and received much more attention. The estimated region of Konyanka is indicated in Figure 4.5.

Figure 4.5. Region of Konyanka
4.6 Wassulunka

Wassulunka is a dialect which is estimated to be spoke by 150,000 people, in a region northeast of Kankan, Guinea, and southwest of Bougouni, Mali. This means that it comprises an area generally around the intersection of Ivory Coast, Mali, and Guinea. It has been considered in the past quite close to Maninka of Guinea, although not much detailed study has been done in this area. Figure 4.6 shows the area of the Wassulunka dialect.

Figure 4.6. Region of Wassulunka

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7Platiel (1978) notes that there are some speakers of Wassulanka in Senegal.
4.7 Maninka

Maninka is the term for the Manding dialect in northern Guinea and also extending into Liberia. It is a quite dominant language of Guinea, adopted by the government for use on radio, an official orthography, and literacy program for adults. It is a second language for many. (However, the linguistic appropriateness of this use or dialectal adaptations is unknown.) Reported numbers of speakers are not very studied, but estimates are 100,000 for Guinea and 64,000 for Sierra Leone (Grimes 1978). Figure 4.7 provides a geographical estimate of the areas pertaining to Maninka (roughly an area defined by Kankan, to Fraanah, to Dinguiraye). It is known as manenakanori-kan west of Kankan.

Figure 4.7. Region of Maninka
4.8 Mandinka

Mandinka is the term applied to Manding dialects in Senegal, Gambia, and Guinea Bissau (approximately 500,000 speakers). Mandinka is known throughout the Gambia; in Senegal south of the Gambia, the region of Casamance (generally area of Sedhiou, Marassoum); and also in the southeastern quarter of Senegal. (In the southeast of Senegal, Maninka is also present, as well as some Bambara.) There is radio use of Mandinka and an official alphabet (Tera 1979). It is a major language of the Gambia, and enjoys cultural prestige. Mandinka is spoken in the eastern part of Guinea Bissau, but has not been very studied there. However, in Senegal and in Gambia there has been considerable language research on Mandinka by Houis, Coulibaly, Bird, Creissels to name a few. Through the efforts of IFAN, there has been an orthographic system done for Bambara, which is the focus of harmonization efforts (Diagne, in UNESCO 1978). Figure 4.8 shows the general areas for the Mandinka dialect.

Figure 4.8. Region of Mandinka
4.9 Xassonke

Xassonke is the dialect of Manding spoken generally in the area west of Kayes (very near the Senegal border, and towards Bafoulabé, southeasterly direction. About 110,000 speakers are estimated of this group (Platiel 1978). Speakers are called *khassonkakano*. Figure 4.9 provides a map for this region of Xassonke.

Figure 4.9. Region of Xassonke
4.10 Diakhanka

This dialect has been associated by some with Soninke, but Bimson (1978) lexicostatistically places it in the Manding complex. Bimson’s data is taken from Long’s word lists, based on the dialect in Touba, in northwest Guinea. The region of the Diakhanka dialect of Manding is in the area of Touba, northwest Guinea to Kedougou, Senegal (SE). See figure 4.10.

Figure 4.10. Region of Diakhanka
4.11 Kurano

Kuranko is a Manding dialect which is generally in the northeast corner of Sierra Leone. It is highly mutual intelligible with Maninka, but detailed dialect studies have not been done. The number of speakers is reported to be approximately 180,000, in Sierra Leone, and south of Dabola, Guinea (Platiel 1978). Figure 4.11 shows a rough area of location of the Kuranko dialect. Some villages which Kuranko is spoken in are Yiffin, Sefodu, Kabala, Koromonto, and Bodala (in Sierra Leone).

Figure 4.11. Region of Kuranko
5.0 Linguistic Characteristics

This section will briefly discuss the linguistic features of Manding languages, in two parts: (5.1) Phonological Characteristics and (5.2) Grammatical Characteristics. Recent dialectology studies by Creissels (1980a, 1980b) and Galtier (1981) have been done, which are very good for comparisons among Manding dialects. This section will utilize information from these works in dealing with characteristics of Manding languages.

5.1 Phonological Characteristics

Phonological aspects of Manding languages have been described by Creissels (1980a) in terms of choosing two dialects, Bambara and Mandinka, and comparing these. Bambara represents the “eastern” Manding group, and Mandinka represents the “western” Manding group. A rough partition may be considered by a vertical line through Kita, Mali, distinguishing the eastern from western dialects. (See figure 4.0 for the scheme of Galtier (1981) to subdivide Manding dialects into eastern and western.)

