■ THE MEANING OF THE *YE* FORMS IN BASSE MANDINKA

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U ovom radu se analizira semantički sadržaj gramova formiranih oblikom *ye* u varijanti jezika mandinka koja se govori u Baseu i okolnim selima u naistočnijem delu Gambije. Ove konstrukcije mogu se podeliti u dve grupe: tipovi *YE₁* i *YE₂*. Kada je reč o varijanti *YE₁*, naš materijal pokazuje da se ta konstrukcija koristi kao sadašnji perfekt (sa rezultativnim, inkluzivnim, iterativnim, iskustvenim, neodređenim i performativnim značenjem), prošlo vreme (svršeno, prosto i trajno), prošli perfekt i budući perfekt. U kondicionalima ova konstrukcija uvodi tri vrste značenja: hipotetičke aktivnosti, kontrafaktuelne ali još uvek moguće akcije i irealne kontrafaktuelne situacije u prošlosti. Kada se izvodi iz nekih glagola primanja, opažanja i osećanja, ova konstrukcija funkcioniše kao simultano-rezultativno, stativno prosto sadašnje i buduće vreme. Takođe se sreće u izrekama gde ima vrednost univerzalnog ili habitualnog prezenta. Kada je reč o *YE₂* gramu, značenje je uvek modalno. Ova konstrukcija funkcioniše kao kohortativ, imperativ i jusiv. Ona, takođe, može iskazivati realno (sadašnjost-budućnost), ili irealno (prošlost) optativno značenje. Oblik *YE₂* ima snagu namernog subjunktiva u finalnim zavisnim rečenicama, kojim se izražavaju ciljevi i namere.

Ključne reči: afrička lingvistika, porodica jezika mande, manding jezici, glagolski sistem, semantika.

1. INTRODUCTION

Mandinka may be classified as the westernmost variety of the Manding cluster (Wilson 2000:109) which, in turn, forms a part of the Western branch of the Mande family (Kastenholz 1996:281, Vydrine, Bergman & Benjamin 2000 and Williamson & Blench 2000). Manding, itself, includes various regional variants or dialects such as

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Bambara (employed especially in Mali), Malinké (used in Guinea) and finally Mandinka – an idiom widely spoken in Gambia, Senegal and Guinea Bissau with a total number of speakers amounting, as for the year 2006, to almost one and a half million (Lewis 2009).

The use of Mandinka in Gambia, as well as in other countries,[2] is almost exclusively colloquial. However, in recent times, the language has acquired a more respectful status due to the standardization of its spelling, completed in *A practical Orthography of Gambian Mandinka* (1988 and 1993)[3] and subsequently employed in *Mandinka English Dictionary* (1988 and 1995) and in translations of some important Christian and Muslim religious texts, e.g.: *Kambeŋ Kutoo* ('New Testament' 1989), *Kambeŋ Kotoo* ('Old Testament' 1998) and *Selections from the Writings of the Promised Messiah* (1988). This constant endeavor for homogenizing or standardizing the tongue and, consequently, for its adjustment to a literary production – together with a timid but yet increasing appearance of Mandinka in television, radio and the Internet – has indisputably improved the socio-political position of the idiom.

The description of the Mandinka language, although greatly advanced by several important articles and some insightful grammar books (cf. for instance, Rowlands 1959 and Creissels 1983), still include areas which could be studied in a more exhaustive manner. One of them is the semantics of verbal constructions.

The present paper – meeting the above-mentioned demand for further grammatical analyses – aims at providing a detailed examination of the semantic load of a verbal category of Mandinka, labeled in accordance with its most distinctive morphological marker, the *YE* form: in order to form the construction, exemplified in (1), one employs the lexeme *ye* (cf. however, the *ŋa* and *ŋà* markers are also frequently used in the first person singular and plural).

(1)   A **ye**[4] faloo saŋ
       he YE[5] donkey buy
       He bought a donkey

The formation – invariably transitive and positive (its negative form employs the lexeme *maŋ* instead of *ye* or *ŋa*[6]) – has been classified in some general grammar books or papers dedicated to other linguistic phenomena as an aorist tense (Macbrair 1842: 15), a stative (Creissles 1983) or a perfective-completive aspect (Creissels 2008: 77, 2010a: 3, 2010b: 3; cf. also Rowlands 1959, Spears 1965, Long 1971 and *Mandinka Learning Manual* 2002). More specifically, Macbrair (1842: 15-16) proposes that the construction describes past and present actions as well as states which exist from a certain instant in the past to the present day, or more accurately, to the moment which is simultaneous to the main reference time. It approximates, thus, a past tense, present tense, perfect and pluperfect. According to Creissels (1983), the *YE* affirmative

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2   We will focus on Gambian Mandinka given the fact that, as will be explained, our evidence has been collected in the Upper River Region, an Eastern part of that country.

