

# A Role and Reference Grammar (RRG) Analysis of English and Mandinka: Constrasting the *on*, *at*, *in* and *káŋ*, *to*, *kóno* Adpositional Phrases

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## Abstract

This paper is about contrastively analyzing the *on*, *at*, *in* and *káŋ*, *to*, *kóno* adpositional phrases between English and Mandinka using the RRG theory. By using English secondary data, Mandinka primary data derived from interviews and some elicitation techniques that were carried out among native speakers, this article focuses its analysis on how the aforementioned adpositions are used in discourse to help locate referents in relation to reference points that either refer to space or time. In doing so, it has found some similarities and differences between the two languages as far as the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic interpretations are concerned. Two types of adpositions are distinguished in the two languages: predicative and nonpredicative adpositions. The adpositional phrases are then interpreted according to whether they are predicative or nonpredicative.

**Keywords:** Adposition, preposition, postposition, adjunct, phrasal adjunct, argument, core, periphery, left-detached position, pre-core slot.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Some research has been conducted on different aspects of Mandinka grammar, but few works are devoted to contrasting these different aspects to those of English that is today's lingua franca. Thus, this paper is interested in analyzing the use of *on*, *at*, *in* and *káŋ*, *to*, *kóno* adpositional phrases between English and Mandinka. It aims to deal with what the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic interactions of such adpositional phrases are before finding similarities and differences between the two languages in this sense. It is hypothesized that the two languages are syntactically, semantically, and pragmatically similar and different in the use of the adpositions under consideration.

Following Crystal (2008), an adposition is a term that is used to subsume the two categories of preposition and postposition. A preposition "refers to the set of ITEMS which typically precede NOUN PHRASES (often single nouns or PRONOUNS), to form a single CONSTITUENT of STRUCTURE" (Crystal, 2008, p. 383). A postposition is defined as "A term used in the grammatical classification of WORDS, referring to the CLOSED set of items which follow noun phrases (or single nouns or PRONOUNS) to form a single CONSTITUENT of structure" (Crystal, 2008, p. 377). Hewings (2005) states that "the general

definition of a preposition in traditional grammar is that it is a word that governs, and normally precedes, a noun or pronoun and which expresses the latter's relation to another word" (p. 598). As an SVO language, English importantly uses prepositions, whereas it is postpositions that usually occur in Mandinka, an SOV language.

Van Valin (2005) argues that there are two types of adpositions. These are predicative adpositions and non-predicative adpositions. Predicative adpositions give "substantive semantic information to the clause in which they occur, both in terms of their own meaning and the meaning of the argument that they license", whereas "Non-predicative adpositions do not add any substantive semantic information to the clause and do not license the argument they mark" (Van Valin, 2005, pp. 21-22). This means that adpositional phrases can be an essential part of the core as they can pertain to the periphery. If they belong to the periphery, they give additional information to the core; if they are licensed by the matrix verb of the core, they give essential information without which there is incompleteness. Biber *et al.*, (1999) also make a distinction between free and bound prepositions. According to them, a free preposition has an independent meaning inasmuch as its occurrence does

not depend on any other item in use. The realization of a bound preposition depends on another word that is chiefly the matrix verb. The information that is sent by adpositional phrases may be about different interpretations based on the type of adposition that is nucleus.

Huddleston and Pullum (2002) point out that when talking about spatial relationships, there are mainly two entities that are considered. There is an entity that is looked upon as the landmark (or area), and the other is taken as the trajector. The landmark is the entity in which the trajector is located. The trajector is the item whose location is specified; it is the located element. In this paper, the landmark is called the reference point, whereas the trajector is called the located element. About the use of prepositions, Huddleston and Pullum go further by saying that “the contrast between transitive vs. intransitive can be applied to prepositions as well as verbs”. They demonstrate that there are some prepositions that take one argument, whereas others may take two.

In English, the prepositions *on*, *at*, and *in* can be used to express both temporal and spatial information (Alexander, 1988, p. 149). Referring to these prepositions, he argues that a position in space can be considered in relation to a point (a place or an event), a line (a place we think in terms of length), a surface (a place we think of as a flat area), an area or volume (a place which can ‘enclose’). The choice of the use of each of these prepositions to express spatial information depends on what speakers want to say in relation to some dimensional properties. Downing and Locke (2006) argue that, in English, when speakers make such a choice they use “cognitive patterns or mental image schemas of each relationship, in accordance with the way each relation is perceived in the culture” (p. 546).

Sarr (2021) indicates that Mandinka boasts two copular verbs *mú* and *be*. The copular verb *mú* is used to express identificational, specificational, and equational predications, whereas *be* is used for locational predications. In many constructions, the copular *be* can be associated with *káj*, *to*, or *kóno* postpositional phrases to help locate the referent of a subject core argument in space. According to Sarr, postpositional phrases may be interpreted as modifiers when they are used with certain verbs, whereas they are usually licensed by the Mandinka copular verb *be*.

Creissels and Sambou (2012) state that the Mandinka postposition *kóno* that is used as a noun in the sense of pregnancy is also used as a spatial postposition to mean ‘inside of’. They state that *káj* also is a spatial postposition that corresponds to the French preposition ‘sur’. As far as *to* is concerned, they have pointed out that this postposition is used to express a spatial location in a more general way. In fact,

Creissels and Sambou have given important clues on such three postpositions, but these clues are not sufficient to have better comprehension of the different communicative functions each of these said postpositions has. Rowland (1959) also has explained, in English, the meanings of many Mandinka postpositions including *káj*, *to*, and *kóno*, but his work does not show in any way how these postpositions can be contrasted with their English counterparts. Unlike current available works on Mandinka postpositional phrases, this article aims to show the very communicative functions of *káj*, *to*, and *kóno*. It also gives important information about the use of the English prepositions *on*, *at*, and *in*, and how these prepositions are different and similar to their Mandinka counterparts.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The Mandinka sentences presented in this paper are derived from our corpus that is composed of texts we collected from competent native speakers in both Senegal and the Gambia by means of techniques like semi-structured interviews, translation eliciting, corrective elicitation, and paraphrasing. The use of these different techniques is important because it can help the linguist to get varied and relevant data they can use to analyze languages from different angles.

