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When Linguists and Speakers Do Not Agree: The Endangered Grammar of Verbal Art in West Africa

Across Africa, linguistic techniques that are closely associated with traditional genres are vulnerable to changes in traditional habits, and often become extinct long before the language is recognized as endangered. Their loss accounts for the discrepancy between professional linguist's assessment and the speakers' perception of the vitality of the language. The study discusses an array of endangered storytelling strategies accumulated by Wan (Mande; Côte d'Ivoire) in response to the needs of traditional narrative performance. Such strategies include morphosyntactic means that allow the storyteller to manage a complex narrative without resorting to explicit lexical encoding or multiplying the number of sentences. [African languages, verbal art, language endangerment, performance, narrative]

Introduction

Recent decades have seen an upsurge of interest in issues of language extinction, leading to increased efforts to describe and document the world's endangered languages.[1] Research on language endangerment has focused largely on the ways languages *compete* for speakers, as most widely known cases of language loss are due to speakers shifting from one language to another (Grenoble and Whaley 2006; Grenoble 2011).[2] Evaluation of language vitality and hence of the urgency of documenting particular languages has been shaped to a large extent by this notion of linguistic competition.[3] Among the most important criteria that are widely used are the absolute number of speakers; the proportion of speakers within the total population (as opposed to speakers of a potentially threatening language); and whether or not the language is being transmitted from one generation to the next (i.e. whether or not another language is gaining ground among the new generation at the expense of the endangered one). Other criteria recognized as contributing to language loss include shifts in domains of language use, which directly affect transmission to the next generation (e.g., a dominant language replaces the endangered one in school education); response to new domains and media (e.g., a dominant language, rather than the endangered one, is used in radio broadcasts); and availability of materials for language education and literacy (Fishman 1991; UNESCO 2003; Krauss 2007, among other classifications of endangerment situations; also Grenoble and Whaley 1998).

In spite of linguists' increasing attention to the formal assessment of language vitality, the criteria-based approach suffers from several shortcomings. One of the most urgent problems, and the one I explore in this study, is the discrepancy between

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the professional assessment by linguists and the views shared by the local community of language users. Linguists' assessment of language vitality and the need for documentation often fails to match that of the speakers (Leonard 2011). Many communities show no interest in documenting their endangered languages (Tsunoda 2006:160), while others express concern about losing their language long before that language qualifies as endangered by the linguists' criteria. Mismatches between professional assessment and native speaker perceptions put into question the adequacy of the current approach to language documentation (Hill 2002 and the commentary; Rice 2009; Kroskrity 2009).[4] They suggest that speakers' view of their language and its most valuable aspects may differ from a European linguist's notion of language as a combination of grammar and lexicon (Saussurean *langue*).[5] Understanding the sources of that difference may help linguists come to an agreement with speakers as to what should be documented and when is the right time to embark on a documentation project.

I address these questions by exploring attitudes to language endangerment among speakers of Wan, a Southeastern Mande language of central Côte d'Ivoire. Wan is relatively well off by all existing vitality measures, yet many of its speakers have a strong feeling of "losing" their language. I will argue that this apparent paradox is rooted in the special attitude to language shared by the community of Wan speakers: language is understood as traditional *ways of speaking*, and those can only be fully realized in specific communicative practices that are currently at the point of extinction. When such practices go out of use, the language is no longer regarded as properly transmitted to new generations; its creative potential is considered to be lost, and younger speakers are thought to acquire an incomplete, impoverished version of the language, stripped of much of its cultural value.[6] From this community's point of view, language loss starts long before any changes in language transmission can be detected based on linguists' criteria, and the threat does not come from another language.

The study is organized as follows. I first introduce the case of Wan as a curious combination of an objectively "healthy" sociolinguistic situation and exceedingly pessimistic perceptions voiced by speakers. I discuss centrality of the traditional narrative performance to the speakers' perception of linguistic competence. I then explore several grammatical phenomena that are perceived as endangered, focussing on morphosyntax broadly conceived, i.e. on means that allow the storyteller to manage a complex narrative without resorting to explicit lexical encoding or multiplying the number of sentences. Finally, I analyze two sample narratives to illustrate the use (or the non-use) of the strategies in question, and conclude the study with general discussion.