The vowel systems of Bambara and Mandinka are shown in figure 5.1.

![Figure 5.1. Vowels of Bambara and Mandinka](image)

Three major differences are evident: number of vowels, nasalization in Bambara, and vowel length in Mandinka. In addition, there is a frequent correspondence of the Bambara mid vowels $e$ and $o$, with the Mandinka high vowels $i$ and $u$: see table 5.1 for examples (from Creissels 1980a).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bambara</th>
<th>Mandinka</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bólo</td>
<td>búlu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sé</td>
<td>síi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bambara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bólo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sé</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are many other relationships and phonological rules with respect to the vowel systems, but just a brief sketch of the phonology characteristics will be provided here.

Syllable structure between Bambara and Mandinka provides additional information on the two-vowel systems, noted by open syllables and closed syllables (typically a nasal). Examples are shown in table 5.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bambara</th>
<th>Mandinka</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fĩ</td>
<td>fĩŋ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dé</td>
<td>dĩŋ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bambara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fĩ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dé</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this relationship, phonological coalescence of the vowel plus nasal of Mandinka historically resulted in the nasalized vowels of the eastern dialect (Creissels 1980a:9). However, there is not consistent or absolute occurrence of a nasal consonant in Mandinka corresponding to a nasalized vowel: see table 5.3 for examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bambara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yâfâ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mâfâ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Creissels notes considerable variations among dialects that would otherwise seem close (1980a:10).

The long vowels of Mandinka reflect the loss of an intervocalic velar consonant (a natural, weakening process), a mechanism apparent in some fluctuations in Bambara. Examples are given in table 5.4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bambara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sīg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tága ~ tá ~ táa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In other eastern Manding dialects, such as Worodugu (Gingiss 1973, Keita 1976), other phonological innovations can be found in certain environments, showing different dialectal evolutions. Table 5.5 shows examples for semi-vowel formation and phonemic front rounded vowels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bambara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kíli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>şûrû</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the consonant system of Manding languages, the examples of Bambara and Mandinka may be again used as representing eastern and western dialects. Figure 5.2 show the consonant phonemes of Bambara and Mandinka.

Bambara

(p) t c k
b d j g g’
m n ŋ ng h
f s ( )
(z)
l r
y w

Mandinka

(p) t c k
b d j
m n ŋ n h
f s l r
y w

Figure 5.2. Consonants of Bambara and Mandinka
The parenthesized phonemes in the charts indicate the absence of full phonemic status. For \( p \), in both dialects, it is more present now because of borrowings; it is only really characteristic with respect to ideophones. Also, \( h \) is a borrowing from Arabic. In Bambara, \( s \) and \( z \) reflect process of palatalization and voicing. Creissels (1980a) notes the gradual dialectal variations, for instance, with voicing adjacent to nasals. As one goes southeastward from Gambia to Ivory Coast, conditional voicing of \( s \) becomes more and more frequent. In Mandinka, \( z \) is entirely unknown, whereas in Bambara \( z \) is very evident.

The consonant systems of Manding languages are often discussed in terms of variation with respect to position in a word. Word initial and intervocalic positions are straightforward to compare in the typical CVCV patterns, or the reduced patterns of CV:, and C-semiV-V. (The latter is especially frequent in the eastern Manding dialects of Bambara and Dyula.) Examples of various alternations are given in tables 5.6 and 5.7. (Examples from Galtier 1981.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>W. Manding (Gambia)</th>
<th>W. Manding (Guinea)</th>
<th>E. Manding (Mali)</th>
<th>E. Manding (Ivory Coast)</th>
<th>Kuranko</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘attacher’</td>
<td>‘milieu’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s~k</td>
<td>c~l</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>siti</td>
<td>te:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘se coucher’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>dá</td>
<td>lá</td>
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Table 5.7 Some intervocalic consonant alternations in Manding languages

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>W. Manding</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Md</td>
<td>Mn</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘attacher’</td>
<td>t ~ d ~ r</td>
<td>sidi</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘lourd’</td>
<td>kuli</td>
<td>gili</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>kuli</td>
<td>gili</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘courir’</td>
<td>bori</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>bari</td>
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<td>‘soleil’</td>
<td>tili</td>
<td>tili</td>
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<td>tili</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘sel’</td>
<td>k:o:</td>
<td>koko</td>
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<td></td>
<td>kogo</td>
<td>xoxo:</td>
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Abbreviations: Md – Mandinka of Gambia; Mn – Maninka of Kita; Xs – Xassonke; Mnen – Maninka of Guinea; Bm – Bambara; Dy – Dyula.

