

Plurals in Mano: from nominal number to counter-expectation meaning

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Structure of presentation

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- mirative (counter-expectation)

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Supra: Noun modifiers with sentential scope in Dan

I. The Mano language-1

- Mano < South Mande < Mande < Niger-Congo;
- Spoken in Guinea (70 000 speakers) and Liberia (140 000 speakers);
- Level of description: (Neal et al. 1946), (deZeeuw, Kruah 1981); (Becker-Donner 1965); the Liberian variant of the language;
- Field trips to Guinea since 2009.

I. The Mano language-2

Three level tones, grammatical tones

Almost no morphology

(Subject NP) – PPM – (DO) – V

PPM – predicative personal marker: person+number+TAM
(pro-drop)

II. Plurals in Mano: general properties and functions-1

- 2 markers: *nì* (~ kinship terms) and *vò*
- For humans, opposition singular ~ plural, for all other words, opposition general ~ plural (Corbett 2000).

N̄ Kòó lī

‘I saw Ko’s brother (exactly one)’;

N̄ Kòó lī nì gè

‘I saw Ko’s brothers (more than one)’;

N̄ gbá gè

‘I saw dog (one or more)’;

N̄ gbá vò gè

‘I saw dogs (more than one)’.

II. Plurals in Mano: general properties and functions-2

If the real-world plurality of human beings is necessarily marked, plurality of non-humans is very seldom marked in texts.

Two stories told by two speakers dealt with birds coming to eat the rice; one speaker consistently used plural marker, the other one didn't.

<i>Mòdò</i>	<i>léē</i>	<i>nū</i>	<i>lūú-ā</i>	<i>yí,</i>	<i>léē</i>	<i>nū</i>	<i>kpànā-kpànāzè.</i>
bird	3SG	come	bush-DEF	in	3SG	come	abundantly

(A child who is charged with chasing the birds from the rice field:)
'Birds come to the field, there are too many of them'.

<i>N̄</i>	<i>bú</i>	<i>wē</i>	<i>mòdò</i>	<i>vò</i>	<i>wāā</i>	<i>bèlè-pià</i>	<i>ɲɔɔ!</i>
1SG	rice:FOC	DEM	bird	PL	3PL>3SG	eat-PROG	a.lot

'The birds are eating my rice too much!'

II. Plurals in Mano: general properties and functions-3

- Plurality can be expressed, apart from plural markers, by:

a) Irregular plural forms of nouns

mā 'person' ~ *mā̄* 'person.PL'

b) Numerals

yílí 'tree' ~ *yílí yààkā* 'tree three'

c) Reduplication of adjectives

gěĩ jɔɔ̄ 'orange bitter' ~ *gěĩ jɔɔ̄-jɔɔ̄* 'orange bitter~PL'

d) Any combination of these, including several plural markers within one noun phrase

gā̄ yààkā man.PL three 'three men'

nɔɔ̄bé pěĩ-pěĩ child.PL small~PL 'small children'

nɔɔ̄bé nì child.PL PL 'children'

Ñ dàā nì gòò vò (my father PL dead PL) 'my ancestors'

II. Plurals in Mano: general properties and functions-4

- Only plural marker and irregular plural forms of nouns are strong markers of plurality: they demand a **formal accord with a coreferential subject pronominal marker** in number. In the absence of the former, the NP will be coordinated as sg, except for human referents:

<i>Bū</i>	<i>ḡḡḡ</i>	<i>yààkā</i>	<i>lē</i>	<i>gbínī</i>
rice	bag	three	3SG	heavy

‘(These) three bags of rice are heavy’.

<i>Bū</i>	<i>ḡḡḡ</i>	<i>vò</i>	<i>ō</i>	<i>gbínī</i>
rice	bag	PL	3PL	heavy

‘(These) bags of rice are heavy’.

II. Plurals in Mano: general properties and functions-5

- There are however some (rare) exceptions:

<i>Kwító</i>	<i>vò</i>	<i>bē</i>	<i>sěí</i>	<i>lē/ō</i>	<i>wáá</i>	<i>sóóli.</i>
pineapple	PL	DEM	every	3SG/3PL	thousand	five

All pineapples cost 5 thousands (guinean francs).

- In the direct or indirect object position, though, this rule is rather a tendency, note the example with two different strategies in the very same syntactic position:

<i>Gó</i>	<i>wélé</i>	<i>vò</i>	<i>lé</i>	<i>ā</i>	<i>ló</i>	<i>ō</i>	<i>ŋwō</i>	<i>dùò.</i>
cola	bone	PL	REL	3SG>3SG	buy	TOP	1SG>3PL	throw

'I threw away the cola nuts that you had bought'.