We have selected the English sentences that are presented in this paper from different books we have read on different topics. Before using such second hand data, we gave great importance to their reliability, suitability and adequacy. If data are reliable, suitable, and adequate, their analysis can lead to good results and interpretation.

## 3. RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

This section is devoted to the presentation and interpretation of English prepositional phrases headed by *on*, *at*, *in*, and Mandinka postpositional phrases headed by *káj*, *to*, *kóno*, through cononical examples of sentences to express spatial and temporal information.

### 3.1 Expression of location in space

English and Mandinka use adpositions to refer to the locations of various elements in the outside world. Depending upon the speaker’s personal viewpoint, these locations can be either concrete or abstract. Thus, in this section, we shall show how English and Mandinka contrastively indicate the place of referents in the outside world by using *on*, *at*, *in*, and *káj*, *to*, *kóno*, respectively. Depending on whether these adpositions are licensed by the verbs with which they co-occur, or not, they can be classified in terms of predicative and non-predicative adpositions (Van Valin, 2005, p.21). This amounts to saying that the adpositions that are labelled as being predicative usually license arguments, whereas the non-predicative ones do not; the latter’s occurrence is chiefly asked by the predicate

as can be seen in some of the following examples that will be described in the following paragraphs.

- (1) a) He put the book on the table.  
3SG landi DEF kitaabu káŋ DEF taabulu  
A ye kitáábóo landi taabulóo káŋ.
- b) What did you sit on?  
Múŋ do.PRET 2SG síi káŋ  
Í síita múnne káŋ ?
- c) On what did you sit?  
káŋ múŋ ke.PRET 2SG síi  
(Lit. \*Káŋ múŋ í síita?)  
Í síita múnne káŋ ?
- d) She is in the shop.  
3SG COPV kóno DEF kunfaa  
A be kunfaa kóno.
- e) Mike was sleep-ing in the bedroom.  
Mayiki AUXV.PRET síinoo kóno DEF búŋo  
Mayiki be síinoo káŋ búŋo kóno.
- f) In the garden, I saw cat-s.  
kóno DEF kaadini 1SG je.PRET ñankuma-PLM  
Í ŋa ñankumóolu je kaadinóo kóno.  
Í be kaadinóo kóno, ŋ ŋa ñankumóolu je
- g) John met his old friend at the bank.  
Jóoni beŋ.PRET 3SG kotoo teeri to DEF banki  
Jóoni níŋ a teeri kotóo benta bankóo to.
- h) He is sitt-ing at the desk  
2SG AUXV síi-PROG to DEF táabulu  
A be síiríŋ táabulóo to.
- i) I am at the airport.  
1SG COPV to DEF ayidapori  
Í be ayidaporóo to.

The English preposition *on* in (1a) marks an argument adjunct that appears within the core, not in the periphery. The meaning of the prepositional phrase *on the table* cannot be separated from that of the core in so far as its occurrence is licensed by the verb *put*. For the construction *He put the book* in (1a) to become complete and meaningful, it needs the prepositional phrase *on the table* that importantly helps express the concrete location of what the direct core argument *book* refers to in the real world. In such expression of the location, the preposition *on* plays an important part because its mere absence from the core construction renders the latter incomplete as one can realize in *\*He put the book the table*.

With verbs like *put*, the choice about locative prepositions is open. The choice may be done between *on*, *at*, *in*, etc., according to the speaker's viewpoint about both the element that is being located and the

reference point [1]. In (1a), following the speaker's viewpoint, the exact position of the referent *book* is found on the referent *table* that is considered to be a surface that is defined by Alexander (1988) as a place we think of as a flat area. In reality, a surface may not always be about "a flat area", it logically [2] rather refers to the outer or top part of something that can serve as a reference point. As such, the locative preposition *on* is used to logically indicate the place of an element on the outer or top part of another element that can serve as a reference point.

In English, both the pre-core slot and the preposition *on* appearing in the clause final position can co-occur in a construction whose illocutionary force signals interrogative. This is what is exemplified in (1b) where the pre-core slot *what* stands for the single argument of the prepositional phrase headed by *on* that is placed sentence finally. This position occupied by *on* vis-à-vis its single argument is what is called by some linguists "preposition stranding". Unlike what is realized in (1b), in (1c), the preposition *on* and *what* occur in the initial position of an interrogative construction. Thus, one should note down that both (1b and c) are acceptable constructions; the major noticeable difference is at the syntactic level that shows the two different positions *on* can occupy in relation to *what* that is not an argument in the core, but rather an argument in the prepositional phrase as is already mentioned above. Unlike what is realized in (1a) and in (1b), it is the preposition *on* that licenses the single argument of the prepositional phrase, not the matrix verb. Thus, in such a usage, *on* is construed as being predicative.

In addition to *on*, in English, *in* also can be used in different syntactic positions to express location. In (1d), it is used in the core to concretely locate the referent of the core argument *She* in the referent of another item in the outside world. Once again, the choice of the type of preposition is made according to the way in which the location is subjectively or objectively viewed. In this sense, Quirk *et al.*, (1985) argue that we do so in relation to the dimensional properties of the location in question. Thus, after the choice of a precise preposition, the hearer is told about how the location is conceived. Whatever the prepositional phrase in use may be, the occurrence of the preposition is of prime importance inasmuch as it is the very element that helps us know the real position of the located item.

<sup>1</sup> Some linguists use the landmark instead.

<sup>2</sup> The use of logically is important here because there are some special cases in which the preposition *on* is used to refer to the inside of something. This is seen in examples of prepositional phrases like *on a bus*, *on a plane*, *on a train*, *on a ship*, etc.

In fact, in (1d), the preposition *in* is used to show that the referent of *She* is located inside the referent of the item *shop* that is looked upon as being three-dimensional. This idea is normally expressed by means of the usage of *in* if and only if the referred place can have the located item inside it. This is of paramount importance because mostly if the reference point doesn't have an inside in which the located element can be put, depending on the context and the speaker's viewpoint, another preposition may be used instead. For example, an item that is larger than a container may be found on top of it. In this manner, one will say that the located element is on the container instead of its being inside it.