3   This spelling convention has likewise been maintained in the present paper.

4   The relevant *YE* verbal forms will be given in bold type.

5   All markers of the *YE* formation – either *ye* or *ŋa* – will be glossed as YE.

6   The negative variant of the sentence quoted in example (1) would be *A maŋ faloo saŋ* 'He did not buy a donkey'.

transitive stative marker may apply to present and past time spheres. It introduces both completive actions and ongoing states, being furthermore employed to convey the meaning of future eventuality. A similar description may be found in *Mandinka Learning Manual* (2002: 14-15) where the *YE* construction is said to be an aspectual form which denotes a completed action or a state which is presently actual, corresponding to the English simple past, simple present and perfect tenses. Finally, Gamble (1987: 17-18), Colley (1995: 9, 12 and 15) and Drammé (2003: 47 and 50) specify the value of the *YE* form as equivalent to past and present tenses.

It should be noted that the marker *ye* may also be used to derive another verbal expression, which – in contrast to the previously described *YE* gram – can be both transitive and intransitive (cf. example 2) and which is furthermore negated by employing the entity *kana* instead of *maŋ*.[7] This construction has been viewed as prototypically modal, a type of a subjunctive (Creissles 1983 and Wilson 2000). Its meaning includes injunctive, optative, suggestive or purposive values (ibid.) or corresponds to an imperative-exhortative category (Gamble 1987: 18 and 22), equivalent to the English expressions such as *let us*, *shall I*, *so that I shall/I can*.

(2)   A **ye** naa!
      he YE come
      May he come!

Our paper, yet devoted to the semantics of the two kinds of the *YE* constructions, does not study the values of these forms in what would be called Standard Mandinka, i.e. the normalized language used in grammar books and literary texts. The description of the properties of the *YE* gram is narrowed to Mandinka native speakers, residents of Basse, the capital of the Upper River Region, and of neighboring villages (Bassending, Manneh Kunda and Kaba Kama and Mansajang) in the easternmost part of the Gambia. Basse Mandinka, although profoundly similar to the standardized literary language, displays various divergences.[8] For instance in Basse, the voiced velar stop [g] – absent in the "official" Mandinka – is regularly used and certain genitive or pronominal constructions may be formed with the postposition *ye* besides the standard form with *la* (for a complete review of differences, see Andrason forthcoming).[9]

In our discussion on the particularity of Basse Mandinka, we shall not overlook the fact that the territory where this variety is employed is dominated by other ethnic groups, in particular by Fulas and, much less importantly, by Serehules. This signifies that Fula and Serehule idioms prevail in various parts of the region although there are villages, a type of linguistic islands, with the Mandinka "supremacy". Finally, it should be acknowledged that in Basse and its proximities another regional variety of Manding is spoken: *Jaahanka*.

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7   The negative variant of example (2) would be *(fo) a kana naa!* 'Let him not come!'
8   On the other hand, it should be emphasized that some of these dissimilarities are not limited to Basse Mandinka but, quite the opposite, may also be detected in other parts of Gambia.
9   Despite a number of differences, it may not be adequate to regard Basse Mandinka as a dialect of the standard language given the fact that the dissimilarities are mostly phonetic and lexical. On the other hand, it is evident that the issue of classifying a certain linguistic system as a dialect – or at a higher level, as a language – is not exclusively linguistic, but also depends on political, sociological and economic factors.

As for the *YE* formation, Basse Mandinka admits three alternative variants of the marker employed for the first person singular or plural. Besides the standard form ŋa, one may find by-forms such as *na* (very frequent), *ne* and ñe [*ɲe*] (these two varieties are relatively seldom met). Since the vernacular used in the capital of the Upper River Region and in its neighborhood is far from being a normalized consistent system, a unified solid language, it is not surprising that the acceptability of the four mentioned lexemes varies from one speaker to another. While some informants accepted all of them, giving the preference to *na*, others regarded the form ŋa as the most accurate – yet being aware of the use of the auxiliary words *na*, *ne* and ñe.[10] Below, we offer the entire conjugational pattern of a gram derived by means of the *ye* entity, taking as an illustration the sentence *motoo saŋ* 'buy a car (lit. in the inverse order, i.e. car + buy)':

	Singular	Plural
1p	*ŋa (na, ñe, ŋe) motoo saŋ*	*ŋà (nà, ñè, ŋè) motoo saŋ*
2p	*i ye motoo saŋ*	*ali ye motoo saŋ*
3p	*a ye motoo saŋ*	*ì motoo saŋ*

In the first person singular and plural, the form *ye* may also appear: *nte* (*fanaa*) *ye motoo saŋ* 'I (also) bought the car'.