II. Plurals in Mano: associative

- *Nì* marker has some non-canonical usages (which appear to be at least as frequent in texts as canonical plurality) and can be used with mass nouns:

a) **associative** ('X and those who are (something which is) associated with X')

<i>Nòò</i>	<i>wē</i>	<i>nì</i>	<i>sěí</i>	<i>wāà</i>	<i>wèlè</i>	<i>gbāā</i>
sheatfish	DEM	PL	every	3PL	get.up	now

'The Sheatfish and everybody who were with him woke up now'.

<i>Ññ</i>	<i>nū</i>	<i>ḡónó</i>	<i>nì</i>	<i>ká.</i>
1SG	come	oil	PL	with

'I bring oil (among other things)' ~ 'I also bring oil'.

II. Plurals in Mano: distributive

b) **distributive** (meaning 'different types of X', 'X here and there').

<i>Wēī</i>	<i>nì</i> ,	<i>súò</i>	<i>nì</i>	<i>pē</i>	<i>nóféfé</i>	<i>ā</i>	<i>nāā</i>	<i>lūā</i>	<i>vò</i>	<i>kèlè.</i>
salt	PL	pepper	PL	thing	any	3SG>3SG	search	woman.PL	PL	ADR

'He asked the women different types of salt, different types of pepper, all kinds of things'.

yílí *nì* (tree PL) 'trees here and there'

II. Plurals in Mano: intensificative

- c) “**intensificative**” (Corbet 2000: 235): this type of plural usually does not correspond to the real-world number which the hearer can usually infer from other information. Note the absence of coordination:

<i>Kélé</i>	<i>nì</i>	<i>lé</i>	<i>āà</i>	<i>dà</i>	<i>ḃē,</i>
Shed	PL	REL	3SG.PRF	Fall	DEM
<i>kélé</i>	<i>ḃē</i>	<i>ḃàá</i>		<i>là</i>	<i>kē!</i>
shed	DEM	2SG.NEG>3SG		on	take

‘Even the shed that has fallen down, you do not repair its roof!’

Compare with English:

Who’s been repairing motorbikes in the kitchen?

‘It was much pleasanter at home,’ thought poor Alice, ‘when one wasn’t always growing larger and smaller, and being ordered about by mice and rabbits.’
(*Alice in Wonderland*, chapter 4, example suggested in (Corbet 2000: 235)).

II. Plurals in Mano: contrastive focus

d) “contrastive focus”

“[Contrastive foci] express a contrast between the information conveyed by the speaker in asserting α and the assumed expectation state of the hearer: a speaker will use contrastive marking on a focus constituent α if she has reason to suspect that the hearer will be **surprised** by the assertion of α , or by the speech act containing α . Because of this, the speaker uses a non-canonical, i.e., marked, grammatical form to direct the hearer’s attention, and to shift his common ground in accordance with the new information provided” (Zimmerman 2007).

<i>Kòō</i>	<i>nì</i>	<i>lé</i>	<i>ē</i>	<i>nū</i>	<i>kèá...</i>	<i>kpòó</i>	<i>wélé</i>	<i>lē</i>
carp	PL	FOC	3SG	come	long.time.ago	cauri	bone	3SG

<i>kèá</i>	<i>à</i>	<i>pēlà</i>	<i>kwáā</i>	<i>gè.</i>
long.time.ago	3SG	front	1PL	see

‘The (king) carp came long time ago, a cauri shell was on its front, we saw it’.

II. Plurals in Mano: intensificative vs contrastive

- **Intensificative:** contrast between the observed situation and the **expectation state of the speaker**;
- **Contrastive focus:** contrast between conveyed information and the **expectation state of the hearer**.

II. Plurals in Mano: mirative-1

e) *vò* and *nì* markers: **mirative**

“Mirativity, as it is currently understood in the literature, is (...) a first person, **speaker-oriented** phenomenon which marks a statement as being surprising or **unexpected**” (Peterson draft).

Plural marker can be placed inside (with its usage being close to intensificative) or outside the noun phrase, in the beginning or the end of the proposition, followed by deictic and discursive markers.

<i>ĭĩ</i>	<i>gbéípié</i>	<i>vò</i>	<i>kè?</i>
2SG	walk	PL	do:IPFV

<i>ĭĩ</i>	<i>gbéípié</i>	<i>kè</i>	<i>vò?</i>
2SG	walk	do:IPFV	PL

‘(How come,) you are taking a stroll? (I thought you always stay at home)’.

II. Plurals in Mano: mirative-2

The situation that a Mano speaker comments by using a plural marker is not necessarily directly observed, it may be known from **past experience** but still considered **surprising** and **abnormal**:

<i>Kónó</i>	<i>lé</i>	<i>bà</i>	<i>bèlè</i>	<i>vò</i>	<i>bē,</i>
food	REL	2SG>3SG	eat:IPFV	PL	TOP

<i>báà</i>	<i>gó</i>	<i>pìà</i>	<i>dɔ?</i>
2SG>3SG	go.out	place.IZF	know

(Addressing to a lazy person who had never worked in his life)
‘The food you eat, do you know where it comes from?’

