

Interactional foundations of grammar: Mano relatives clauses as a result of pragmatic cooptation of a topic-comment construction

In Mano (Southern Mande), the marker *lé* can be used in a strikingly large and seemingly contradictory set of contexts, including as a demonstrative predicator, as a focus marker, as a topic marker and as a relativizer. In this talk, I address the polysemy of the marker by drawing functional connections between all the usages. I follow the tradition of usage-based approach to language and in particular on conversation analysis by presenting the usages of *lé* as a *family of constructions*. As a result, I do not treat Mano relative clauses as a construction type in itself, but rather as a pragmatic cooptation of a topic-comment construction. Finally, I reflect on the invariant function of *lé* in all the construction subtypes involved. I characterize it as that of *attention-drawing* and discuss whether, and how, such analysis can be supported by the data.