In English, the locative copula *be* is used to indicate the location of the referents of subject core arguments in the outside world. This is what is exemplified in (1b) through which the meaning conveyed by *in* clearly demonstrates that the referent *the shop* contains the referent of the item *She*, which means that it has it in its inside. In such a use, the locative copular *be* importantly requires the occurrence of the prepositional phrase without which there is no complete construction as can be seen in *\*She is*. The prepositional phrase is then construed as the complement of the core.

Even though the locative copular licenses the prepositional phrase expressing the notion of location, one should bear in mind that it does not have any influence on the choice of the type of preposition that has to head such a prepositional phrase. This is freely chosen according to the speaker's communicative intention so to paraphrase Quirk *et al.* (1985). For instance, *She is* may be followed by an *on* or *at* prepositional phrase depending upon the speaker's mental image schema in relation to the located element and the reference point.

Whether the prepositional phrase pertains to the core clause or to the periphery, the locative preposition *in* is used for "containment" if we follow Downing and Locke (2006). In (1d and e), *in* is used to expression "containment", but the realizations are not the same. In (1d), it is licensed by the matrix verb *is*, whereas in (1e), it appears in the periphery while

licensing an argument (the reference point) that does not pertain to the core construction. In (1e), the preposition phrase *in the bedroom* can be left out without affecting the overall meaning of the core; it is just used to give additional information. In doing so, unlike what occurs in (1d), the use of *in* indicates that it is both the referent of *Mike* (a person) and the action of sleeping that were located in the referent *bedroom*. Not only does the *bedroom* contain *Mike*, but also what he was doing (sleeping).

In English, the peripheral prepositional phrase can also be realized in the left-detached position for some focal motivations. This is what happens in (1f) where *In the garden* is found in the sentence initial position. Here, the left-detached position shows that the speaker has put some focus on the location where *cats* were seen or the location from which *cats* were seen. With such a left-detached position, there is some ambiguity inasmuch as one can interpret that *cats* were either seen in the garden or from the garden by the referent of the subject core argument *I*. In doing so, the garden contains both *cats* and the subject core argument *I* at once or it only contains the referent of *I*. The main function of the left-detached position in such a type of construction is that the speaker wants to draw the hearer's attention to the reference point that is captured in terms of "containment" with the use of the preposition *in*.

In (1e and f), the prepositional phrases *in the bedroom* and *In the garden* are realized in different syntactic positions, but what they have in common is that, pertaining to the periphery, they both serve as additional information; they are then phrasal adjuncts that modify the core information. Following Van Valin (2005), what speakers of the English language do not normally do is use phrasal adjuncts among the constituents of the core as can be shown by the unacceptability of constructions like *\*Mike was in the bedroom sleeping* and *\*I in the garden saw cats*. A locative prepositional phrase can occupy either the initial position of the sentence, or the final one according to the speaker's communicative intention. These different positions that can be occupied by English locative phrasal adjuncts are represented in the figures below.

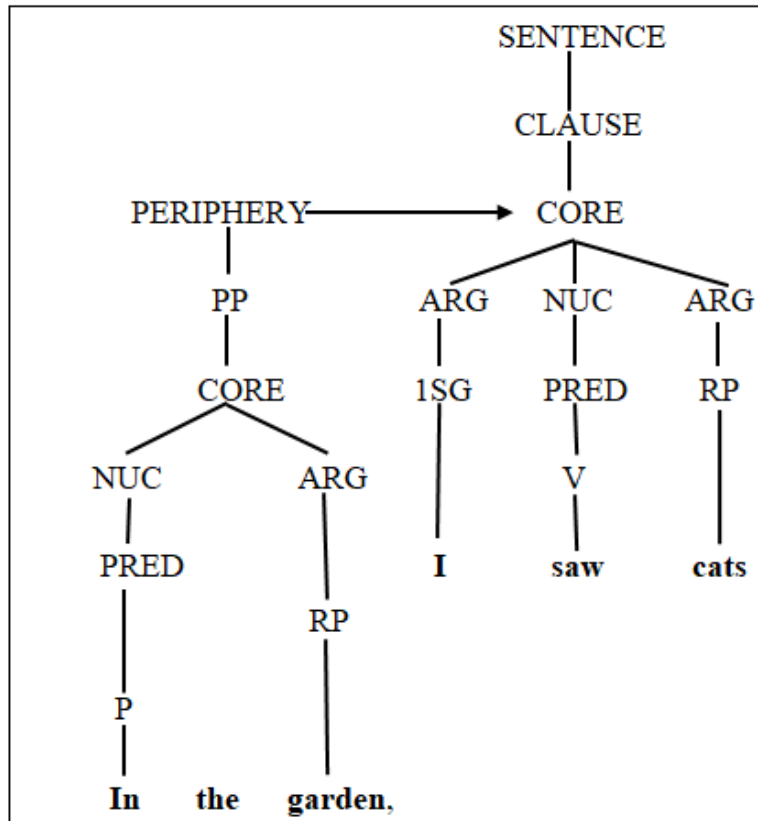


Figure 1: Syntactic representation of an English prepositional phrase in the left-detached position