Naive Perception of Language Endangerment

Major approaches to language endangerment focus on everyday language use, and so do documentation efforts. Following a recent turn in theoretical linguistics to the study of language use, naturally occurring data has been favored over data derived from elicitation or introspection, quite in line with the Boasian tradition of placing texts at the center of linguistic and cultural studies (Carr and Meek 2013; Epps et al. 2017). The observation-based approach has contributed to recent shifts in language documentation practice: proper linguistic "documents" are now expected to include recordings of natural conversations, interviews or at least monologues produced spontaneously by speakers (Seifart 2008). Speakers of endangered languages, however, rarely share linguists' fascination with everyday speech, and they often do not see any use in documenting what from their point of view are careless, unprepared, and sometimes disfluent exchanges by ordinary speakers on mundane subjects. In many communities, language is valued not as a unique combination of vocabulary and grammatical features, but as the carrier of an oral tradition; it is that particular capacity of language that makes it worthy of documentation and study.

What such speakers strive to achieve is a better transmission to next generations not of the language as understood by a grammarian, but of particular linguistic practices and devices considered vital to such practices.

Even in those African communities that retain their traditional social organization and economy, modern Western cultural practices seep into daily life with new forms of entertainment (television, radio) and education (compulsory Western-style schooling). The extinction of indigenous forms of knowledge transmission—including techniques of storytelling and instruction—is accompanied by the loss of their associated linguistic strategies. Cultures without an established tradition of writing are sometimes viewed as particularly susceptible to shifts in discourse practice: without fixation, linguistically encoded knowledge "is always only one generation away from extinction" (Harrison 2007:147).[7] Recent changes in the life of rural West African communities mark precisely this shift in practices of textual production, and the case of Wan is rather typical in this respect. From the scholar's point of view, Wan is a well-preserved language; it is described as "vigorous" in the Ethnologue (Lewis et al. 2015), it is "stable" in terms of the classification proposed in Krauss (2007), and it sees no immediate threats from other languages spoken in the region.

Like many inhabitants of West African villages, speakers of Wan are normally multilingual: they may speak, with different degrees of proficiency, Jula, Guro, Baule and/or Mwan; knowledge of French is becoming common among the younger generations. Yet there is no systematic shift from Wan to any one of these languages, and none of these languages is currently considered to be culturally or economically dominant. In the rural setting, Wan still enjoys a somewhat privileged status of a ritual language associated with an influential mask cult that has been prominent enough to be borrowed by neighbouring ethnic groups. The Baule, for example, have been using Wan as their ritual language, and until recently practiced sending their children to work for Wan-speaking families in exchange for instruction in Wan.

More generally, Wan does not seem to have any systematic problems with language transmission. In terms of absolute numbers, it is gaining, rather than losing speakers.[8] In 1993, the number of speakers was reported as 22,000; it can be currently estimated as reaching 30,000, mostly due to demographic growth. In many villages, Wan is the most widely spoken language. There are also no observable shifts in domains of language use, and although Wan has never been used in radio broadcasting, it can be hardly described as seriously endangered by French. Finally, while educational materials are in general scarce in West Africa, an orthography has been developed for Wan by a local SIL branch, and their efforts in literacy promotion have produced a primary, a reading manual, and a small number of educators and Bible translators.[9] So with respect to availability of materials for education and literacy, Wan can also be described as gaining ground, rather than losing it.

In light of the positive recent developments, it is surprising that speakers of Wan express deep concern with the well-being of their language. The elderly in particular complain of Wan being lost and not transferred to new generations. On my first encounter of such complaints, I dismissed them as part of traditional nostalgic talk about constant deterioration of various aspects of life: diminishing harvests, changing climate, weakening connection to ancestral spirits (cf. Hill 1998; Cavanaugh 2004). It soon became clear, however, that the pessimistic views on language vitality persisted across generations, in a way that invited further study.

