

Typology of Imperative Constructions

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Chapter 24

IMPERATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS IN BAMANA

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1. Grammar notes

Bamana (better known as Bambara in the English-speaking world) is spoken in the Republic of Mali and in a few other West African countries. It is a word-isolating language of the Manding Group, Mande Family, Niger-Congo Phylum.

Clause structure (syntactic relations) in Bamana is characterized by a fixed word order and the use of auxiliaries. The basic word order is SOV. Isolation also serves as the morphological technique. The only exclusions to the rule "a word = a root" can be found in word formation, where new words are constructed by adding up roots.

A typical feature characteristic of isolating languages attested in Bamana is that the absolute majority of sentences are polypredicative constructions. Bamana has no adverbs as a word class: all its adverbial meanings (benefactive, goal, addressee, locus, source, time, etc.) are expressed by means of adverbial clauses that often function as complements or non-finite predicates (including the so-called serial constructions).

This chapter is largely based on data from the so-called standard (urban) dialect, with a few examples borrowed from the Beledugu dialect. Imperative constructions in Beledugu demonstrate certain syntactic differences from those in the standard dialect (and these sentences are specially marked in the text below). All examples used in this paper are taken from textual sources – mostly general-education editions like readers (Magasa 1978) and grammars (Bird, Kante 1976) – or are represented by separate sentences elicited from informants. My main informant was a linguist from Mali, Mr. Adama Konate, whose untimely decease in 1990 has been mourned by everyone who knew him.

So far, I have encountered only one special study addressing imperative constructions in West-African languages (Demuth, Yanco 1979) that exists as an unpublished manuscript.

Like many other West African languages, Bamana has lexical tones, see (Courtenay 1974; Creissels 1978; Diarra 1985). In recent years, a ground-breaking work by Valentine Vydrine on Manding lexical systems (V. Vydrine 1999) has changed some previously held views and led to a much deeper understanding of the tonal systems in these languages¹. Apart from these, Bamana also features grammatical tones expressed by means of a so-called tonal article marking noun phrases, and a set of phrasal accents used to distinguish between questions and statements, see (Petrjankina 1983). Imperative utterances seem to have no special accent, except the usual forcefulness and urgency of tone common to imperative constructions in all languages.

Fixed word order in Bamana produces a system where each clause can be described as a sequence of ordered positions or slots allotted for specific word classes. The linear slot structure of a Bamana clause is built as follows:

Slot 1 – subject NP

Slot 2 – construction marker

Slot 3 – direct object NP (with transitive constructions)

Slot 4 – main predicate

Slot 5 – circonstant (an adverbial NP with/without a postposition). There is no separate position for, and therefore no category of, the indirect object.

Construction markers (CM) are used to denote various characteristics of the situation described in the relevant clause, as well as the semantic type of the predicate. A complete list of Bamana CM's and three examples of their usage in actual sentences are provided below²:

bé	–	incompleted (INC)
té	–	incompleted negative (INCN)
yé ₁	–	completed transitive (CMPL)
má	–	completed negative (CMPLN)
∅ ... -Ra ³	–	completed intransitive (CMPL)
bénà	–	intentional (Int)
ténà	–	intentional negative (IntN)
nǎ, ná	–	intentional certain (Int)
békà	–	actual continuous (ActC)
bé ... lá	–	actual progressive (ActP)
ká ₁	–	stative (Stat)

mán	–	stative negative (StatN)
ká ₂ , kà ₂	–	dependent clause (DC)
kánà	–	dependent clause negative DCN)
mánà	–	hypothetical (Hyp)
yé ₂	–	imperative (Imper).

(1a) cě́ yé finí́ dá dùgú́ mà⁴
 #1 #2 #3 #4 #5
 Man CMPL clothes put ground on
 'A man put his clothes on the ground'

(1b) jí́ ká kálán
 #1 #2 #4
 water STAT warm
 'The water is warm'

(1c) à ténà bó só' kónó
 #1 #2 #4 #5
 he IntN go-out house inside (= out of the house)
 'He will not leave the house.'

The rigid rules of Bamana linear-position syntax exclude the use of any inserted elements (e.g. a dependent clause inside the main clause). Multiclausal sentences in Bamana have two additional slots used for building polypredicative constructions: the leftmost slot #0 (reserved for topicalized information), and the rightmost slot #6 (reserved for expressing "afterthoughts"). The relevant subject, object or circonstant slot within the matrix clause is filled with a pronominal trace which is anaphorically or cataphorically related to the dependent clause. In Bamana, these can be relative, complement, coordinate, or nominalized clauses.