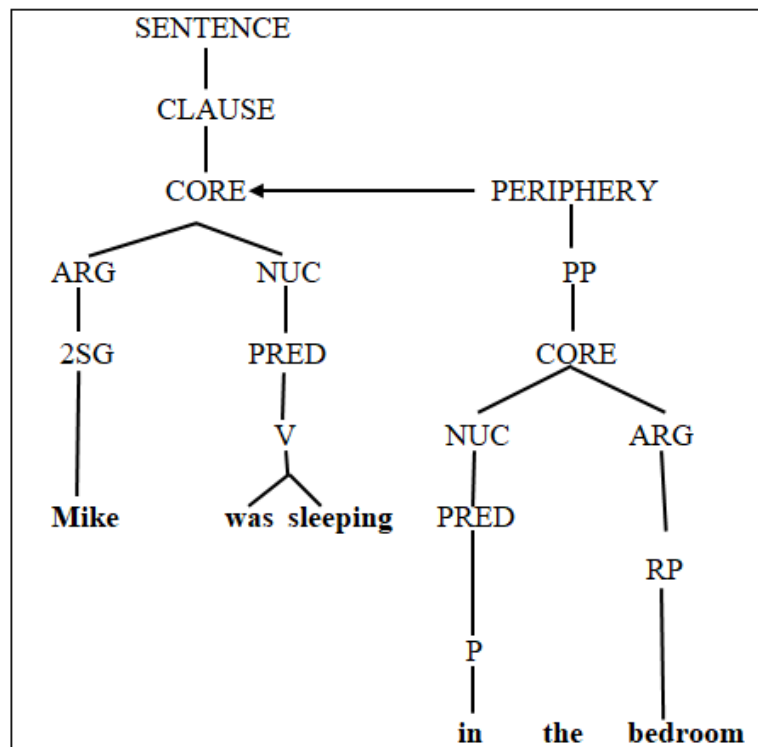


Figure 2: Syntactic representation of an English prepositional phrase in the sentence final position

The English preposition *at* also occurs in both predicative and non-predicative prepositional phrases to help locate actions, the referents of items at precise points in space. This is what is expressed through the

use of the phrasal adjunct *at the bank* whose usage is to inform the hearer about *John* and *his old friend's* meeting that happened at a precise point in space. Like what occurs in (1e), in (1g) also, the prepositional

phrase is placed in the sentence final position, more precisely in the periphery. It is a predicative prepositional phrase in so far as it is not licensed by the main verb of the core. It is an entity whose use is important for the hearer to get enough information on the part of the speaker, but it is not essential for the utterance to be complete and understandable. In (1g) *John met his old friend at the bank*, the idea of location at the bank that is considered to be a point is referred to different items of the construction at once. *John* is located at the bank; the meeting is located at the bank; *his old friend* is located at the bank as well. This is somewhat different from what happens with the use of the English locative copular verb *be* with which it is the referent of the core argument subject that is mainly located.

In (1i), the prepositional phrase *at the airport* is used to complete the core. In doing so, it is the referent of the single core argument (the subject) that is located at a point in space, *the airport*. In such a kind of locative expression, the prepositional phrase usually comes after the locative verb *be* for there to be meaningful information. Its use in the sentence initial position or just after the subject core argument causes ungrammaticality. *\*At the airport I am* is as ungrammatical as *\*I at the airport am*. Like the locative prepositions *on*, *in*, the preposition *at* cannot, on its own, convey the idea of location, it usually co-occurs with an element that is construed as a reference point even though in some contexts such an element is often omitted. Both (1h and i) appear with prepositional phrases that are labelled as phrasal adjuncts inasmuch as they give additional information that modifies the core. In (1h) also, the use of *at* at the head of the phrasal adjunct *at the desk* is very important because it signals to the hearer that *He* is neither on top of *the desk* nor under it, but what is rather expressed is the position as a point *He* has in relation to the referent *the desk*.

To recapitulate, the *on*, *in*, and *at* prepositional phrases can be adjunct arguments as they can be simple phrasal adjuncts; in the first case they pertain to the core, whereas in the second one, they belong to the periphery. With most verbs, the choice about locative prepositions is open insofar as it may be done between *on*, *at*, *in*, etc., according to the situation or the speaker's viewpoint about the reference point and the element that is being located. The locative preposition *on* is used to logically indicate the place of an element on the outer or top part of another element that can serve as a reference point; in doing so, the reference point is interpreted as a surface. In English, both the pre-core slot and the preposition *on* appearing in the clause final position can co-occur in a construction whose illocutionary force signals interrogative.

The *in* prepositional phrase is used for containment in both constructions where it pertains to the core clause or the periphery. In constructions whose

illocutionary force signals declarative, the *on*, *in*, and *at* peripheral prepositional phrases can also be realized in the left-detached position for some focal grounds. In fact, a locative prepositional phrase can occupy either the initial position of the sentence, or the final one according to the speaker's communicative intention.

The English preposition *at* also occurs in both predicative and non-predicative prepositional phrases to help locate elements at precise points in space. Sometimes, these points may also be considered to be itineraries. The use of the *on*, *in*, and *at* prepositional phrases with most action verbs is somewhat different from what happens with the use of the English locative copular verb *be*. With the locative verb *be*, it is the referent of the core argument subject that is mainly located, whereas with most action verbs, both the referent of the subject core argument and the action itself can be located vis-à-vis the reference point as is demonstrated in this paper. The prepositional phrases are obligatorily realized when they complete the meanings of cores whose matrix verb is the copular verb *be*. In the following paragraphs, let us now see what happens in Mandinka.

Unlike English, Mandinka employs the postpositional phrases *káŋ*, *to* and *kóno* to indicate the positions of items in space as one can see in the examples below.

- (2) a) Mur-óo be síraŋ-o káŋ.  
knife-DEF COPV chair-DEF on  
The knife is on the chair.
- b) A la kod-óo be láa-ríŋ láaraŋ-o káŋ.  
3SG GEN money-DEF COPV put-RES bed-DEF on  
His/Her money is on the bed.
- c) Láamini ye í dóŋ mot-óo káŋ.  
Lamine PF.POS REF dance car-DEF on  
Lamine danced on the car.
- d) A la mus-óo be koloŋ-o to.  
3SG GEN wife-DEF COPV well-DEF at  
His wife is at the well.
- e) Túuraa be búnbúŋ na kóoree to.  
bull.DEF COPV bellow PROG cowshed.DEF at  
The bull is bellowing at the cowshed.
- f) Bii, Aramata ye dab-óo faa a la buŋ-o kóno.  
Today Aramata PF.POS bed bug-DEF kill 3SG GEN bedroom-DEF in  
Today, Aramata killed a bed bug in her bedroom.
- g) Alimam-óo ye a la tasabay-óo tú jaameŋ-o kóno.