All the examples quoted in the present paper have been provided by ten native Mandinka speakers residing in Basse or in villages located in the vicinity of the Upper River Region capital. All of them participated as informants in an extensive field research which aimed at writing a grammar of Basse Mandinka (cf. Andrason forthcoming). Below we list these persons together with their age, occupation and place of residence:[11] Keba Suusoo (13 years old, primary school student, Bassending), Malik Suusoo (18, high school student, Bassending), Musa Yaffuneh (24, watchman, Basse), Lamin Manneh (25, university student, Manneh Kunda), Mamanding Sanyang (27, nurse assistant, Basse), Musa Sanneh (29, driver, Kaba Kama), Baba Kamara (30, teacher, Mansajang), Saikou Drammeh (44, nurse, Basse – originally from Serekunda, but has lived in Basse for ten years), Kumba Jallow (56, cook, Mansajang) and Mariama Mendi (32, nurse, Basse – originally from Fulla Bantang)[12].

It should be noted that all the examples have been video-recorded and systematically studied with the listed native speakers. In accordance with their methodological source, these examples may be arranged into three classes. The first group includes sentences spontaneously formulated by informants. The second assembles phrases which were produced on the request of the author. And the third class reflects examples which, although pronounced and – if necessary – reformulated by the native speakers, were inspired by passages found in standardized written texts, in particular in the Bible and in Islamic literature.

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10 This also means that Basse Mandinka should be viewed as a combination – not a fusion – of several more local (limited to villages) or even personal realizations.

11 The list has been arranged according to the age of the informants.

12 The last two informants are entirely bilingual: Fula-Mandinka and Manjago-Mandinka. Their ethnic background is Fula and Manjago respectively.

2. EVIDENCE

As it is the case in Standard Mandinka, the tense-aspect-taxis-mood (TATM) values of the locutions derived by means of the auxiliary *ye* may be divided into two major classes. The first group includes invariably transitive constructions which are negated substituting the entity *ye* by *maŋ* (e.g., *A maŋ motoo saŋ* 'He did not buy the car'). As will be demonstrated in sections 2.1 and 3 below, this type of the *YE* construction – hereafter labeled *YE*$_1$ – provides meanings which parallel semantic properties displayed by the intransitive *TA* gram (observe that the negation of the *TA* formation also uses the particle *maŋ*; cf. Andrason 2011b).

The other class embraces typically modal functions, which are usually referred to as subjunctive (cf. Creissels 1983 or Wilson 2000; for details see section 2.2). This variety – hereafter labeled as *YE*$_2$ – offers two formal or syntactical properties which enable us to differentiate it from the variant mentioned previously. First, the *YE*$_2$ locution may be virtually employed with all kinds of verbs either intransitive or transitive ones, in contrast to the *YE*$_1$ form which is restricted to transitive constructions. Second, in order to negate the *YE*$_2$ variant, the lexeme *kana* is used contrary to the element *maŋ* which appears in the negation of the *YE*$_1$ gram (e.g. *Nà kana taa!* 'Let us not go'). Additionally, the *YE*$_2$ formation may be differentiated by placing the modal particle *fo* at the beginning of the sentence, before the subject (*Fo a ye naa!* 'May he come' / 'Let him come').

2.1 VALUES OF THE *YE*$_1$ FORMATION

The *YE*$_1$ construction is commonly found with the force of a resultative present perfect: it portrays an already accomplished activity as relevant for the current situation. In other words, a formerly completed action has a patent effect on the preset state of affairs:

(3) a. Danko doroŋ **ŋa** motoo saŋ
     just only I-YE car buy
     I have just bought the car (i.e. Now, I am an owner of the car)
   b. A **ye** bundaa soroŋ ne
     he YE door close EMPH[13]
     He has closed the door (i.e. The door remains closed)
   c. **Ŋa** a domo
     I-YE it eat
     I have eaten (i.e. I am done with the food)
   d. I **ye** a baŋ?
     you YE it finish
     Have you finished?

The *YE*$_1$ formation may also appear with the value of an inclusive perfect. In that case, it indicates that a situation or an activity has been holding without interruption from a certain – explicitly determined – point of time in the past to the present moment:

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13   The lexeme *le* or *ne* (if following a nasal consonant) is an emphatic particle which will be glossed hereafter as EMPH.

(4) a. **Ŋa** motoo ñiŋ soto kabiriŋ 2001
I-YE car this have since 2001
I have had this car since 2001

b. **Ŋa** sayikuloo ñiŋ soto sanji saba
I-YE bicycle this have year three
I have had this bicycle for three years

c. **Ŋa** *ñiŋ* yaamaroolu bee muta le ka bo n na dindiŋyaa waato la
I-YE this orders all EMPH from[14] I of[15] childhood time at/with
I have kept all these orders from my youth up

d. **Ŋa** a loŋ ne kabiriŋ foloodulaa to
I-YE it know EMPH since beginning at
He has known it from the beginning

Likewise, the YE_1 locution can express iterative resultative activities, functioning as an iterative perfect:

(5) a. **Ŋa** *ñiŋ* filimoo juubee siiñaa luulu
I-YE this film see time four
I have seen this film four times

b. Bii **ŋa** wo ke siiñaa keme
today I-YE that do time hundred
Today, I have done it one hundred times