Construction markers (CM) fall into two unequally distributed categories. The majority of construction markers are independent CM's that may occur both in monoclausal constructions and in any clause of a complex sentence. Only two of the CM's listed above, *mánà* and *kà₂*, are restricted to dependent clauses, although each in a different way. *Mánà* is used in only conditional clauses, while *kà₂* has the widest distribution among all Bamana CM's. As a marker of a dependent predication *kà₂* is found with complements to modal and experiential verbs, cf. (2a); in coordinate same-subject constructions, cf. (2b); in serial constructions, cf.

(2c); and in subjunctive clauses, cf. (2d). Also, they can be found in single-clause constructions with optative meaning, cf. (3a) and (3b):

- (2a) Mádù bé sé kà sò/ bòlì
 Madu INC can DC horse ride
 'Madu can ride a horse'
- (2b) à Ø nà-ná kà à mùsò' yé
 he CMPL come-CMPL DC his wife see
 'He came and saw his wife'
- (2c) à Ø sín-ná kà bó fúrá'tú kóró
 he CMPL head-for:CMPL DC go.out forest from
 'He came out of the forest'
- (2d) ní fǎ' bé báará' ké wálásá à mùsò' ká
 my father INC work do so.that his wife DC
 màlò' sà'n
 rice buy
 'My father works, so that his wife could buy rice'
- (3a) Álá ká héré' ké í₁ yé₂
 lord DC happiness make you POSTPOS (= wish)_{1,2}
 'Let Lord make you happy'
- (3b) fùnténí' ká ké
 heat DC become
 'Let the hot weather come.'

The *ká*₂ marker occurs with high and low tones. My data show that low-tone occurrences (reflecting a higher degree of cohesiveness within a sentence) take place where the clause subject is omitted, cf. (2) – (3) above and (17) – (18) below. These tonal differences, plus the fact that neighboring languages employ two phonetically different markers in similar environments have led some authors to believe that Bamana has two mutually unrelated *ká* markers. However, the available syntactic and semantic in-language evidence indicates that the differently toned markers represent two forms of the same element occurring in complementary distribution to each other, with the low tone used where the subject is omitted. Both

of them have a common semantic component denoting an "in-order-to" relation between two adjoining clauses, cf. (2d). This relation may be present in the sentence as a trace of an omitted "wishing" clause, see (3a) and (3b); or as a semantic link between two clauses of a coordinate construction, see (2b), or serial construction, see (2c).

Some complement constructions with the CM *ká*₂ are semantically related to imperatives, because their main-clause predicate has a causative performative meaning of prescription and may be used in a directive speech act (at the same time, the *ká*₂ marker is not compulsory with all such complement constructions). In such constructions, the most frequently used verbs are *bílá* 'force, compel', *bàlì* 'forbid', *tó* 'allow, let', *yàmàrù* 'allow', *kó* 'tell', *jě'n* 'agree with, allow' in the Beledugu dialect. Syntactically, these predicates differ by the type of the NP that occupies Slot 3. With *bílá*, *bàlì*, and *yàmàrù* it is the performer of the action, with *tó*, it is theme coded as a pronominal trace of the complement clause, and *jě'n*, which forms only intransitive constructions in this environment, has Slot 3 empty, cf.:

- (4a) ní fǎ' bé ní bílá kà nìn báará' ké
 my father INC I force DC this work do
 'My father makes me do this work'
- (4b) sánjí' bé ní bàlì kà táa
 rain INC I prevent DC go
 'The rain prevents me from going'
- (4c) ní fǎ' bé ní yàmàrù ní ká táa
 my father INC I allow I DC go
 'My father allows me to go'
- (4d) à fǎ' bé à tó dén' ká táa
 his father INC it allow child DC go
 'Father allows his son to go'
- (4e) ní fǎ' Ø jě'n-nà ní ká táa
 my father CMPL allow-CMPL I DC go
 'My father allowed me to go.'

2. Imperative constructions

The inventory of imperative constructions in Bamana is fairly small compared to that in languages of other types – a trait Bamana shares with isolating languages in general. Nevertheless, a cell in the universal imperative paradigm can be filled with more than one imperative construction, which is attributable not to differences in aspectual or other verbal meanings, but to a diversity of the mixed types of prescription expressed in Bamana.