Imam-DEF PF.POS 3SG GEN rosary-DEF  
leave mosque-DEF in  
The Imam left his rosary in the mosque.

h) Mus-óo-lu ye maan-óo saji múŋ ne  
kóno ?

woman-DEF-PLM PF.POS rice-DEF pound  
what FOCM in

Where did women pound the rice?

Mandinka uses the locative postposition *káŋ* to locate items on reference points that are viewed as a surface. This means that such reference points have on their tops or outer parts the located items. This is what is expressed in example (2a) where, with the use of *káŋ*, the referent *Muróo* is located on top of *síraŋo* (the reference point). It is the Mandinka locative copular verb *be* [<sup>3</sup>] that is used to establish such a relationship between the subject core argument *Muróo* and the postpositional phrase *síraŋo káŋ*. In Mandinka, the absence of the postpositional phrase in constructions like (2a) causes incompleteness. *\*Muróo be* (*\*the knife is*) is an incomplete utterance speakers do not produce. It is important to note that the occurrence of the subject core argument in such locative constructions is crucial. On this topic, it is said that:

To locate the referent of the subject in space, Mandinka usually has recourse to the combination of nouns related to the names of places and postpositions such as *to* (at), *kóno* (in), *káŋ*, and so on. In doing so, the copular verb *be* needs both the presence of the subject and the postpositional phrase to convey complete information (Sarr, 2021, p. 156).

The syntactic position of the *káŋ* postpositional phrase is of prime importance for there to be the indication of a located element on a surface. For instance, if it is difficult to construe the overall meaning of sentences like *\*Muróo be káŋ síraŋo* (The knife is on the chair), *\*Káŋ muróo be síraŋo* (*\*On the knife is the chair*), etc., it is because *káŋ*, as a postposition, cannot precede the single argument (*síraŋo*) it licenses. *\*Káŋ síraŋo muróo be* also (*\*On the chair the knife is*) is unacceptable because, with the use of the locative copular verb *be*, Mandinka does not normally place its postpositional phrases in the initial or left-detached position of a core construction. As a postposition, *káŋ* cannot start a core. The locative copular verb *be* is usually followed by the *káŋ* complement that is used to locate the referent of the subject core argument in space.

If an item is considered as lying down on a surface, Mandinka often associates the use of the copular verb *be* with that of the verb *lása* (lie down) that

has at its end the resultative suffix *-ríŋ*. With this co-occurrence, the postpositional phrase can often be left out without affecting the completeness and meaningfulness of the core in use, especially when the subject core argument in use refers to an animate being. As such, both *Salimu be láariŋ* (Salim is lying down) and *Salimu be láariŋ láaraŋo káŋ* are complete and meaningful sentences, the only difference is that the latter gives more information than the former. In this manner, the postpositional phrase *láaraŋo káŋ* is a phrasal adjunct that is used to modify the core; it gives additional information. On the other hand, when the referent of the subject core argument is an inanimate object, the occurrence of the locative postpositional phrase seems to be crucial for the production of a complete utterance. As such, *A la kodóo be láariŋ láaraŋo káŋ* is complete and meaningful, whereas *\*A la kodóo be láariŋ* is odd or ambiguous in meaning.

Except for lexical verbs such as *ke* (put), *landi* (put), and the like, in many Mandinka core constructions where the matrix verb is a lexical one, the *káŋ* postpositional phrase is chiefly construed as a phrasal adjunct whose argument is considered to be the reference point (a surface) of the predicative action. As such, in (2c), the postpositional phrase *motóo káŋ* is used to locate not only the referent of the subject core argument *Láamini*, but also the action of *dóŋ* (dance) the latter did. This means that *Láamini* was on the car, but he danced on the car as well, which is different from what occurs in (2a and b). *Motóo káŋ* occurs in the periphery, and it conveys additional information vis-à-vis the core information.

A Mandinka postpositional phrase headed by *káŋ* usually appears in the sentence final position; the situation in which such a type of postpositional phrase may be found in the sentence initial position is when it is used like a noun phrase (or a reference phrase). In doing so, it is used as a core argument standing for the subject as is the case in an example like *Laaraŋo káŋ be nóoriŋ báake le* (lit. *\*On the bed is very dirty*). With this kind of Mandinka construction, the postpositional phrase that has a nominal usage is not used as a reference point, it is rather used to say something about it. As such, *be nóoriŋ báake le* (is very dirty) is used to say something about *Laaraŋo káŋ* (On the bed). It is important to highlight that the postpositions *káŋ*, *to*, *kóno* can all occur in postpositional phrases that occupy the subject position while having a nominal usage.

The Mandinka postposition *to* is used to place an element at a reference point that is normally considered to be a point in space. In doing so, the speaker's intention is to indicate that the located element is at such and such a position in space. In (2d), the postpositional phrase *koloŋo to* signals that the reference phrase *A la musóo* (his wife) is concretely located at the well (*koloŋo*), a point in space. The point is known but may not be identified in most cases if the

<sup>3</sup> Some people also use *bi*.

context does not help. For instance, with the use of *koloŋo to*, the hearer is told about the point in space, but he/she may not know which *koloŋo* this is exactly about, especially in case there are many wells. Accordingly, the lack of identification suggests that this is more about the location in space than about the identification of the reference point vis-à-vis other possible similar reference points.

The *to* postpositional phrase can be realized in constructions where it is licensed by the locative copular verb *be* standing for the matrix verb. This is the case in (2d) where the use of the *to* postpositional phrase *koloŋo to* is compulsory for the whole sentence to be complete and meaningful. Unlike what is possible in (2e), in (2d) \**A la musóo be* is complete and meaningful if and only if the location is indicated; this is what the *to* postpositional phrase is used for. In (2e) *Túuraa be búnbúŋ na kóoree to*, the realization of the postpositional phrase *kóoree to* (a phrasal adjunct) is optional, for the M-intransitive verb *búnbúŋ* does not need its occurrence for there to be a complete and meaningful utterance. If the lexical verb (that can be M-intransitive, M-transitive, or a three argument verb) does not require the realization of the postpositional phrase, this is described as being predicative. In this manner, *kóoree* is argument in the periphery that is headed by the postposition *to* that also expresses at the same time the very idea of “point in space”.