The YE_1 gram is also commonly employed as an experiential perfect, indicating that the subject has performed a given activity – as a minimum – once during his or her life. Put differently, the person has an experience of carrying out the action expressed by the verb. In this sub-value of the perfect, the undertone of current relevance remains clearly recognizable, but on the contrary, the sense of resultativity is no longer available:

(6) a. Fo i **ye** nene sitajiyo miŋ?
Whether you ever baobab.jus drink
Have you ever drunk baobab-jus?

b. **Ŋa** bukoo *ñiŋ* karaŋ
I-YE book this read
I have read this book (it might have occurred at any time during my life time)

The YE_1 gram can also function as an indefinite past (labeled alternatively 'indefinite perfect'), denoting indisputable past events and activities, without however specifying their temporal location in the past sphere in an overt manner, for instance by means of adverbial locutions:

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14 The slot *ka bo…la* is a circumposition that means 'from'.
15 The slot *n na* (i.e. *n/ŋ* + *la*) corresponds to a possessive adjective with the meaning of the English *my*.

(7)   *Ŋa* a je marisewo to. A **ye** duuta luulu saŋ. A **ye** ì samba suwo kono.
      I-YE him see market at. he YE mango five buy. he YE them bring home in
      I saw him at the market. He bought five mangos. He brought them home.

The YE_1 form – approximating the category of a performative perfect (cf. Hebrew *qatal* and Arabic *qatala*, cf. Andrason 2011a) – is occasionally employed in order to perform certain acts rather than to describe a situation or an activity. This means that, if determined conventional circumstances are respected, the fact of uttering a given proposition with the verb in YE_1 gram triggers a new state in the speaker's reality (cf. Austin 1962: 5, 60). This usage is restricted in Basse Mandinka to predicates which lean themselves for performative acts, e.g. verbs of speaking or giving:

(8)   a.   *Ŋa* n kali!
           I-YE myself swear
           I swear!
      b.   **Ŋa** i daani
           I-YE you pray
           I pray you / I beseech you

With a high frequency, the YE_1 gram functions as an explicit definite past tense expressing immediate (e.g. hodiernal, 9.a), recent (e.g. hesternal 9.b), general (a person's life time 9.c) or remote (e.g. ancient 9.d) past events. This means that the activity conveyed by the YE_1 formation may be located in a past temporal sphere, whatever its distance from the speaker's present time is:

(9)   a.   *Ŋa* a ke bìi soomandaa
           I-YE it do today morning
           I did it today in the morning
      b.   Kunuŋ **ŋa** i je
           yesterday I-YE you see
           I saw you yesterday
      c.   **Ŋa** ñiŋ motoo saŋ sanji luulu kooma
           I-YE car buy year five ago
           I bought the car five years ago
      d.   Bituŋ Mansa Sulemani **ye** Banisirayila alifaalu kumandi...
           then king Solomon YE Israel elders call
           Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel

Functioning as a definite past, the YE_1 gram is frequently employed in order to convey aspectually perfective actions: unique, punctual and presented in their entirety:

(10) a.   Seruŋ ate **ye** kewo faa
           last.year he YE man kill
           Last year, he killed a man

    b.   Kunuŋ, **ŋa** sayikuloo saŋ
           yesterday I-YE bicycle buy
           Yesterday, I bought a bicycle
    c.   Sulemani ye Yaawe la buŋo baŋ loo la
           Solomon YE Lord (Yahweh) of house finish build to
           Solomon finished building the house of the Lord

Nevertheless, the YE_1 construction may also function as an aspectually neutral simple past, i.e. as a preterite, being sometimes able to introduce activities of a wide temporal length or simply durative:

    (11) a.   Kunuŋ **ŋa** n doŋ baake
             yesterday I-YE myself dance very.much
             Yesterday I danced a lot (cf. the use of the imperfective past *bailaba* in
             the Spanish translation)
       b.   Kunuŋ **ŋa** m bambaŋ
             yesterday I-YE myself be.in.a.harry
             Yesterday I was in a hurry (cf. the use of the imperfective past
             tenía prisa in the Spanish translation)
       c.   A niŋ ì tarata jee, aniŋ a **ye** batiseeroo ke
             he with them was there and he YE baptizing do
             He was there with them, and he was baptizing
       d.   Baawo a ye ñiŋ kuwolu ke, wo le ye a tinna ì **ye** a toora
             Since he did this things do that EMPH did it cause[16] they YE him persecute
             Because he did (or had done) these things, for that reason, they
             persecuted him (cf. the use of the imperfective past in the
             Spanish translation: *perseguían*)