Assuming that A is the Speaker, B – the Listener, BB – Listeners, C – 3rd person, D – the Performer of the action, the imperative paradigm in Bamana will look as follows:

- Cell 1. D=B
- Cell 2. D=BB
- Cell 3. D=C
- Cell 4. D=CC
- Cell 5. D=A+B
- Cell 6. D=A+BB
- Cell 7. D=A (with B present at the moment of speech)
- Cell 8. D=A (with BB present at the moment of speech). See (Xrakovskij, Volodin 1986).

2. 1. Prototypical imperative constructions

The two prototypical imperative constructions in Bamana correspond to Cell 1 (with a singular performer) and Cell 2 (with plural performers) in the paradigm above. Imperative constructions with plural performers do not differ from other verb constructions in Bamana, cf. (5b) below vs. (1a) – (1c), and imperative constructions with a singular performer do not differ from functionally similar constructions in many other languages, cf. (5a) with the predicate represented by a simple verb stem, and both A and D not coded in the surface structure:

- | | | |
|------|----------------|-------------------------|
| (5a) | bòli; | lívúru' tà |
| | run | book take |
| | 'Run!' | 'Take the book!' |
| (5b) | á yé bòli; | á yé lívúru' tà |
| | you:PL IMP run | you:PL IMP book take |
| | 'You:PL run!' | 'You:PL take the book!' |

In (5b) *á*, the 2PL pronoun with a high tone (not to be confused with *à*, the low-toned 3SG pronoun), is a non-emphatic variant of *áw* – 'you:PL'.

Notably, the Beledugu dialect (with certain differences in the usage of pronouns compared to the standard dialect) has an additional imperative construction with D=BB, cf.:

- | | | |
|------|---------------|----------------------------------|
| (5c) | á//aá bòli; | á//aá lívúru' tà |
| | you:PL run | You:PL book take |
| | 'You:PL run!' | 'You:PL bring {take?} the book!' |

Potentially, there are two ways to interpret (5c). The first is to postulate the existence of a zero imperative marker used instead of *yé*, and the second, to view the pronoun *á* (where *aá* is an optional variant with lengthening) as a form of address. The second interpretation appears to be more preferable, because it can explain the optional lengthening of the vowel (characteristic for addresses in many languages). Apart from that, the second interpretation does not break the linear structure of the Bamana clause where subjects must be always separated from direct objects by a construction marker. If the second interpretation is true, the Beledugu dialect differs from the standard dialect in that it has only one variant of a prototypical imperative construction where the number of the performers is specified in the form of the address.

2. 2. Derivative indirect imperative constructions

As suggested in (Bergelson 1985), the polyfunctional marker *ka₂* has one prototypical function underlying all its occurrences – that of marking dependent (subordinate) clauses and thus serving as an 'indirect mood' marker. In complex, multiclausal constructions like (2a) – (2d), this dependency is syntactically obvious. In addition, *ka₂* is used in simple single-clause constructions with optative meaning, cf. (3a) – (3b). For such cases one can postulate a semantic dependency of *ka₂* on an implicit performative 'I want, that...', cf.:

- | | |
|------|--------------------------------|
| (6a) | í bé à fè í ká lívúru' tà |
| | I INC it want you DC book take |
| | 'I want you to take the book' |
| (6b) | í ká lívúru' tà |
| | you DC book take |

'Why don't you take the book?'

The expression of volition underlies any speech act of causation or prescription, and it is only natural that *ka*₂ is used for coding derived indirect imperative constructions, where volition carries out the illocutionary function of prescription. Expressing will here stands for the illocutionary function of inducement. Thus, depending on context or communicative situation (6b) can be also translated as 'Take the book!' and used as a more polite and less coercive variant of (5a). With other cells of the universal imperative paradigm (where D ≠ B/BB) imperative constructions with *ka*₂ represent the only grammatical instrument to express imperative meanings:

(7a) ù ká táa só` kónó
they DC go home in (=postposition)
'Let them go home / Why don't they go home?' D=CC

(7b) án ká bāmánánkán` kàlàn
we DC Bamana learn
'Let's study Bamana' (the title of a Bamana textbook) D=A+B/BB

So D=B and D=BB constructions can occupy two cells each in the universal paradigm, cf.:

(8a) lívú` dí
book give
'Give [me] the book'

(8b) í ká lívú` dí
you DC book give
'Why don't you give [me] the book?'

(8c) áw / á yé lívú` dí
you:PL IMP book give
'You:PL give [me] the book'

(8d) áw ká lívú` dí
you:PL DC book give
'Why don't you:PL give [me] the book?'