Mandinka uses the postposition *kóno* to indicate the notion of containment. This can be done with both the use of the copular verb *be* and lexical M-intransitive, M-transitive, and three argument verbs as matrix verbs. Like the other postpositional phrases that

have already been dealt with, the usage of the *kóno* postpositional phrase also can be compulsory with lexical verbs such as *ke* (put), *landi* (put), and *tú* (leave). For instance, in (2g) where the matrix verb is *tú*, the occurrence of *jaameŋo kóno* is essential in order that the construction is complete and meaningful. Thus, it is essential information that shows by means of the use of *kóno* that the Imam’s rosary is located inside *jaameŋo* (the mosque) that is the container. With the use of the postposition *kóno*, there is usually a “container” and a “contained”; the container is the reference point and the contained is the located element that has to be containable vis-à-vis the container. For example, it is comprehensible to locate *tasabayóo* (the rosary) inside *jaameŋo*, but it would be odd and unacceptable to locate *jaameŋo* inside *tasabayóo* in the real world.

Unlike what occurs in (2g), in (2f), the postpositional phrase *a la buŋo kóno* is a phrasal adjunct that stands for the periphery to the core *Bíi, Aramata ye dabóo faa*. In fact, the postposition *kóno* is used to locate *Aramata, dabóo*, and the action of killing *faa* inside *buŋo* (the bedroom) at once, whereas this is different from what happens in (2g) where only one element (*tasabayóo*) is located in the container. What is not located in (2f) is the left-detached non-phrasal adjunct *Bíi* (today) that places what happens in the bedroom in time. Like the postpositional phrase *a la buŋo kóno*, *Bíi* also is a modifier; if the former modifies the core, the latter modifies the whole construction. The non-phrasal adjunct *Bíi* can appear both in the left-detached and sentence final positions, but *a la buŋo kóno* as a phrasal adjunct is only realized in the sentence final position.

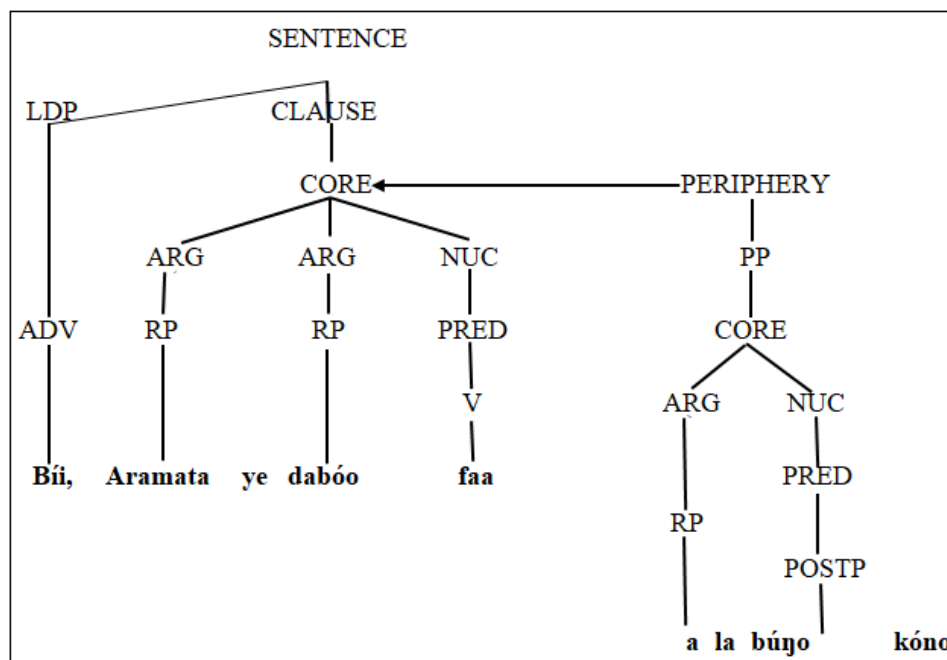


Figure 3: Syntactic representation of a Mandinka postpositional phrase in the sentence final position



There is no remarkable difference in terms of structural order between Mandinka interrogative and declarative constructions. In (2h) whose illocutionary force signals interrogative, the postpositional phrase whose argument the question is about does not change positions. The question word *múŋ* is used to occupy the same position in which the argument in the postpositional phrase will occur in a declarative construction. In interrogative constructions like this one, the use of the interrogative particle *múŋ* indicates that the reference point is not normally known by the speaker, but the occurrence of the postposition expresses whether this is looked upon as a surface, a container, or a point in space. In this manner, in *Musóolu ye maanóo saji múŋ ne kóno ?*, the reference point is not normally known by the speaker, but their use of the postposition *kóno* shows that they know that it is in the inside of the unidentified [<sup>4</sup>] reference point that the referent *maanóo* is pounded. Unlike the type of containment that is realized in (2f), in this case, it is the element *maanóo* and the action of pounding that are considered to be located in the reference point the question is about.

In fact, speakers' schemata of the reference point are very important when it comes to interpreting or using the adpositions *on*, *in*, *at*, and *káŋ*, *kóno*, *to*, to refer to location. This is what is pointed out by Downing and Locke (2006) who say that "When we express spatial relationships, we use a mental picture or image schema for each type of relationship" (p. 546).

To summarize, the Mandinka locative postposition *káŋ* is used to locate items on the tops or outer parts of reference points; in doing so, the said reference points are viewed as a surface. Mandinka does not normally place its postpositional phrases in the initial or left-detached position of a core construction. The only situation in which such types of postpositional phrases may be found in the sentence initial position is when they are used as reference phrases. If an item is considered to lie down on a surface, Mandinka often associates the use of the copular verb *be* with that of the verb *láa* (lie down) that has at its end the resultative suffix *-ríŋ*. With this co-occurrence, the use of the postpositional phrase can often be optional, especially when the subject core argument in use refers to an animate being.

