A grammar of Mankanya: An Atlantic language of Guinea-Bissau, Senegal and the Gambia
Gaved T.J.D.

Cover Page

Universiteit Leiden

The handle holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

Author: Gaved, T.J.D.
Title: A grammar of Mankanya: An Atlantic language of Guinea-Bissau, Senegal and the Gambia
**Issue Date:** 2020-11-05

Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Sociolinguistic situation

According to the Ethnologue (Lewis, Simons and Fennig, 2013), Mankanya is a language spoken by approximately 75,000 people across the countries of Senegal, Guinea-Bissau and the Gambia. Mankanya is an exonym, and the majority call themselves *bahula,* the people of Hula, (the original name for their chief town which is now called Bula), and the language is referred to as *uhula.* A small number of Mankanya refer to themselves as *bawuh,* reflecting their origins in the town of Co[1].

Approximate location of Mankanya speakers

---
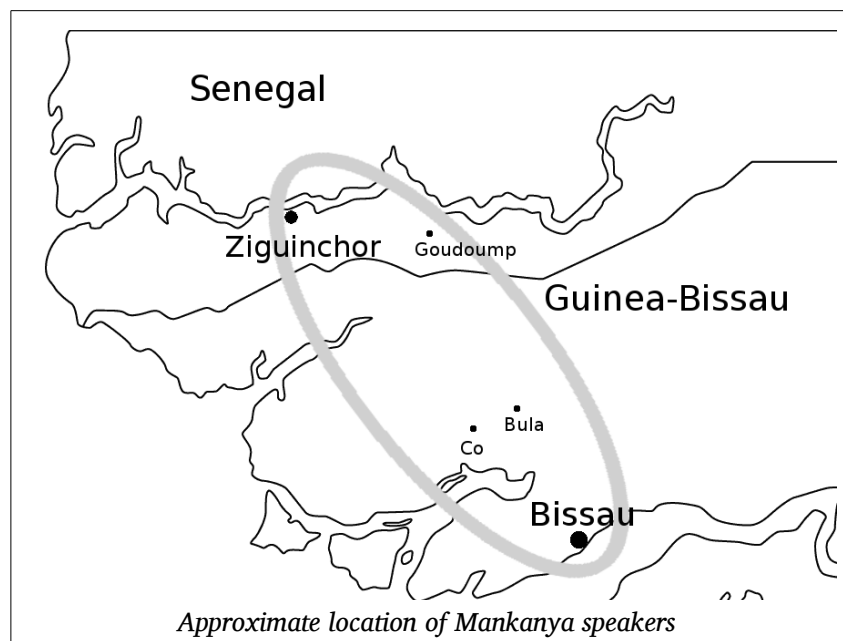
1   Bula*/hula* and Co[ko]*/wuh* may indicate a historical system of consonant mutation which no longer exists.

Bula and Co are towns in the Cacheu region of Guinea-Bissau. However, over the years there has been a steady migration of Mankanya northwards. Trifkovič (1969, p. 3) cites Carreira (1960) as putting the start of this migration in the first quarter of the 19th century. The same sources indicate that the migration was due to a number of causes: insufficient cultivable land, internal conflicts and abuse of power by the colonial authorities. The Mankanya first moved into southern Senegal (the area known as the Casamance), particularly around Ziguinchor the regional capital, and then expanded eastwards along the southern bank of the River Casamance. Later they also moved into the Gambia. Like virtually all Senegalese languages, internal migration has additionally created Mankanya communities in most major urban centres.

Many Mankanya speakers in the home area are farmers, and in recent times have been heavily involved in the cultivation of cashew nuts, a major export cash crop for both Guinea-Bissau and Senegal.

Traditionally, the Mankanya have a hierachical social structure, with each village having a chief, who would ultimately be under the authority of the chief (or king) of Bula. This chieftaincy has been apparently traced back to 1522 (Niouky and Robert, 2011). The chief of Co seems to have the second highest authority and at some point in the past broke away, but was then brought back under the authority of Bula. Though the system of chiefs still exists, they now play a largely symbolic role. For example, in the past the royal compound at Bula would be the home to the royal officials as well as the king, but now only the king and his family live there with very little pomp and ceremony.