Only the elderly speakers claimed to be proficient in linguistic matters; they were ready to answer questions about the language and to engage in storytelling sessions. Younger speakers confessed feeling incompetent in language-related issues, and they did not seem to develop full competence as they grew older, at least in those 15 years that I observed the community. Linguistic competence was also perceived as largely independent of the speaker's social status; in fact, speakers of remote villages—including younger ones—were often expected to have better language skills, in spite of their illiteracy and lack of school education (and often in spite of their lack of explicit interest in traditional values).[10] Speakers' subjective feeling of linguistic

insecurity largely agreed with the community's assessment: to record "proper Wan," one had to contact an acknowledged proficient speaker or visit a remote village. This lack of confidence among speakers was particularly surprising in that it did not correlate with proficiency in any other language. Many young speakers only used Wan in their everyday interaction, and apparently had no problems communicating in Wan among themselves. Some of the older speakers, on the other hand, claimed to be proficient speakers, and were recognized as such, in spite of being multilingual.

The situation also seemed unusual given that normally, recognition of language loss by the community is delayed, and the problem does not become apparent to the speakers until normal transmission has already been interrupted (Dixon 1997:147; Bradley 2013:6).

Upon further investigation it became clear that what speakers meant by "proper Wan" differed significantly from a grammarian's concept of linguistic competence. Being able to support everyday conversation did not qualify one as a proficient speaker; to speak "proper Wan," one had to master specific linguistic strategies characteristic of traditional narrative performance. In the local community, language proficiency is assessed based on the speaker's storytelling ability, and it is the traditional way of performing a story that is perceived as endangered. The discourse of "language loss," or endangerment, reflects the noticeable decrease in the number of speakers mastering the traditional genres of narrative performance.[11]

Performances that did not fulfill the traditional genre's expectations were dismissed by more proficient speakers as "simplistic" and "ordinary"; one speaker, for example, described the modern ways of telling a story as "only suitable for small children" and "no longer capable of inspiring adults." The following analysis is based on discussions with speakers of transcripts of narratives told by more and less experienced storytellers.

The Function of Narrative Genres

The special value assigned to narrative genres is related to the ideological role the oral tradition plays in the life of Wan-speaking communities. Not only are stories told to amuse, entertain, and educate; some of the stories are invoked as evidence for the involvement of the Wan in shaping the area's history. Historical narratives are used to claim for the Wan a special status of local spiritual and political leaders, and to emphasize continuity between their past and present. They serve as essential instruments of fostering the speakers' ethnic and social identity and defining their relationship with the neighboring ethnic groups.

The special significance of historical narratives is reflected in the way storytelling sessions are organized. They begin with entertaining stories that are perceived as amusing and educational. Such stories normally end with a moralizing conclusion; they are intended primarily for children and younger adults. As the session progresses, stories become more complex and serious; they no longer need to be amusing, and they often lack a moralizing component. A session may end with historical narratives. These must be told by an elderly speaker with enough auhority to report and interpret historical events involving legendary ancestors. Many middle-aged speakers that I approached would not agree to tell a historical narrative citing their lack of authority and not being capable of doing it properly. The same speakers would often feel confident enough to tell other kinds of story, including aitiological ones.

The oral tradition assumes special importance in light of the overall scarcity of material evidence for the long-term presence of the Wan in the area. The Wan seem to have arrived in the area relatively recently, together with other ethnic groups (Ravenhill 1978), and their physical environment does not yet bear strong symbolic associations with their presence. There are few memorial sites associated with the history of the Wan, and burial sites predating the most recent move are no longer in use. The recent migration has thus contributed to the group's need to assert their

ethnic identity and to affirm their connection to their present-day territory. That need was reinforced by the way the Wan were treated by the colonial administration: they were not recognized as an ethnic group in its own right, and were assigned to two different administrative districts. The two districts were dominated by populations that spoke different languages, roughly corresponding to the dialectal division: speakers of the Ken dialect found themselves attached to the Baoule-dominant Beoumi district, while speakers of the Mia dialect were mostly assigned to the Dyula-dominated district of Mankono. The ethnic identity of Wan speakers is constantly questioned by their neighbors, and the group's unity is also put into question by speakers of Wan themselves in discussions of dialectal differences: the Ken describe the Mia as "Dyula," while the Mia mock the Ken for being "Baule."

Traditional narratives are used to argue that the Wan are an ancient ethnic group in its own right. They report the arrival of ancestors of the Wan in the area where they are now settled. They are also used to support claims for political power that go beyond the local context; for example, the oral tradition recounts the deeds of the ancestor hero in the course of the war between colonial forces and Samori Toure which impacted the entire region at the end of the 19th century.