The Mandinka postposition *to* is used to place an element at a reference point that is normally considered to be a point in space. In doing so, the speaker's intention is to indicate that the located element is at such and such a position in space. Mandinka uses the postposition *kóno* to indicate the notion of containment. In the image of the other locative postpositions, this can be done with both the

use of the copular verb *be* and lexical M-intransitive, M-transitive, and three argument verbs as matrix verbs.

### 3.2 Expression of temporal information

In this section, we will be dealing with how both English and Mandinka use adpositions to express temporal information. First, we will start our analysis with English prepositions *at*, *on*, and *in*, before turning to the case of the Mandinka postpositions *káŋ*, *to*, and *kóno*.

- (3)
- a. He work-s on Sundays.  
3SG dóokúu-PSM P Dimaasi-PLM  
A ka dóokuwo ke Dimaasóo le la.
  - b. His father di-ed in 1999.  
3SG faa fáa-PRET kóno saŋ  
A faamáa fáata 1999 le la.
  - c. They have class at 3.  
3PL soto karaŋ to talaŋ saba  
I ka karaŋ talaŋ saba le.

As is said by Alexander (1988), the English "prepositions *at*, *on*, and *in* refer not only to place, but also to time" (p.149). The choice between these three prepositions to express specific temporal information may differ according to what the speaker wants to say or the context. This does not mean that they can be used interchangeably; each preposition is used in such and such a context while following some syntactic and semantic rules.

To locate an element on a specific day of the week, English chiefly uses the preposition *on*. In example (3a), the preposition *on* is used to relate to a specific time of the week that is *Sunday*. The appearance of the *-s* morpheme, the plural marker, shows that the located action (working) happens every *Sunday* of the week. *On* is also found in English constructions where it indicates a specific moment in connection with a date as is exemplified in *He will be missing on the 7<sup>th</sup> of May*. In both (3a) and *He will be missing on the 7<sup>th</sup> of May*, the prepositional phrases *on Mondays* and *on the 7<sup>th</sup> of May* are phrasal adjuncts that modify their cores by giving them temporal additional information. It is worth mentioning that, for some focal expressions, these types of *on* phrasal adjuncts can also be found in the left-detached position. As such, speakers often produce utterances like *On the 7<sup>th</sup> of May, He will be missing* or *On Mondays, he works*. In English, the term "time" itself is used with *on* to focus on the notion of punctuality. *On time* means not before, not after the referred time, but rather at the very time that is arranged.

Unlike *on*, the preposition *in* is used to refer to a length of time within which something is located. In doing so, the use of *in* helps locate an event inside a period of time that can be longer or shorter than the day. For instance, *in* can head *the morning, the*

<sup>4</sup> This is unidentified from the speaker's knowledge.

*afternoon, the evening* as it can head elements that refer to longer periods such as *months, years*, and so on. When *the morning, the afternoon* and *the evening* are preceded by the name of a day, it is *on* that is used instead, as is the case with the days of the week. This is what is exemplified in *There will be a meeting on Tuesday afternoon* and *I will do it on Wednesday evening*.

In (3b), one can make the interpretation according to which the father's death is located within the year 1999. There is temporal expression, but it is important to note that the expressed time is used to contain a happening that is expressed by the matrix verb. In *His father died in 1999*, this happening is expressed through the M-intransitive verb *died*. Even if the information conveyed by the prepositional phrase *in 1999* contributes to the meaning of the core, its use is not essential. In addition to specific parts of the day, *in* can be used with periods such as the week, the month, the year, and the season. In doing so, *in* indicates the location of different events inside these periods.

The difference in interpretation between *on time* and *in time* is helpful in suggesting that if *on* is used to signal specific times, *in* is chiefly used with longer periods. As is already said, *on time* means *exactly a specific time*, whereas *in time* is not specific, it rather relates to a longer period than *on time*. With the use of *in time*, the speaker indicates that there is "a comfortable margin" (Thomson & Martinet, 1986, p. 66), which means that something does occur before the arranged time. In English, it is also possible to use *in* to relate to the happening of something in no more than a particular indicated total of time. This is what occurs in an example like *The President will arrive in ten minutes* in which the hearer is told that the arrival will happen in not more than *ten minutes* that is here the particular indicated total of time; it means that the arrival will happen *in ten minutes* from the time of speaking.

The preposition *at* is used to indicate a point in space or in time. When it is about saying that such and such an event happens at a specific point in time, in English, speakers tend to use the preposition *at*. In *They have class at 3*, the phrasal adjunct *at 3* gives temporal information that is additional to the core information. In doing so, the preposition *at* that heads the phrasal adjunct signals that 3 is considered to be a point in time; here, this is a point of the day, more precisely an hour that is a particular point on the clock. *At* can also be used when it is about relating to other specific points of the day like *noon, midday, night, and midnight*. Being a particular point of the week, the weekend also can appear in a prepositional phrase headed by *at*.

English also uses the preposition *on* to locate an element on a specific day of the week. This preposition is also found in English constructions where it indicates a specific moment that is associated with a

date. English prepositional phrases expressing temporal information can also be realized in the left-detached position as well. Unlike *on*, the preposition *in* refers to a length of time in which something or an event is located; the referred period of time can be longer or shorter than the day. *In* is then used to place happenings in specific times or part of the day, with periods such as the week, the month, the year, and the season. English speakers tend to use the preposition *at*, when it is about relating such and such an event to a specific point in time. *At* can also be used when it is about locating items at other specific points of the day like *noon, midday, night, and midnight*. Let us now turn to the case of Mandinka by analyzing the examples below before identifying the similarities and differences between the two languages.

(4) a. A ko a be í la kod-óo jóo la le ñiŋ tili ful-óo kóno.

3SG say 3SG COPV 2SG GEN money-DEF pay OBL FOCM DEM day two-DEF in

He/She said that he/she will pay back your money in these days.

b. Moo jamaa le wulu-ta ñiŋ saŋ kóno.

