

## Investigating the semantics of tense-aspect markers in Jula

### *Anonymized abstract*

**Abstract.** Drawing on elicitation sessions conducted with a native speaker, we intend to introduce the main features of the tense-aspect system of Jula (an understudied Mande language). We will discuss how markers can be combined in order to form further intra-aspectual distinctions or more intricate tense-aspect meanings; we will then present complex sentences in Jula and show how they can help diagnose the meaning behind TAM markers and make the distinction between tenses and aspects.

**Introduction.** Jula is a SOV language (Keita 1990) which allows the insertion of Tense-Aspect-Modal (TAM) markers in one or two positions, after the subject or after the verb (just like other Mande languages, see Kirill 2011). Our research shows that Jula is mainly aspectual, with three main aspects, namely imperfective, perfective and prospective, and only one tense, namely past.

**Main aspects.** Imperfective contains one sub-aspect, the progressive, which is expressed through the insertion of an additional marker. Perfective and prospective on the other hand do not contain sub-aspects, but perfective has a different realization depending on the transitivity of the verb. This is especially interesting since the marker used to denote perfective on intransitive verbs is similar to the progressive affix, raising an inter-aspectual syncretism.

**Prospective markers and crosslinguistics comparison.** Some more syncretism can be found if one decomposes the prospective marker, which might come from the combination of imperfective + the verb 'to come'. The grammaticalization of motional verbs into future-like meanings is actually quite common across languages from African families (Osam 2002, Welmer 1976, Kirill 2011), as well as the presence of imperfective (as extended present) in constructions denoting prospective constructions (Ameka & Kropp Dakubu 2008).

**Past tense.** Jula's past tense restricts the event to an anterior time, no matter its aspectual realization. However, the past tense cannot be found without aspect, which proves its different nature and shows that Jula has aspects as its prominent category (following Bhat 1999 model).

**Complex sentences.** Finally, we make use of complex sentences in order to investigate the expression of past in future, future in past, as well as 'before' and 'after' clause. Since these sentences create embedded temporalities (and sometimes ambiguities), they allow to rule out absolute tense interpretations of the aforementioned markers as well as make some theoretical distinction between past and perfect, future and prospective.

### **References.**

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