The Wan have been borrowing extensively from their neighbors, and some of their own cultural practices have been subject to considerable influence. In some cases, the origin of a particular cultural element is hard to establish and is hotly debated. The famous Goli mask cult, for example, had been borrowed from the Wan by the neighboring Baule and Guro, but became widely associated with the Baule both within and outside the area (Ravenhill 1978). A major argument in debates concerning the cult's origin is the account of the mask's aquisition by the Wan, as preserved in their oral tradition.

To summarize, the special significance of the Wan oral tradition derives from its ideological function. As the only available records of Wan history, traditional narratives play a crucial role in fostering the speakers' ethnic identity. They can only be told by select members of the community, and the way they are told is subject to special aesthetic evaluation according to the standards of virtuoso performance. While historical narratives are in this sense the essence of the oral tradition, the same standards are relevant for the performance of other traditional stories, albeit they are not as strictly enforced in the case of entertaining or didactic stories.

In what follows I discuss some characteristic properties of Wan storytelling. Some of them are associated with different storytelling traditions across West Africa; their areal distribution corresponds to the use of a popular type of interactive narrative performance. In this traditional performance, the story is presented by one or several speakers who constantly switch roles between the narrator, the story's characters, and the actual speaker addressing the audience (corresponding to changes in footing in the sense of Goffman 1979). The performance presupposes active interaction with the audience: the speaker addresses the audience with questions, remarks and requests for supporting statements ("Am I not telling the truth?"); in some cases the audience functions as a chorus singing the story's song along with or for the speaker (see below). The linguistic devices that are descibed below are essential to such performance: they help the speaker set the story in time and space, animate the story's characters, and switch between the multiple roles the speaker assumes during the performance.

The Grammar of Narrative Performance

To explore the grammar of storytelling, I used story performances recorded during my fieldwork in the village of Kounahiri in 2001, and the recordings made by Philip L. Ravenhill in the early 1970s (1973/1974). I transcribed and analyzed the recordings together with native speakers, who admitted having only passive knowledge of some of the grammatical strategies represented in the recordings. The strategies that are presented below are only a sample; its only purpose is to illustrate how narrative

performance employs, in some cultures, special grammatical means that are largely absent from ordinary talk.

The Use of Ideophones

The phenomenon that is perhaps most commonly recognized as a distinctly "African" oral feature is the use of ideophones, or intensifying words that represent, rather than describe, events and qualities. In many languages, ideophones form a lexical class on their own: their syntactic behavior is distinct from that of both verbs and interjections, their morphology is reduced or defective, and their phonology differs from that of other words. From the semantic point of view, ideophones are characterized by indexicality: unlike regular predicates, which refer to event types or generalized properties, ideophones point directly to individual instances of events and entities (Nikitina 2012d).

Ideophones rarely survive in written texts (except in stylized character speech). In narrative performance they are typically accompanied by gestures that help the storyteller represent the event or an object's property even more vividly (Finnegan 1970:384; Voeltz et al. 2001). Cross-linguistic differences in frequency notwithstanding, ideophones thrive in genres involving elements of performance (Finnegan 2007:45). In Wan, too, they are an essential property of traditional narration.

Ideophones help describe events in ways that are alternative to the canonical clause strucure: unlike regular clausal and nominal constructions, which predicate events or qualities of entities, ideophones allow the storyteller to represent the entire situation using one word, often accompanied by gesture. Thus, in (1), the ideophone represents a peculiar type of falling that is followed by rolling. Unlike adverbs, the ideophone is separated intonationally from the clause, and it can be used on its own to represent the entire situation of falling (see below for further examples).

(1) *è* *sīā:* *rììgòŋ!*
3SG fell IDPH
'He fell and rolled awkwardly.'

In narrative performance, ideophones are indispensable. They are, however, rarely found in stories told by urban speakers, and hardly appear in ordinary talk (Childs 1996). In the few hours of recorded performances I encountered more ideophones than in the previous years of analyzing everyday discourse. Younger speakers admitted having only a passive knowledge of some of the ideophones, and a number of ideophones from Ravenhill's older recordings were completely unknown to them. More generally, the use of ideophones in African languages has been declining due to ongoing shifts in the modes of textual production.[12]

Special Discourse Reporting Strategies: Logophoricity

In narrative performance typical of West Africa, the storyteller not only acts as the narrator and animates the story's characters—he or she is also expected to interact actively with the audience. The audience may be invited to share remarks, offer praise or even participate in the performance of certain episodes; the audience may interrupt or even ridicule the narrator. In the course of this interaction, the narrator faces the task of switching between multiple discourse roles and juggles a variety of distinct voices which in modern European theater would be assigned to different actors (Goffman 1974:519–520; Urban 1989). Many African languages offer their speakers a tool that responds directly to the needs of such intermittent switching of roles: the *logophoric* strategy of discourse reporting (Nikitina 2012b).