**Tone systems**

Tone in Manding languages is important although in the history of the studies, it has not always been attended to; such as Delafosse’s mention of tone not being an important factor in Dyula. Also, not a few tutorial works and dictionaries have words with no tone marking. But in recent years, tone has been well studied, such as by Welmers, Spears, and Bird.

Manding languages have the feature of terrace tone, with varying degrees of intervals. Tone provides contrast in lexical items (e.g., bágà ‘cooked rice’ and bàgà ‘poison’), and also serves grammatical distinguishing function. There are many tonal processes which distinguish different dialects, which are not always straightforward to figure out. Braconnier (1982) proposes an analysis of tonal inversion for the Odienné dialect of Dyula. Dyula dialects seem to have been elusive as to a clear understanding of all the functions.

**Grammatical Characteristics**

Grammar of the Manding languages will be discussed with reference to the noun phrase, the verb phrase, and the sentence. Studies of Manding language by French researchers (such as Houis, Creissels), however, tend to be functionally oriented, dealing with systems of grammatical constructions (such as système des modalités nominales, syntagme complétif, and predication verbale. See, for example, Creissels (1980) for a thorough systematic, functional analysis of Manding grammar, with respect to dialectological groupings.
The noun phrase can be as the subject or direct object of the sentence, and also can fill the object of a postposition. Manding typically uses postpositions. An example is: *musa fe* ‘near Musa’. The location of the noun phrase as subject, or object, is either before a tense/aspect marker or between a tense/aspect marker and a verb. The noun phrase has the option of being either definite or indefinite. The definite form is indicated by suffixation of a vowel, *-o*. This morpheme is the final one in a noun phrase. The indefinite form is an unbound marker, as in *muso ye yan* ‘there is some woman here’. An interesting feature between dialects is the representation of the definite form by tone only, in Bambara and Maninka, for instance. In Mandinka and Kuranko, there is the presence of a suffixed segment. Other suffixation marks the plural, usually *la*, or something similar.

The noun phrase in its simplest form has no adjectives or suffixes. Noun phrases can be more complex, such as with genitives or in compounds. Adjectives and qualifiers usually go between a noun phrase and its definite marker.

There is also a distinction between alienable and inalienable possession in a noun phrase, which is present in Manding dialects. It usually has the vowel *a* with a preceding stop or liquid. (For example, *ka* in Bambara, and *la* in Mandinka). The noun phrase can be more complex, but only a brief sketch is provided here. Creissels (1980a, 1980b) and Houis (1980) have done extensive work on Manding dialect comparisons. The verb phrase in Manding languages are generally of two types, transitive and intransitive. The object is pre-verbal in transitive constructions, as in *a ba* ‘it remove’. A postpositional phrase may also be a complement in verb phrase structure. There are definite cooccurrence constraints on the construction of verb and postpositional phrase. These must be as selectional restrictions provided in the lexicon. There is a special type of verb phrase with the nominalizing morpheme *–li*, and *ke*, ‘to do’. The construction appears to be transitive in its form (e.g., *n ye tabi ke* ‘I past cooking do’, Gingiss 1973:71), but is actually intransitive semantically. There are certain distribution differences of the tense/aspect markers in the Manding dialects, but generally the construction of verb phrases is very similar.

In Manding dialects, sentence structures are also similar, making up about eight types. These types are: identificational, existential, imperative, locative, durative, intransitive, adjective, and common sentence type. Gingiss (1973) provides many examples and comparisons of Manding languages, which tend not to differ widely in sentence construction.

### 6.0 Conclusion

As was noted in section 3.0, the languages within the Manding group tend to have a high degree of cognition and inter-language intelligibility. Bilingualism in at least the dominant languages of Dyula and Bambara add much bilingualism to the picture. People depend on these trade languages for market usage. In Mali, Bambara is broadcast on the radio, taught in schools, and used in government offices (Tera 1979). As Platiel (1978:44) notes, the linguistic realities change because of population migrations and media use of dominant dialects (such as Bambara). She cites, for example, Bozo, Ligbi, Numu, and Soninke as showing serious linguistic change. Such influences are especially strong in Mali, northwest Ivory Coast, and western Upper Volta.

However, people who tend to stay in remote village areas without much travel to larger towns are not so bilingual, and intelligibility may be quite lower in these areas. With much linguistic similarity and degree of bilingualism, surveys such as Bolli et al. (1972) are helpful in providing more detail regarding intelligibility between many villages in a region.