The Mankanya were one of the main groups to respond to the outreach of Catholic missions in the area around the beginning of the 20th century, and most Mankanya would now call themselves Catholic. However, many of them also maintain their traditional religious practices.

One aspect of the Catholic influence is that, since Catholic missions often involved schools, education has a high value amongst the Mankanya. Particularly in Senegal, many Mankanya are well educated. Mankanya are exposed to schooling in one of three different languages, depending on the country in which they live: Portuguese, French, or English, in Guinea-Bissau, Senegal and the Gambia respectively. Because of the history of civil war, the education system in Guinea-Bissau is much less developed than those in the other two countries.

Mankanya has been in contact with Upper Guinea Creole, a Portuguese based creole, probably since its origins around the beginning of the 17th century (Kihm, 1994, p. 4). For over 400 years this creole has been the language of wider communication in what is now Guinea-Bissau and the

Casamance area of Senegal. In the past 30 years Wolof has begun to take over that role in the Casamance.

Mankanya, along with Manjaku and Pepel, form a group of closely related languages, often referred to as Manjaku, the largest of the three. This group is part of the Atlantic family of languages, which in turn is part of the Niger-Congo phylum.

The most recent work on the structure of the Atlantic family is by Pozdniakov and Segerer (Forthcoming). They propose the following structure:

Wolof Wolof, Lebu

Nyun Baynunk; Buy

Tenda Basari, Bedik, Konyagi, Tanda, Bapen

Jaad Biafada, Badiaranke

Fula-Sereer Fula (Pular, Pulaar, …); Sereer

Cangin Palor, Ndut, Noon, Laala, Saafi

Nalu Nalu; Baga Fore; Baga Mboteni

NORTH

ATLANTIC

Balante Ganja, Kentohe, Fraase

Joola Fogny, Banjal, Kasa, Kwataay, Karon, Ejamat, Keerak, … Bayot?

Manjaku Bok, Cur, Bassarel; Pepel, **Mankanya**

Bijogo Kamona, Kagbaaga, Kajoko

BAK

In the BAK group, all the languages apart from Bijogo were originally classified as part of a group of the same name in earlier work, e.g. Sapir (1971). The BAK group has the common feature that some version of the *bak-* morpheme appears as a marker of the third person plural. For example in Mankanya the third person plural object pronoun is *baka*.

Variation within Mankanya has not been formally described. Trifkovič (1969) treats Mankanya as one language without dialects. Anecdotally, Mankanya speakers say that there are only two dialects – the main one *uhula,* and a second minor one *uwuh,* spoken by Mankanya living in the region of Co. More significant differences are influences from the languages of wider communication. For example, code switching with French for large numbers and dates is common in Senegal, but with English in the Gambia. The lack of variation in Mankanya as compared to neighbouring languages like the Jola languages is a question for further research. One factor maybe

that Mankanya society is traditionally hierarchical, with an overall king based in Bula. Another may be that the Mankanya put a high value on education, which results in an increase in mobility between the various Mankanya communities, both for schooling, and afterwards for work.

1.2 Previous work

The only formal description published on Mankanya is "Le Mancagne: étude phonologique et morphologique: étude phonologique et morphologique" (Trifkovič, 1969). This description does not completely correspond with my data, and I will note where there are differences. Since then a number of students at the University Cheik Anta Diop in Dakar have produced unpublished phonologies at the French Maîtrise level, but those I have seen have not produced new analyses.

The Mankanya people have been discussed in some anthropological work notably Jacqueline Trincaz e.g. "Mythes, sens et représentations de la maladie chez les Mancagne de Casamance" (Trincaz, 1973).

More recently there has been "Pratiques et representations des parlers macagnes de Goudomp (Senegal)" (Ndecky, 2011).