Logophoric reports serve to distinguish the discourse of characters from that of the narrator; they are used for embedding evaluation and introducing different "voices"

(Hill 1995). Logophoric reports involve the use of special pronouns, which signal reference to the character whose discourse is being reported. In (2a), the logophoric pronoun refers to the person to whom the discourse is attributed; in (2b), a third-person pronoun obligatorily refers to a participant other than the reported speaker.[13]

(2) a. *bé à nɔ̰ gé* ***bā*** *bé gòmɔ̰*
then 3SG wife said LOG that understood
'Then his wife said she$_{LOG}$ understood that.'

b. *bé à nɔ̰ gé* ***è*** *gā*
then 3SG wife said 3SG went
'Then his wife said he$_{PERS}$ left.'

Logophoric reports differ from both direct and indirect discourse as represented in modern European languages. On the one hand, they do not quote the reported discourse in its original form (a direct report would be expected to feature a first person pronoun, not a logophoric marker). On the other hand, the logophoric pronoun is often the only feature consistent with an indirect discourse interpretation; all other deictic features—including other person values—are defined with respect to the reported speech situation (Roncador 1988:290–293, 1992; Stirling 1993:256–257; Nikitina 2012c). The examples in (3a–e) illustrate the "direct discourse-like" features of logophoric clauses, such as the use of interjections (3a), ideophones and vocatives (3b), imperatives (3c), and—most significantly—the obligatory use of second-person pronouns to refer to the reported addressee (3b–d) and the obligatory use of first-person plural pronouns to refer to groups of participants including the reported speaker (3e). Note that logophoric reports need not be introduced by an overt verb of speaking; they can function as independent clauses which are only attributed to a character based on contextual information (Dimmendaal 2001).

(3) a. *bé è gé ēé! báā bɔ̄ á dīdīą̰ yą́*
then 3SG said yeah LOG.EMPH passed COP just.now there
'And he said: yes, it was me$_{LOG}$ who passed by just now.'

b. *dègbè, mɔ̰-mū é, ą̀ą́ tí dé! Ké lāá*
friend people-PL DEF 3PL+COP many IDPH if 2SG+COP
nè, bāá nɛ̰ ɔ̰, srɔ̀!
at.place LOG+COP at.place NEG IDPH
'Man, those people, they're many! [Even] if you're [staying] here, I$_{LOG}$ am not [staying] here.'

c. *ké lā zò-á bā biàgà nɛ̰, zɛ̄ zānā̰ dì!*
if 2SG come-STAT.PERF LOG wake PURP word true say
'If you've come to wake me$_{LOG}$ up, tell the truth!'

d. *è gé zò bé lā bā pólì*
3SG said come then 2SG LOG wash
'She said: come and wash me$_{LOG}$.'

e. *bé bā nā̰ kàà wò á yā̰ ēē ?*
then LOG mother 1PL+COP do FOC how EXCL+Q
'And [he said]: 'My$_{LOG}$ mother, how shall we act?'

Systematic mixing of "direct" and "indirect" deictic values is a common feature of logophoric reports across West and Central Africa (Hagège 1974; Hedinger 1984; Boyeldieu 2004). The regularity of that mixing sets logophoric reporting apart from occasional direct/indirect "hybrids" of European literary genres, such as the free indirect discourse of modern European novel (Banfield 1973; Plank 1986; Günthner 2000; Aikhenvald 2008). Unlike the stylistically motivated, occasional deictic shifts, West African logophoric reporting is often obligatory, involves a seemingly

inconsistent treatment of the same deictic value (person) rather than of different values, and is in general not associated with any stylistic effects (Nikitina 2012b).