The typical value of the perfect category, i.e. the concept of anteriority – previously discussed within the present time frame (cf. examples 3, 4, 5 and 6 above) – may also be found in the past and future temporal spheres. In the former case, the YE_1 formation approximates a pluperfect (it expresses actions which preceded another clearly past activities; cf. examples 12a-f) while in the latter, available only in certain temporal subordinated phrases – especially in clauses which are introduced by the conjunction *niŋ* –, the gram is employed with the force of a future perfect (it expresses acts which shall take place before other situations in the future; see examples 13a-b):

    (12) a.   Mansa Yehowasi ye saateewolu seyinkaŋ muta Beni-Hadadi bulu,
             king Y did villages repeat seize BH from,
             King Jehoash took again from the hand of Ben-hadad the cities
             a **ye** mennu muta nuŋ a faamaa bulu
             he YE which seize then his father from
             which he had taken from the hand of his father

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16   The slot *wo le ye a tinna* glossed as [that EMPH did it cause] corresponds to an English expression: 'for that reason'.

    b.   Kabiriŋ a **ye** ì la miiroolu loŋ, a ye ì jaabi
           when he YE they of thoughts know he did them answer
           When he had known their thoughts, he answered them...

    c.   Kabiriŋ a **ye** ì la lannoo je, a ko:
           when he YE they of[17] faith see he said:
           When he had seen their faith, he said:

    d.   Ì ye kaŋo laa ñiŋ dookuulaa kuntiyo la ko a **ye** a la feŋolu le tiñaa
           they did accusation present this servant chief against that he YE he of[18]
           things EMPH spoil
           They accused the steward that he had wasted his [of the master] goods

    e.   Í muruta suwo kono, komeŋ Alla **ye** a fo ñaameŋ
           they returned house in like God YE it say as
           They returned home according to the word of the God (i.e. as God had said it)

    f.   Moolu bee naata, ko a **ye** a fo ì ye nuŋ ñaameŋ
           People all came like he YE it say them for then as
           All the people came as the king had appointed

(13) a.   Saama niŋ i **ye** bukoo karaŋ, i si n kili!
           tomorrow when you YE book read you shall me call
           Tomorrow, when you have read the book, you shall call me!

    b.   Sii jaŋ foniŋ **ŋa** a ke
           Sin.down here until I-YE it do
           Sit down here (be seated) until I have done it

The *YE*$_1$ construction may also appear in conditional protases being, again, introduced by the conjunction *niŋ* 'if'. In that case, the formation expresses hypothetical but yet possible future events or situation which – if performed – would logically and temporarily precede actions conveyed by the apodosis. This value approximates the use of the indicative future perfect in *modus realis* in Latin: *Si te rogavero aliquid, non respondebis?* 'If I ask you something, will you not answer?' (Jurewicz *et al.* 1993: 128) or *Si id credideris, erraveris* 'If you (shall have) believe(d) that, you will have gone (will go) wrong' (Gildersleeves & Lodge 1895: 380):

(14) a.   Niŋ i **ye** motoo saŋ, ntelu be taa la Banjunu
           if you YE car buy we are go to Banjul
           If you buy a car, we will go to Banjul (i.e. once you have bought the car, we will be able to go to Banjul)

    b.   Niŋ **ŋa** kodoo soto, m be motoo saŋ na
           if I-YE money have I am car buy to
           If I have money I will buy the car (i.e. once I get some money, I will buy the car)

    c.   Niŋ Laamini **ye** booroo miŋ, a be kendeyaa la le
           if Lamin YE medecine drink he is be.healthy to EMPH
           If Lamin drinks the medicine he will be well (i.e. once he has drunk the medicine he will get well)

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17   The slot *ì la* (lit. 'they of') corresponds to a possessive adjective with the meaning of the English *their*.
18   The slot *a la* (lit. 'he of') corresponds to a possessive adjective with the meaning of the English *his*.

Sometimes, the reading can be real and counterfactual. In such cases, the YE_1 form introduces activities that refer to a present temporal sphere but portrays them as conflicting with the current state of affairs. This function corresponds to the use of the Latin *coniunctivus imperfecti* in the *modus irrealis* in the present: *Si id crederes, errares* 'If you believed (you do not believe but you still could), you would go wrong' (Gildersleeves & Lodge 1895: 385):

(15) Niŋ ali **ye** wo moolu kanu, mennu ye ali kani,
     if you YE that people love who did you love
     Even though you loved people who love you (i.e. you do not love them
     but you still could),

     wo be ali nafaa la muŋ ne la?
     that is you benefit to what EMPH at/with
     how would that benefit you?