An additional need is evaluation of appropriateness of literature available, often in the dominant dialect. In Bambara of Mali, and in Maninka of Guinea, for example, there is both a Bible and other literature, as well as the languages being chosen as “official” (Bambara being much more developed than Maninka). Yet, the degree to which this literature really communicates to remote villages and dialects is unknown. To both religious and government bodies it does seem appealing to be able to enable one dialect, with a normalized orthography, to reach many Manding speakers in West Africa; even to the point of widespread inter-country cooperation (see, for example UNESCO 1978 and UNESCO 1979). Yet, what may be produced is a third, synthetic language which people have to learn in addition to their own and the trade language. Without the necessary linguistic study and sociolinguistic (generally very lacking) study, it seems to me that the really effective widespread application of dominant dialects remains an untested ambition. Language samples from various villages would be helpful, of course, and the DNAFLA 1980 survey in Mali contributes much toward such information.

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4Tera (1979) contains an excellent overview of the status and usage of Manding languages in West Africa.

5See Campbell (1972) for evidence of this in the area of Touba, Ivory Coast, concerning the Maou (Mauka) language. Also Anderson (1982), surveying “Malinké” (probably Xassonke or Mandinka) indicates similar village characteristics of being weak in Mandinka and Bambara.
Linguistic assessment and intelligibility studies can be done as more and more groups of villages are researched. Intelligibility studies have been done both on the basis of linguistic data (that is, word lists) using an appropriate factor (a fraction less than 1.0) applied to cognate data (for example, Welmers 1957). Or, dialect test tapes of autobiographical discourse, with content questions for the hearer being tested, have also been used for estimation of mutual intelligibility between dialects (Casad 1974). Some areas where such studies have been applied in a thorough manner are in the northern part of Ivory Coast, in the Senufo region around Korhogo (Welmers 1957), and around the Ivory Coast-Upper Volta border (Groff and Solomiac 1982). After such analysis, what remains is appropriate planning and personnel strategy for a language area. Welmers (1957) represents an example of an analysis-strategy sequence for the Senufo languages around Korhogo.

In consideration, then, of linguistic samples and whether a literature from one dialect can be used in another, sometimes simple word lists and cognate percentages may not be the only criteria. Bimson (1978:300) points out that grammatical structure may be quite different. In the case he notes the question particle of Maninka, Bambara, and Kuranko share similarities (ba, wà, and wa, respectively). Whereas Kono and Vai, with which Kuranko has been traditionally grouped, do not have these. Kono and Vai mark questions by a special question intonation. The point of this is that grammatical features also play an important role in figuring "mutual intelligibility." Bimson cites five other significant grammatical differences which go to show the legitimacy of placing Kuranko within the Mandekan group and not with Kono and Vai (as Long 1971 had done by cognate studies).

Bird (1968) points out that with respect to relative clauses, the Bambara (of the region from Bamako to Segou) differs significantly from the Maninka spoken in the region of Kita. The differences are within the system of appositional and adjunctive relative clauses. (Both types are present in Mandekan group.) The interesting thing in the differences (between Bambara and Maninka) is that the Maninka speakers have an obligatory rule of shifting the appositional relative clause to the rear (being the more conservative dialect). Whereas, in Bambara, constraints at the level of stylistic preference determine the shift of the relative clause, not an obligatory rule as in Maninka. Bird further points out that much of the Bambara used on Radio Mali, for instance, is translated from French. Therefore, the constraints of obligatory rear-shifting of the relative clause are relaxed in the Bambara, being the less conservative dialect. This implicates a grammatical difference which could have a bearing on, say, rejection of certain structures by native Maninka speakers.

Also helpful in evaluating inter-dialect intelligibility is sociolinguistic interviewing, which should not be underestimated. It is not unusual to find that sociolinguistic impressions indeed corroborate and enhance intelligibility test results (see Campbell 1972, Groff and Solomiac 1982). Bendor-Samuel (1980, 1982) has discussed sociolinguistic factors and also approaching the question of using linguistic relationships together with sociolinguistic factors to try to predict comprehension. Typically, linguistic factors can only indicate a lack of comprehension, and not predict adequate comprehension.

In conclusion, there is much that remains to be done—linguistically, sociolinguistically, and assessment of needs for indigenous literature. There are over two thousand languages spoken in Africa, and work can always be adduced in linguistic research, teaching of languages, and production of literature. Dwyer and Irish (1982) of Michigan State University have begun a language resource project with the aim of a handbook of human, institutional, and material resources for the teaching and learning of African languages.