The basic difference between prototypical imperative constructions like (8a) and (8c) on one hand and derivative indirect imperative constructions like (8b) and (8d) on the other is that the former express direct prescription, and the latter, indirect prescription loaded with additional modal meanings. At the same time, there is at least one context, i.e. in imperative constructions with dependent conditional clauses, where indirect imperative constructions of the (8b) and (8d) type represent the only instrument to convey imperative meaning, cf.:

(9) ní à Ø nà-nà í mǎ` í ká lívú` dí
if he CMPL come-CMPL you to you DC book give
'If he comes to you, give him the book.'

2. 3. An interpretation of (D=A)

In Bamana, a compulsory element of (D=A) situations (described in (Xrakovskij, Volodin 1986) as situations of self-prescription) is the presence of a 'higher-authority' listener who is expected in some way or other to endorse the action to be performed by the speaker. This means that in (D=A) situations in Bamana instead of actually urging himself/herself to perform the action the speaker rather applies to the listener for a permission to do so. As to pure self-prescription, it seems to have no special coding in Bamana. Compare (10a) and (10b) - multicausal constructions where the main clause is represented by an imperative construction (where the main predicate is *tó* - 'leave, allow'), and the dependent clause, by a clause with *ka*₂:

(10a) à tó ní ká nìn báará` ké
it allow I DC this work do
'Let me do this work'

(10b) á yé à to ní ká nìn báará` ké
you:PL IMPER it allow I DC this work do
'You:PL, let me do this work.'

3. Prohibitive constructions

The dependent clause marker *ka*₂ has a negative variant *kana* used in the same construction types. All prohibitive constructions in Bamana are formed with *kana*, cf.:

(11a) *kàná b̀̀lì*
DC:NEG run
'Don't run!'

(11b) *í kàná b̀̀lì*
you DC:NEG run
'Don't you run!'

(11c) *à // ù/ kàná d̀̀nkíí' dá*
he // they DC:NEG song sing
'Don't let him/them sing the song' [= 'Let him/them not sing the song']

(11d) *áw // án kàná táa só' kónó*
you:PL // we DC:NEG go house in
'Why don't you:PL // we not enter the house.'

The constructions in (11a) and (11b) fill the same cell in the universal imperative paradigm, with (11a) representing a prototypical negative imperative construction, and (11b) an indirect negative imperative construction.

3. 1. Preventive constructions

Strictly speaking, there are no specifically marked preventive constructions in Bamana; these can be only identified on purely semantic grounds, cf. (12) below vs. (11a) – (11d):

(12) *kàná b̀̀nyà*
DC:NEG get-bigger
'Don't get bigger (= Don't get fat).'

At the same time, definitely agentive/non-agentive verb pairs reveal interesting differences when used in preventive constructions. Definitely agentive verbs in

Bamana are represented by a group of so-called reflexive verb denoting intentional/controllable actions. They are found only in transitive constructions with the reflexive pronoun *í* 'self' (historically, a 2SG pronoun) in the position of the direct object, cf. (13a) and (13b). When used in imperative constructions they reveal a specific pattern of semantic behavior (compare their use in positive and negative imperative constructions in (14a) – (14d)⁵:

(13a) *à yé í b̀̀n*
he CMPL REFL fall.down
'He fell down (on purpose)' (a prototypical transitive imperative construction).

(13b) *à ∅ b̀̀n-nà*
he CMPL fall.down-CMPL
'He fell down (accidentally)'

(14a) *í b̀̀n*
REFL fall.down
'Fall down! (on purpose)' (A core imperative transitive construction)

(14b) *í kàná b̀̀n*
you DC:NEG fall.down
'Don't fall down!' (a prohibitive (=negative indirect directive) intransitive construction)

(14c) **b̀̀n*
'Fall down! (accidentally)' (a prototypical intransitive imperative construction)

(14d) *kàná b̀̀n*
DC:NEG fall.down
'Watch out not to fall down' (a preventive (=negative) prototypical imperative) intransitive construction).

The difficulty of interpreting sentences like (14a) – (14d) mostly lies not in the homonymy of *í*, but in the unclear status of the construction in (14b). The problem is: can one view (14b) as a "regular" prohibitive construction, or simply as a "negative variant" of the imperative construction in (14a)? From a formal point of view (14b) is a negative indirect intransitive imperative construction, and

thus it cannot be classified as a negative variant of either (14a) or the hypothetical sentence in (14c). One would expect that a "regular" reflexive-verb prohibitive construction should be structured as (14e):

- (14e) ^{??*} kàná í bìn
 DC:NEG REFL fall.down
 'Don't fall down!'