The YE_1 gram can likewise be found in conditional protases denoting past unreal counterfactual activities or situations, thus equaling the Latin *coniunctivus plusquamperfecti* in the modus *irrealis* in the past: *Si id credidisses, erravisses* 'If you had believed that (but you did not), you would have gone wrong' (Gildersleeves & Lodge 1895: 385):

(16) a.   Niŋ ali **ye** nte kanu, ali be seewoo la nuŋ
          if you YE me love you are be.happy to then
          If you (had) loved me, you would have rejoiced (but you did not love me
          and consequently you were not happy)
     b.   Niŋ ite **ye** wo ke nuŋ, tennuŋ nte baarinkewo te faa la nuŋ
          if you YE that do then, so.then I brother is.not be.dead to then
          If you had done it, my brother would not have died

In cases where the YE_1 formation is derived from certain verbs of receiving (e.g., *a soto* 'receive, have' and *a muta* 'get'), perceiving (e.g., *a moyi* 'hear, understand' and *a loŋ* 'know') and feeling (e.g., *a kanu* 'love' and *a koŋ* 'hate, detest'), it may denote three additional types of meaning. First, approximating a simultaneous-resultative category, it denotes a present static condition, portraying it as acquired due to a previously performed action. This value is similar to the sense offered by resultative perfects. However, the meaning of a resultative perfect displays a reverse arrangement of the two semantic planes: the most relevant segment of the meaning reflects a dynamic event which, due to its results, is in some way related to a present state of affairs.

(17) a.   Fo i **ye** a moyi?
          whether you YE it hear
          Have you heard it? / Do you know that?
     b.   **Ŋa** leetaroo muta
          I-YE letter receive
          I have gotten / I have got a letter

Second, in the case where certain verbs expressing feelings (e.g. *a kanu* 'love' and *a koŋ* 'hate') are employed in the YE_1 gram, the value of the construction can be interpreted as stative, contrasting with more dynamic expressions formed, for instance, with the auxiliary *ka*:

(18) a. Nte **ye** i kanu le
         I YE you love EMPH
         I love you
     b. Ate **ye** n koŋ
         he YE me hate
         He hates me

And third, certain verbs when used in the YE_1 locution introduce present activities with no evident traces of resultative (perfect or anterior) and stative shades of meaning. In this function, the construction displays an analogous force to various Indo-European simple presents:

(19) a. Ŋa musoo soto
         I-YE wife have
         I have a wife
     b. Ŋa wo loŋ
         I-YE that know
         I know that

If the context locates the reference time in the past, the meaning of the YE_1 construction, formed from the above mentioned predicates, approximates a simple or durative (imperfective) past:

(20) a. Ŋa a loŋ nuŋ
         I-YE it know then
         I knew that (cf. the use of the imperfective past in the Spanish translation: *lo sabía*)

     b. Kunuŋ a **ye** kodoo soto
         yesterday he YE money have
         He had money yesterday (cf. the use of the imperfective past in the
         Spanish translation *tenía dinero*)

The YE_1 expression may also be found in maxims or proverbs, introducing atemporal universal truths and coexisting, in certain cases, with the habitual-iterative formation *ka* + verbal base (cf. 21.b):

(21) a. Moo, meŋ **ye** katiroo **ke**, a **ye** jooroo **soto**
         person who YE harvesting do he YE payment have receive
         He who reaps, receives wages

b. Moo doo ka fiiroo ke, doo **ye** katiroo **ke**
    person the.one KA sowing do the.other YE harvesting do
    One sows and another reaps

2.2 VALUES OF THE *YE*$_2$ FORMATION

When used with the first person singular or plural, the *YE*$_2$ formation approximates a cohortative gram: the subject – a person viewed as an individual or as a member of group – directs orders, suggestions or advises to him- or herself, or to the group in question. In that function, the gram has a similar force to the English expression *let me* or *let us*, Polish imperative *Cieszmy się* 'Let us be happy!' and to the Latin *coniunctivus hortativus*: *Amemus patriam* (Jurewicz *et al.* 1993: 109):

(22) a. **Ŋa** duŋ suwo kono!
         I-YE enter house in
         Let me enter into the house
     b. M bula, **ŋa** taa!
         me leave I-YE go
         Leave me, let me go!
     c. **Ŋà** ñiŋ motoo saŋ!
         we-YE this car buy
         Let us buy this car!
     d. Ali **ŋà** domoroo ke!
         all we eating do
         Let us eat!
     e. Ali **ŋà** a faa!
         all we-YE him kill
         Let us kill him (L.20.14)

When directed to the second person plural – most frequently following an overt imperative construction – the *YE*$_2$ formation acts as an imperative: it expresses orders, commands or suggestions directed to a single interlocutor or to a group of them:

(23) a. Wuli, ì **ye** loo ǹ teema!
         stand.up you YE stand we among
         Arise and stand here in the middle of us
     b. Wuli, ì **ye** taa!
         stand-up you YE go
         Stand up and go!
     c. Ñiŋ kewo faa, ì **ye** doo bula!
         this man kill you YE another leave
         Kill this man, leave the other!

> d.   Wuli, i **ye** i la basoo sika, aduŋ i **ye** sayi suwo kono
>   stand.up you YE you of[19] mat pick.up and you YE return house in
>   Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house

Since orders may also be introduced by the verbal locution *si* + verbal base (a modal-future construction), the YE_2 formation in the sense of an imperative frequently follows the *si* periphrasis:

> (24) a.   Ali si a samba naŋ, ali **ye** a faa
>   you shall him bring to.here you YE him kill
>   Bring him here and kill him!