The most closely related languages have been described in "A Manjako grammar with special reference to the nominal group" (Karlik, 1972) and "Phonologie, morphologie et structures syntaxiques du Pepel" (Ndao, 2011). The three languages together are discussed and compared in a chapter of "Guinea Languages of the Atlantic group: description and internal classification" (Wilson and Storch, 2007).

Data from Mankanya can also be found in the work of Alain Kihm, e.g. "Noun class, gender, and the lexicon-syntax-morphology interfaces: A comparative study of Niger-Congo and Romance languages" (Kihm, 2005).

1.3 Data sources

The data used as the basis of this thesis was collected over the time period 2000-2012, whilst I was resident in Senegal and working principally with Mankanya speakers who were involved in translation and literacy programmes in their language.

I have a corpus of 45 texts of different lengths and genres and this is supported by elicited data. Some of the texts were originally oral, and others were written. Not all the texts have been fully glossed. Two examples can be found in the appendixes.

Additionally I had access to the translation of the New Testament and some parts of the Old Testament into Mankanya. As a translation this can not be

considered a primary source, but it was a useful source of ideas and illustrations that informed my analysis.

My lexical database contains 4055 lexemes (mostly roots, but also containing some expressions). 2361 of these were published as "Petit lexique mancagne-français: suivi d'un index français-mancagne" (Gaved and Stammers, 2004)

1.4 Language overview

1.4.1 Phonology

In this section I will give a brief overview of the phonology and more details can be found in chapter 2. Both here and in that chapter I use IPA symbols but elsewhere I use the officially recognised orthography for Mankanya (Republic of Senegal, 2006) as that is how many of the texts were either written or transcribed.

Mankanya has 37 consonant phonemes and 13 vowel phonemes (assuming length as a contrastive feature), which are shown below. Where the orthographic symbol is different from the IPA, that is shown in brackets. Vowel length is shown orthographically by repeating the vowel symbol.

	Labials	Apicals	Retroflexes	Palatals	Velars
Voiceless plosives	p	t	ʈ (t̪)	c	k
Pre-nasalised voiceless plosives	ᵐp (mp)	ⁿt (nt)	ⁿʈ (nt̪)		ᵑk (nk)
Voiced plosives	b	d		ɟ (j)	g
Pre-nasalised voiced plosives	ᵐb (mb)	ⁿd (nd)		ᶮɟ (nj)	ᵑg (ng)
Nasals	m	n		ɲ (ñ)	ŋ
Vibrants		r			
Pre-nasalised vibrants		ⁿr (nr)			
Fricatives	f	θ (t̵)	ʂ (ş)		h
Pre-nasalised fricatives	ᵐf (nf)	ⁿθ (nt̵)	ⁿʂ (nş)		ᵑh (nh)
Sonorants		l		j (y)	w
Pre-nasalised sonorants		ⁿl (nl)		ᶮj (ny)	ᵑw (nw)

Table 1.1: Consonant Phonemes

	Front	Central	Back
High	i iː		u uː ʊ (ú) ʊː
Mid	e eː	ə (ë)	o oː
Low		ɐ (a) ɐː	

Table 1.2: Vowel Phonemes

All oral consonants can appear in a prenasalised form, though not all prenasalised consonants are found in word roots. (See section 2.8 Occurrences and co-occurrence restrictions)

Mankanya is not a tonal language, nor, unlike the related Jola family, does it have vowel harmony based on so-called advanced tongue root distinctions.

Considering long vowels and prenasalised consonants as units then common root patterns are CVC, and CVCVC (and longer patterns). There are a few CV roots, and some grammatical terms have a V root. Addition of affixes can lead to forms like VCVCV, CVCVCCVC and others.

