Polyfunctional pronominal markers in South-Western Mande

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The paper deals with the syntactic functions and morphosyntactic features of polyfunctional (PF) pronominal markers in South-Western Mande languages (SWM). This group includes 6 languages spoken in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The central purpose of the paper is to provide a comparative analysis of PF pronominal markers in SWM. This analysis is based on the synchronous grammar descriptions and manuals on SWM languages as well as on the data collected during the author's fieldwork with Woi-Bhalaga, a Guinean dialect of Looma. This work is supported by a public grant overseen by the French National Research Agency (ANR) as part of the "Investissements d'Avenir" program (reference: ANR-10-LABX-0083)".

It is typical for Mande languages to have several sets of pronominal markers opposed according to their syntactic functions and/or morphological status. One of them is often PF: for example, in Goo (Southern Mande) several sets of subject pronouns are opposed to a set of PF pronouns occurring in non-subject positions (Vydrin 2013). Traditionally, PF markers in SWM are regarded as personal pronouns, too. However, here they are not autonomous word forms but rather inseparable and intransposable bound morphemes. Moreover, the paradigms of PF markers include two suprasegmental morphemes, these expressing the 1st and the 3rd person singular (except for Mende, where the 1st person singular is expressed by means of a segmental morpheme *ɲá-*); they have no segment exponent and manifest themselves on the following morpheme through the change of its initial consonant and tonal alternations. On this evidence, V. Vydrin in (2011) proposes to name such elements in SWM personal prefixes. Here, this term will be avoided in order not to refer to their morphological status.

The specificity of these morphemes consists in their transcategorial nature: they can be attached to a verb (1), a noun (2) or a postposition (3):

LOOMA

(1) *Gè   ká-nì.*
     1sg.base   3sg.pi\see-aor
     'I saw him'.

(2) *kɛ̀ ɛ̀*
     1sg.pi\father
     'my father'

(3) *Fòlòmò ɣà   níkɛ́-y   wódì-zù   má.*
     Folomo 3sg.npst   ref\cow-def   sell-ipfv   3sg.pi\on
     'Folomo is selling the cow to him'.

Particular functions which can be fulfilled by PF pronominal markers in SWM vary. The standard set includes a direct object (4), an argument of a qualitative verb (5), a possessor in the situation of inalienable possession (6) and an indirect object with a postposition (7):

MENDE

(4) *Ŋgá   (ʼ)-pié   lɔ̀   fóló   gbí   mà.*
     1sg.ipfv 3sf.pf-do   cop   ref\day   every   ipfv
     'I do it everyday'. (Innes 1971: 150)

BANDI

(5) *Í-lùkpú-ŋgɔ*   *lèˊ.*
     2sg.pf-short-qual   cop
     'You are not tall'. (Bandi, ms.: II, 17)

ZIALO

(6) *(')-tókó-y*
     3sg.pf-hand-def
     'his hand' (Babaev 2011: 60)

KPELLE (LIB.)

(7) *Gáàloŋ*   *èì*   *kɛˋ*   *ɓɛˊ* *èì*   *tɔ̀ŋ*   *pù*   *(`)-máà.*
     ref\chief.def 3sg.cond2 be   here   3sg.cond2 ref\law put   1sg.pf-on
     'If only the chief was here, he'd punish me'. (Leidenfrost & McKay 2005: 77)

At the same time, there are a lot of smaller differences in the use of PF pronominal markers in SWM. Thus, for example, SWM languages vary according to whether PF markers are necessary even with a full NP present or not. For example, in Looma in an intransitive resultative construction, verbal agreement with a plural subject is facultative (8), while in Zialo it is obligatory (9):

LOOMA

(8) *Zúnú-y-tì*   *tí-ɓɛ́tɛ́-vɛ́*   */zúnú-y-tì*   *kpɛ́tɛ́-vɛ́.*
     ref\man-def-pl   3pl.pi-be.wealthy-res   /ref\man-def-pl   be.wealthy-res
     'The men are wealthy'.

ZIALO

(9) *Pélé* *fèlè-gɔ̀-y-tì*   *tí-w̃ɛ́-yàà*   *lè.*
     ref\road two-def-def-pl   3pl.pf-meet-res exi
     'The two roads have been linked together'. (Babaev 2011: 129)

Especially interesting cases represents the use of PF markers for marking inalienable possession on the head noun. In this case their use may depend on a whole range of factors, such as the type of a noun representing possessum, the meaning of the category of number expressed by a NP in the possessor's position, its referential status, etc. In the report, a detailed analysis of such peculiarities of PF pronominal markers in SWM will be proposed.

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