The YE_2 gram can also be found with the third person singular. In that case – still introducing commands, suggestions and advice, the formation acts as a jussive category. In this use, it approximates the English construction with *let* (*Let him do it!*), the Polish periphrastic imperative with *niech* (*Niech przyjdzie* 'Let him come') or the Latin *coniunctivus iussivus* (*Suum quisque noscat ingenium* 'Let each one know his own mind'; Gildersleeve & Lodge 1895: 173):

> (25) a.   A **ye** naa!
>   he YE come
>   Let him come!
>   b.   Ìtolu **ye** taa!
>   they YE go
>   Let them go
>   c.   N teerimaa **ye** a ke i ye
>   I friend YE it do you for
>   Let my friend do it for you!

In all the uses, introduced thus far, the YE_2 construction constitutes a suppletive (with the first and third person singular and plural) or alternative (in the second person singular and plural) form of the imperative.

However, in various cases, the sense of the YE_2 construction approximates an optative mood rather than the category which covers imperative, cohortative and jussive domains. In these cases, instead of conveying orders or suggestions, the locution expresses wishes, desires or hopes as for the present-future situation. This use has its parallels in the English construction with the verb *may* (*May you live long!* or *May God help you!*), in the Polish expressions with the particle *oby* (*Oby przyszedł!* 'May he come!') and in the Latin *coniunctivus optativus* (*Stet haec urbs!* 'May this city continue to stand!'; Gildersleeve & Lodge 1895: 172):

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19   The slot *i la* (lit. 'you [sg.] of') corresponds to a possessive adjective with the meaning of the English *your* [singular].

(26) a.   A **ye** faa!
          he YE be.dead
          May he day / May he be dead
     b.   A **ye** bambaŋ!
          he YE be.strong
          May he be strong!

Such wishes may also be formulated as for past (presently irreversible) states of affairs. In this use, the gram approximates the *coniunctivus optativus irrealis* in Latin: *Utinam illo tempore vixissem* 'May I have lived in that time' (Jurewicz *et al.* 1993: 120):

(27)   A **ye** naa nuŋ!
          he YE come then
          May he have come then!

The YE_2 gram is also extensively employed in depending subordinated final clauses, introducing a broad spectrum of more specific values which, nevertheless, may be embraced under a single term of a purposive subjunctive: the proposition with the relevant YE_2 form indicates intentions, goals or desires to be accomplished. It should be noted that the clause which includes a relevant YE_2 construction may be linked to the principal clause either asyndetically (28) or by means of a conjunction, such as, *fo* or *puru* 'in order that, so that' and *ko* 'that' (29):

(28) a.   Dalasi taŋ dii n na, **ŋa** taa mbuuroo saŋ na
          dalasi ten give me to I-YE go bread buy to
          Give me ten dalisis to go to buy the bread (lit. so that I may go to buy)
     b.   N lafita i **ye** kurutoo kara n ye
          I want you YE trousers sew me for
          I want you to sew trousers for me (lit. so that you may sew)
     c.   N lafita i **ye** kendeyaa
          I want you YE be.healthy
          I want you to be healthy (lit. so that you may be healthy)

(29) a.   Ì ye Laamini daani fo a **ye** naa jaŋ
          they did Lamin ask so.that he YE come here
          They asked Lamin to come (lit. so that he would come
     b.   Ŋà a faa puru ŋà a la buŋo soto
          we did him kill so.that we-YE he of[20] house have
          We killed him to have his house (lit. so that we would get)
     c.   A ye a fo n ye ko **ŋa** naa
          he did it tell I for so(that) I-YE come
          He told me to come (lit. so that I would come)

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20   Cf. footnote 18.

The purposive final meaning can also be observed in clauses introduced by the verb *ko* 'say':

(30) a. A ko **ŋa** n na joobaloo joo
          he said I-YE I of[21] debt pay
          He said [that] I should pay my debt
    b. A ko i **ye** taa
          he said you YE go
          He said [that] you should go

One should also note that asyndetic purposive uses presented in examples (28.a-c) and (30.a-b) are profoundly similar to the imperative-jussive-exhortative meaning found in principal clauses (cf. examples 22, 23 and 25).