However, my informants found (14e) hardly acceptable.

Similarly, the contradiction between the prescriptive meaning of the construction in (14c) and the uncontrollable action meaning of the verb cannot be fixed by simply expanding the construction in (14c) into *í ká bìn* 'you'd better accidentally fall down', because the latter cannot function as an independent sentence. It can only appear as a dependent clause in a sentence with a prescriptive predicate of the type *ńbè à fè í ká bìn* 'I want you you fall down' (cf. (6a), where the opposition between the agentive and non-agentive meaning of the verb is neutralized.

4. Multiclausal imperative constructions

The meaning of prescription may be expressed in the first clause only or in both clauses of a construction. The first option is found in so-called 'conditional imperative constructions' where the dependent clause can express the condition or the goal of the prescription, cf.:

- (15a) *dén` máná táa í mà í ká lívúú` dí*
 child HYP go you to you DC book give
 'If the child comes your way, give [him] the book'

- (15b) *à ká táa Bàmàkó wálásá à bá` ká à yé*
 he DC go Bamako so.that he mother DC he see
 'Let him go to Bamako, so that his mother would see him.'

Although sentences exemplified in (15a) and (15b) can convey prescription addressed to any person (e.g. the MC of (15a) may be converted into: ... *áw ká lívúú` dí* - 'you PL give [him] the book'), one cannot describe them as imperative constructions proper.

The second option is represented by 'coordinated imperative constructions' which may express prescription to perform a sequence of actions, cf. (16a) - (16c) or several simultaneous actions, cf. (17a) - (17c):

- (16a) *dúmúní` tóbí í ká à dún*
 food make you DC it eat
 'Make the food and eat it'

- (16b) *í sîgî í ká à kàlàn*
 REFLsit you DC it read
 'Sit down and read it'

- (16c) *wúlí í ká táa*
 stand.up you DC go
 'Stand up and go'

- (17a) *à dún kà í mìn*
 it eat DC REFL drink
 'Eat and drink'

- (17b) *kàná kàsì kà à mìn*
 DC:NEG cry DC it drink
 'Don't cry and drink it'

- (17c) *à mìn` kàná kúmá*
 it drink DC:NEG speak
 'Drink it and don't speak.'

In (16) - (17) the first clause of a "coordinated construction" is an imperative/prohibitive construction proper, and the second is a clause with the dependent-clause marker *ka*₂. Where the actions in both clauses are simultaneous, the second clause has a zero subject coreferent with that of the first clause. Notably, in affirmative narrative coordinate constructions, the omission of the coreferent subject in the second clause is compulsory, while in imperative constructions this operation is optional. My informants found that the most natural pattern in constructions under discussion is to keep both subjects in sentences denoting a sequence of actions and omit the second subject in sentences expressing a number of simultaneous actions (to iconically reflect a higher degree of cohesion between the actions). Compare (18a) and (18b); see also footnote 5:

(18a) dúmúní' k'é í ká í mìn
 food do you DC REFL drink
 'Have some food and (then) drink something'

(18b) dúmúní' k'è kà í mìn
 food do DC REFL drink
 'Eat and drink.'

The first clause in constructions, where the performer of the prescribed action is not the listener, may not be represented by an imperative utterance, while the entire construction is structured as a regular affirmative coordinate complex construction with the same subjects (the omission of the second subject is compulsory), cf. (19a) – (19b) and footnote 5:

(19a) à ká í s'ígí kà à s'ébén
 He DC REFL sit DC it write
 'Let him sit and write it'

(19b) *à ká í s'ígí à ká à s'ébén
 he DC REFL sit he DC it write

Notes.

- 1 I express my deep gratitude to Valentine Vydrine who carefully read this paper, checked all examples and marked all tonal characteristics (that had been unmarked in the previous Russian version of this paper).
- 2 In this paper, the construction markers are named by their syntactic function. For a semantic description of the majority of Bamana CM's see (Idiatov 1998).
- 3 Here *-Ra* stands for a hyper-marker that appears as *-na* after nasals, *-la* after laterals, and *-ra* elsewhere.
- 4 Lexical tones are marked on vowels, with 'H', 'L', and 'V' marking respectively high, low, and rising tones. The phrasal accent on NPs is marked by '´' after the noun.
- 5 For (14a) to be interpreted as reflexive by meaning, elision of the last vowel in the CM is compulsory: y'í instead of yé í. Without elision, this sentence would represent a standard transitive construction meaning 'he made you fall down' (pointed out to me by Valentine Vydrine).