1.4.2 Orthography

Mankanya had no widely accepted written form until recently. It is only in the last 20 years that an orthography was developed, resulting in Mankanya's official recognition as a "National Language" by the Senegalese government in 2005 (Republic of Senegal, 2006) (it was officially recognised in 2005 but not signed into law until 2006). The orthography uses Latin characters, and in common with other Senegalese languages uses Ŋ/ŋ [ŋ], Ñ/ñ [ɲ], and Ë/ë [ə]. It also uses some symbols found in few other languages of the region Ŧ/ŧ [θ], Ṭ/ṭ [ʈ] and Ş/ş [ʂ]. The Senegal based Mankanya cultural association, Pkumel, has been running literacy classes (mostly in the Casamance and Guinea-Bissau) since 2001 and a translation of part of the Bible (Genesis and the New Testament) was published in 2014.

Some orthographic representations follow the conventions used with all other Senegalese languages. Prenasals are represented orthographically with "m" before "b" or "p" and "n" before any other consonant. Vowel length is represented by doubling the vowel symbol. e.g [oː] is written "oo".

1.4.3 Morphology and syntax

Most words in Mankanya are multimorphemic – a stem is normally prefixed, and maybe also have derivative suffixes. Like many Niger-Congo languages there are noun classes, and there is agreement between a noun and its

modifiers. There is also verb agreement with its subject. The morphology of nouns is described in chapter 3 and that of verbs in chapter 4. Infinitives and participles are described in chapter 5 and other word classes in chapter 6.

The dominant order of constituents in a clause is Subject Verb Object, adpositions are prepositions, and in a noun phrase most modifiers follow the head noun. Simple sentence types as described in chapter 7 and more complex types in chapter 9. Tense, aspect and mode in Mankanya is mostly expressed by means of auxiliary verbs. This system is described in chapter 8.

The following short text from the beginning of a folk story illustrates some of these features.

1 **Uñiiŋ**   **ubi**   **aya**   **unuur**   **uloŋ**
   u- ñiiŋ   u- bi   a- ya   u- nuur   u- loŋ
   C2S hyena   C2S PAST   SER go   C2S day   C2S INDEF
du   **uṭeeh**
d- u   u- ṭeeh
EXT LOC.DIST   C2S field
"Hyena went one day into the bush"

2 **Awin**   **bnob**   **ṭi**   **bhër**   **bi**
   a- win   b- nob   ṭ- i   b- hër   b- i
   SER see   C5S beehive INT LOC.PROX   C5S hole   C5S GEN
bko
b- ko
C7S tree
"He saw a beehive in the hole of a tree."

3 **Aşë**   **kak**   **adu**   **ṭmaalu**   **aji**   **baya**
   a- şë   kak   a- du   ṭ- maalu   a- ji   ba- ya
   C1S SEQ   return   SER call   NAME hare   SER say   C1P go
bduuf   **kë** **ṭmaalu**   **akak**   **aji**   « **Ŋya**   ».
b- duuf   kë ṭ- maalu   a- kak   a- ji   ŋa- ya
C5S extraction   DS NAME hare   C1S REP   SER say   C2P go
"He came straight back to call Hare to come and help him extract the honey. The hare came, saying 'Let's go' "

Noun classes and noun modifier agreement can be seen in sentence 1 *u-nuur u-loŋ* "a day" and sentence 2 *b-hër b-i b-ko* "hole of the tree". This is discussed in sections 3.3.1 Class prefixes and 6.1 Agreeing Noun Modifiers.

The first sentence shows verbal subject agreement with the *u-* C2S prefix on the initial noun and the initial auxiliary. See section 4.2.1 Subject prefixes for more information.

Sentences 1 and 2 show two different locatives *du* (exterior distal locative) and *ṭi* (interior proximal locative). These are discussed in section 6.4 Locatives.

This text also illustrates several auxiliaries: *bi* PST "Past"(section 8.7.2 Past), *ṣë* SEQ "Sequential" (section 8.7.3 Sequential) and *kak* REP "Repetitive" (section 8.8.6 Repetitive).

There also examples in this text of the use of the reduced serial prefix *a-* SER "Serial" which is discussed in sections 4.2.2 Serial and 9.2 Clauses linked by verbal forms, and the different subject marker *kë* (section 11 The particle kë).