Person many FOCM born-PF.POS DEM year in

Many people were born in this year.

c. Ali ŋ ná beŋ-o loo talaat-óo káj.

2PL IPL PF.POS meeting-DEF fix Tuesday-DEF on

Let us fix the meeting on Tuesday.

In Mandinka, the postposition *kóno* is used to indicate the happening of something in no more than a particular amount of time. In (4a), the use of *kóno* in the postpositional phrase *ñiŋ tili fulóo kóno* (In these two days) signals that the action of *jóo* (paying back) will occur in two days, but not more, if we rely on the utterance that has been produced.

*Kóno* is also used to locate a happening or an event within periods of time such as *lookúŋ* (week), *kari* (month), *saŋ* (year), *sanjaani* (harvest season), *tilinkandi* (dry season), etc. As such, in *Moo jamaa le wuluta ñiŋ saŋ kóno*, the phrasal adjunct *ñiŋ saŋ kóno* includes the postposition *kóno*, the head that licenses the argument *saŋ*, that helps locate what is denoted by the matrix verb *wuluta* that signals at the same time that the subject core argument *Moo jamaa* is a Macrorole that is interpreted as Undergoer. To locate events in periods of time such as *kunúŋ* (yesterday), *bíi* (today), *sáama* (tomorrow), *somandaa* (in the morning), *wulaaróo* (in the afternoon or evening), Mandinka does not generally use postpositions. This can be seen in examples like *I ye dookuwo ké somandaa le* (They worked in the morning), *I júuta wulaaróo le* (They stopped working in the afternoon), and so forth. The only element whose occurrence is noticeable in these

types of constructions is the focus marker *le* that is placed sentence finally.

In Mandinka, the postposition *káj* can exceptionally co-occur with the verb *loo* (fix) to locate events in periods of time such as the points of the day (somandaa, wulaaróo, súutoo, etc.), the days of the week, the week, the months of the year, the year, etc. In doing so, the use of *káj* indicates that the period in use is considered to be a point in time. In an example like *Ali η ná beŋo loo talaatóo káj*, *káj* is used to indicate that *talaatóo*, a day of the week, is looked upon as a point in time. In such kinds of constructions, the realization of the *káj* postpositional phrase is obligatory inasmuch as it is licensed by the main verb *loo*. Accordingly, it contributes essential temporal information to the general meaning of the core.

In a nutshell, the postposition *kóno* is used to indicate the happening of something in no more than a particular amount of time. The postposition *kóno* can also be used to locate a happening or an event in periods of time such as *lookúŋ* (week), *kari* (month), *saŋ* (year), *sanjaani* (harvest season), *tilinkandi* (dry season), etc. Mandinka speakers do not normally use postpositions to locate events within periods of time such as *kunúŋ* (yesterday), *bíi* (today), *sáama* (tomorrow), *somandaa* (in the morning), *wulaaróo* (in the afternoon or evening). In general, Mandinka does not seem to use the postpositions *káj* and *to* to locate happenings in periods of time. The postposition *káj* can exceptionally co-occur with the verb *loo* (fix) to place events in periods of time such as the points of the day (somandaa, wulaaróo, súutoo, etc.), the days of the week, the week, the months of the year, the year, etc.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In short, there are similarities and differences between the use of the *on*, *in*, and *at* prepositional phrases in English and the *káj*, *kóno*, and *to* postpositional phrases in Mandinka. Depending on the logical structure of verbs, both English and Mandinka adpositional phrases appear in predicative and non-predicative forms. This means that when they are predicative, they can be labeled as simple phrasal adjuncts that modify the core by adding optional information to it, whereas when they are non-predicative, they are adjunct arguments that are licensed by the matrix verb. In the first case, they pertain to the core, whereas in the second one, they belong to the periphery. With most verbs of the two languages, the choice about locative adpositions is open insofar as it may be done between *on*, *at*, *in*, in English, and *káj*, *kóno*, *to*, in Mandinka according to the situation or the speaker's viewpoint about the reference point and the element that is being located spatially.

The locative adpositions *on* and *káj* are logically used to indicate the place of an element on the outer or top part of another element that can serve as a

reference point. It has been demonstrated that the English *on* prepositional phrase can appear in the pre-core slot, whereas this is impossible in Mandinka that usually places its postpositional phrases in the sentence final position. The *in* and *kóno* adpositions are used for containment. In constructions whose illocutionary force signals declarative, the *on*, *in*, and *at* peripheral prepositional phrases can also be realized in the left-detached position for some focal grounds, whereas Mandinka does not allow such a realization with its postpositional phrases. The adpositions *at* and *to* are realized to help locate elements at precise points in space. The use of the *on*, *in*, *at* and *káj*, *kóno*, *to* adpositional phrases with most action verbs is somewhat different from what happens with the use of the English and Mandinka locative copular verb *be* and *be* (or *bi*). With such copular verbs, it is the referent of the core argument subject that is mainly located, whereas with most action verbs, both the referent of the subject core argument and the action itself can be located vis-à-vis the reference point. In the two languages, the copular verbs *be* and *be* (or *bi*) license the locative adpositional phrases.

As far as the expression of temporal information is concerned, English also uses the preposition *on* to locate an element on a specific day of the week or to indicate the association of a specific moment and a date. Mandinka does not normally use its postposition *káj* to locate events in time. The only exception is when *káj* co-occurs with the verb *loo* (fix) to place events in periods of time such as the points of the day (somandaa, wulaaróo, súutoo, etc.), the days of the week, the week, the months of the year, the year, etc. Unlike English, Mandinka does not use *to* (the counterpart of *at*) for the location of elements at specific points in time. Like the English preposition *in*, the Mandinka postposition *kóno* also is used to indicate the happening of something in no more than a particular amount of time. Equally, the postposition *kóno* can also be used to locate a happening or an event in periods of time such as *lookúŋ* (week), *kari* (month), *saŋ* (year), *sanjaani* (harvest season), *tilinkandi* (dry season), etc. The six adpositions that have been under consideration are generally used to express some temporal and spatial information in the two languages, but they may also occur in some constructions for some other grammatical purposes.

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