It will be interesting to see what the next decades bring regarding the recognition, study, and promotion of the varied and valuable resources of African ethnic groups and languages.

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10 This is the method often used by members of the Summer Institute of Linguistics and the Société International de Linguistique.
11 Welmer’s report is a good case of linguistic assessment based on lexico-statistic data and estimation of mutual intelligibility. Then, personnel strategy according to dialect similarities, language-learning consideration, and development of indigenous literature is discussed in order to cover this language of 450,000 speakers and a dozen or so dialects.
12 Mutual intelligibility is a frequently used testing method, but bilingualism is not an easy matter to sort out from strictly linguistic intelligibility. As a first step, the story method (Casad 1974) and Mutual Intelligibility Factor (2/3 of cognate point) have been used a lot.
13 For an example of differences in the phonological level between dialects, and implication for a different literature, see Gingiss (1973) and Campbell (1972) concerning Mauka.
14 These cases were concerning identifier morphemes, future construction, affirmative construction, past transitive construction, and negative construction.
References

This section is a collection of source listing which are related to Manding languages, along with some references of wider interest (such as Mande, African languages in general, and sociolinguistics). It is not exhaustive, but purpose of this collection is to provide an idea of what has been done and who has done the work in Manding languages.

This section of references in composed of eight subsections, following a list of abbreviations which may be used in the listings.

List of abbreviations

ACCT Agence de coopération culturelle et technique
L’AELIA Association d’études linguistiques interculturelles africaines
AGECOOP Agence de coopération culturelle et technique
CEPLAN Centre d’études interethniques et interculturelles
CILF Conseil International de la Langue Française
CIRL Cahiers Ivoiriens de Recherche Linguistique
CLAD Centre de Linguistique Appliquée de Dakar
CNRS Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique
DAFS Département d’Alphabétisation Fonctionnelle et Sélective
DNAFLA Direction Nationale de l’Alphabétisation Fonctionnelle et de la Linguistique Appliquée
L’ENLOV Ecole Nationale des Langues Orientales Vivantes
GRTO Groupe de Recherche et Tradition orale
ILA Institut de Linguistique Appliquée
IFAN Institut français/fondamental d’Afrique noire (Dakar)
BIFAN Bulletin de l’Institut fondamental d’Afrique noire (Dakar)
MAPE Projet Mandingue-Peulh
l’INLCO Institut national des Langues et Civilisations Orientales
ORSTOM Office de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique Outre-Mer
SEALF Société d’Etudes Linguistiques et Anthropologiques de France
SLA Section de Linguistique Appliquée de l’Université de Yaoundé
SLAO Société linguistique de l’Afrique occidentale
SOAS School of Oriental and African Studies (London)
SLLR Sierra Leone Language Review
UNESCO United Nations Education, Social, and Cultural Organization

15See DNAFLA 1982, MAPE (Manding-Peul project) bibliography which is a thorough work covering Manding languages.
Dyula

Dyula: Technical linguistic
Coulibaly, B. 1975. Pour une transcription pratique des tons du Jula. Ouagadougou: Annales CLU.
Dumestre, Gerard. 1970b. Lexèmes simples, dérivés et intégrés dans le dioula véhiculaire de Côte-d’Ivoire. 9ème congrès langues de l’Afrique Occidentale; Freetown. Abidjan: ILA.

Tutorial material

Dictionaries, lexiques
Bambara

Technical linguistic


Braconnier, C. 1982. Le système tonal du dioula d’Odienné. ILA, Université d’Abidjan.


Training material


Dictionaries, lexiques, orthography


DNAFLA. 1968. Lexique bambara à l’usage des centres d’alphabétisation.


Manding (Malinké)

Dictionaries, tutorial material

Abiven, P. R. 1906. Dictionnaire français-malinké et malinké-français, précédé d’un abrégé de grammaire malinké.

Conakry. np.


na. 1906. Essai de dictionnaire pratique français-malinké, and dictionnaire français-malinké.

Orthography, literacy national policies


ERA 246 CNRS-INLCO ORCEMONT, vol 2, 3–37.


Literature


General articles


Material done with respect to one country, by country

Gambia


Guineau-Bissau

Ivory Coast

Mali

Senegal

Material with respect to a particular language, by language

Mandinka

Maninka

Mauka

Marka

Worodugu
Xassonke

Mande languages, in general

Bibliographies

General references regarding study of African languages

**Sociolinguistic or survey related**