III. Possible grammaticalization path

Marked and not fully grammaticalized plurality with frequent non-canonical usages as associative and distributive (with compatibility covering mass nouns)

- > **Step 1: intensificative and contrastive focus**
- > **Step 2: mirative**, scope shift accompanied by a replacement of plural marker

III. Possible grammaticalization path

This grammaticalization path fits fairly well into the subjectification theoretical framework which predicts, among other developments,

- 1) A tendency of meanings based in the external described situation to become increasingly based in the speaker's subjective belief state/attitude towards the proposition (Breban 2010) (*Step 1: shift from plurality into intensification NP-internal focus marking*);
- 2) The migration of subjectified elements to the periphery of the phrase, clause, or sentence and/or scope increase (Traugott 2010) (*Step 2: the shift from NP-internal focus marking to mirative*).

- A parallel: case-study of *a bit of* (Traugott 2010):
 - 1) **nominalized expression meaning ‘biting’** (for *the bytt of an Appel* = for *the biting of an apple*)
 - 2) (metonymy) **‘morsel, unit bitten out’** (*An bite brædess brinngenn ~ a bit of bread bring*)
 - 3) (pragmatic expansion) **extended partitives** (The fragments, scraps, *the bits*, and greazie reliques *of her ore-eaten faith*)
 - 4) (semantic/pragmatic expansion + subjectification) **Degree Modifier**, scaling or approximating the head down (Your beauty is *a little bit of a jilt*)
 - 5) (syntactic expansion) **Adverb Degree Modifier** (*a bit wiser*)
 - 6) (further syntactic expansion) **Adjunct** (A. Hear me. B. Not *a bit*)

Conclusion

- an unusual grammaticalization of plural markers;
- mirative meaning emerging independently of evidentials (as opposed to (Lazard 2001) and in support of (Peterson draft) and (DeLancey 2001)), from a very particular source;
- focus marking within an NP (cf. (Giusti 1996));
- In the case of mirative meaning of plurals placed inside NP, we deal with noun modifiers with a sentential scope.

Noun modifiers with sentential scope in Dan-1

Dan < South Mande < Mande < Niger-Congo

Verbs with “preverbs” in Dan (Vydrin 2009)

<i>Gbàtò</i>	<i>yà</i>	<i>yā</i>	<i>bā</i>	<i>à</i>	<i>gǝ</i>	<i>d̄.</i>
Gbato	3 SG.PRF	work	ART	3 SG	head	stop

‘Gbato finished the work’.

<i>Yā</i>	<i>bā</i>	<i>gǝ</i>	<i>yà</i>	<i>d̄.</i>
work	ART	head	3 SG.PRF	stop

‘The work was finished’.

Noun modifiers with sentential scope in Dan-2

<i>Gbàtò</i>	<i>yà</i>	<i>ṛ</i>	<i>bā</i>	<i>dēbà</i>	<i>tà</i>	<i>kú.</i>
Gbato	3SG	REFL	POSS	woman	surface	take

‘Gbato helped his wife’.

*Gbàtò yà ṛ bā dēbà **tà-dù** kú.*

Gbato 3SG.PRF REFL POSS woman **surface-PL** take
‘Gbato helped his wife **several times**’.

*Gbàtò yà ṛ bā dēbà **tà bā à** kú.*

Gbato 3SG.PRF REFL POSS woman **surface ART 3SG** take
‘Gbato helped his wife (in **the problem and in a manner that were mentioned beforehand**).

Noun modifiers with sentential scope in Dan-3

Gbàtò yà ̄ bā dēb̀l̀ t̀ gb̀ p̀p̀ k̀.

Gbato 3SG.PRF REFL POSS woman **surface all** every take
'Gbato helped his wife **in all possible ways**'.

Gbàtò yà ̄ bā dēb̀l̀ t̀ ẁéé b́ k̀.

Gbato 3SG.PRF REFL POSS woman **surface other** some take
'Gbato helped his wife **once again**'.

Gbàtò yà ̄ bā dēb̀l̀ t̀ s̀ééd̀ k̀.

Gbato 3SG.PRF REFL POSS woman **surface small** take
'Gbato helped his wife **a bit**'.

Noun modifiers with sentential scope in Dan-4

Gbato_S [wife_{DO} [surface_{preverb} take]]

or

Gbato_S [[wife surface_{preverb}]_{DO} take] ?

Can we have a complementizer INSIDE a noun phrase?

A good syntactic explanation is more than welcome.

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Thank you!
Merci !
Спасибо!