3. CONCLUSION

The evidence provided by the interviewed Mandinka speakers in Basse and its vicinity shows that the grams formed by means of the entity *ye* display the following semantic load. First, as for the YE_1 variety, the construction is used as a present perfect, offering resultative, inclusive, iterative, experiential, indefinite and performative meanings. It is also used with the force of a past tense with any degree of temporal remoteness from the speaker or narrator's present. The aspectual value of the YE_2 locution in its definite past function is usually perfective or simple. Nevertheless, examples with a durative reading are not infrequent. The sense of anteriority – prototypical for the present perfect function – may also be found in the past and (only in subordinate clauses) future time frames. In conditional phrases, the gram can introduce hypothetical eventual activities or counterfactual but yet real actions, as well as – when located in the past temporal sphere – counterfactual unreal situations. Furthermore, when derived from certain verbs of receiving, perceiving and feeling, the YE_1 expression functions as a simultaneous-resultative, stative and simple present. With the past temporal reference, the three above-mentioned values correspond to a simultaneous-resultative, stative and simple (including durative or imperfective) past. Finally, the gram is found in proverbs with a value of a universal, atemporal or habitual present. It shall be observed that the total semantic content of the YE_1 formation almost perfectly parallels the meanings displayed by the *TA* gram (cf. Andrason 2011b). The sole distinction – given the transitive nature of the YE_1 construction and hence its incompatibility with adjectival stative verbs – is the infrequency of the simultaneous-resultative or present meanings and, in particular, the properly stative value, offered with a great abundance by adjectival roots in the *TA* formation.

Second, in respect to the YE_2 gram, the meaning is invariably modal. More concretely, the construction functions – depending on the person to whom a given sentence is addressed – as a cohortative (1st), imperative (2nd) and jussive (3rd). In the

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21   Cf. footnote 15.

optative function, the gram may introduce real (present-future) and unreal (past) wishes and desires. In dependent final subordinate (including asyndetic) clauses, the YE_2 form is used with the force of a subjunctive purposive category, conveying goals and intentions.

Although the results of our study *grosso modo* confirm the analysis available in the literature published thus far, they also provide some new facts which enable us to sketch a more complete map of the semantics of the *YE* grams. In particular, as for the YE_1 construction, we have detected, until now ignored, values of performative perfect, durative past (especially in the case of dynamic action verbs), future perfect, real counterfactuality, unreal counterfactuality and universal (habitual/gnomic) present. We have furthermore offered a more meticulous description of typical perfect functions having distinguished resultative, inclusive, iterative, experiential and indefinite uses.[22] Likewise, we have proposed a more detailed picture of the values displayed by verbs of reception, perception and feelings, dividing them into three domains: simultaneous-resultative, stative and simple present. In respect to the YE_2 formation, we have made a clear distinction between cohortative, jussive and imperative meanings (a suppletive or alternative form of the imperative) and optative senses. We have also shown that the optative type may be both real (wishes formulated concerning present and future situations) and unreal (desires formulated as for past, impossible to change, conditions).

We also consider that although the present analysis – dedicated to the semantic load of the constructions formed by means of the auxiliary *ye* – was limited to the Mandinka variety employed in Basse and neighboring villages, it can also be valuable to the study of the *YE* formation(s) in the standardized language. We are convinced that the values detected in our examples should likewise be available in Mandinka whether it is spoken on the sea-cost, on the northern bank of the river Gambia in Upper River Region or elsewhere in the country. In an opposite case – i.e. if some differences between the potential of the *YE* grams in Basse and in other areas have been detected – our description will additionally constitute an important piece of information concerning the Mandinka dialectology.

Finally, it would be highly interesting if we could unify the semantic load offered by each-one of the two *YE* formations. In particular, one should aim at explaining the deeply heterogeneous YE_1 gram as a consistent and coherent semantic category where all the specific values are fully balanced and harmonized. Even more tentative – but significantly more difficult – would be the unification of the semantics of the two varieties within a single gram. These two goals inevitably constitute a future research plan of the author.

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22 Such a specification is important due to the fact that perfects in various languages offer a distinct semantic load admitting or not the mentioned sub-types (cf. for instance that the Spanish present perfect *he hecho* 'I have done' contrary to the homologue English construction is not employed with the inclusive sense).

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SUMMARY

THE MEANING OF THE *YE* CONSTRUCTIONS IN BASSE MANDINKA

The present paper analyzes the semantic load of grams formed by means of the entity *ye* in the Mandinka variety spoken in Basse and neighboring villages in the easternmost part of Gambia. Such constructions may be divided into two classes: YE_1 and YE_s types. As for the YE_1 variety, our evidence demonstrates that the construction is used as a present perfect (resultative, inclusive, iterative, experiential, indefinite and performative), past tense (perfective, simple and durative), pluperfect and future perfect. In conditional phrases, the formation introduces three sorts of meaning: hypothetical eventual activities, counterfactual but yet possible actions and unreal counterfactual past situations. When derived from certain verbs of receiving, perceiving and feeling, it functions as a simultaneous-resultative, stative and simple present and past. It is also found in proverbs with the value of a universal or habitual present. In respect to the YE_2 gram, the meaning is invariably modal. The construction functions as a cohortative, imperative and jussive. The gram may also display real (present-future) and unreal (past) optative meanings. In dependent final subordinate clauses, the YE_2 form is used with the force of a subjunctive purposive category, expressing goals and intentions.