The distribution of logophoric reporting in narrative performance suggests that its primary function consists in distinguishing self-reference by the storyteller (the *animator*, encoded by the first-person pronoun) from self-reference by the story's characters (typically encoded by specialized logophoric markers). Logophoric pronouns do not normally refer to the current speaker, even in cases where the speaker reports on his or her own discourse. Only first-person reference is acceptable in (4), and the same restriction is found in most other logophoric languages (Hyman and Comrie 1981; Wiesemann 1986; Curnow 2002:11; Roncador 1992:166).

(4) a. *ŋ̀ gé nə̀ə̀ gà lé*
1SG said 1SG+COP go PROG
'I said I_{PERS} am going.'

b. **ŋ̀ gé ɓāá gà lé*
1SG said LOG+COP go PROG
'I said I_{LOG}'m going.'

Since logophoric pronouns cannot refer to the storyteller, they unambiguously attribute the report to a story's character, even in a one-man performance. Neither a verb of speaking nor a special quotative marker is required to introduce characters' speech ("He said … Then she said …"). The storyteller can instead jump into a logophoric report without an explicit introduction, as in (5), where the report starts on the second line, and a logophoric pronoun appears in the third:

(5) *ɓé è àà tālí kɔ̄lē é dī ē lɔ̄ ságlā.*
then 3SG 3SG.ALN stranger man DEF cow DEF eat started
'Then he [the hyena] started to eat the cow of his [the hare's] guest.'

á gɛ̄! pɔ̄ á lāā dī é tɛ̄ á gɛ̄! <…>
that here.is thing that 2SG.ALN cow DEF killed that here.is
[Hare speaking:] 'Here it is! Here's what killed your cow!'

*lā zɛ̄ bò **ɓā** tā á!*
2SG affair leave LOG on NEG
'Don't blame me_{LOG}!' (lit., 'Do not leave the affair on me_{LOG}.')

Logophoric reporting often coexists with direct reporting, and the storyteller may switch from one to the other within the same stretch of reported discourse. Notably, logophoric reporting appears precisely in those parts of the narrative where the storyteller's persona comes dangerously close to that of the story's characters; for example, in cases where the storyteller claims to have directly participated in the events that are being reported (Nikitina 2012b).

The principles of discourse reporting in Wan differ in important ways from those underlying the distinction between direct and indirect discourse in European languages. A speaker of Wan has no means of representing an utterance from his or her own perspective through a consistent shift in deictic values (as in European indirect speech). Instead, logophoric reporting can be used to explicitly mark a stretch of discourse as attributed to another person. This grammatical strategy allows the performer to explore multiple discourse roles and to mediate between the different voices he is animating.

Special discourse reporting strategies are commonly used in narrative performance, and they become endangered when occasions for such performance become rare. Logophoric reports are replaced with European-style indirect discourse in excerpts from an unfinished Bible translation into Wan. New generations of speakers

are considered unable to act out characters properly—due in part to their only partial competence in logophoric reporting.

The Use of Demonstratives with Fixed References

One of the major challenges any storyteller faces is dealing with multiple characters. Unlike readers of a written text, the audience of a performance has no opportunity to take extra time to reflect on who did what to whom. The storyteller is responsible for keeping all characters distinct throughout the story, including the story's culmination moments, which—in the Wan tradition—do not tolerate verbosity. Much-valued skills of an experienced storyteller include the mastery of special tools that can be used to track multiple referents without resorting to full lexical noun phrases. One of the major techniques serving that purpose in Wan is the use of demonstratives with fixed reference.

In other languages where demonstratives help track referents, their use is determined by discourse factors such as topicality, accessibility or activation state, distance to previous mention, etc. (Himmelmann 1996:226–229). In narratives, such demonstratives can have an anaphoric function, referring back to a previous referent if certain conditions are met with respect to the antecedent noun phrase's definiteness, discourse prominence, etc. (Diessel 1999:95–105). Speakers of Wan employ demonstratives in a very different function. In narrative performance, the reference of demonstrative pronouns remains fixed throughout long stretches of discourse, and their use does not depend on contextual factors. The story's protagonist is consistently referred to by third-person pronouns. The story's secondary participants are referred to by demonstratives. Unusually for a demonstrative, it does not matter which of the characters was mentioned last or which one was the topic of the previous clause; the demonstrative's reference only changes between episodes, as secondary participants change. Functionally similar strategies are attested in related languages, even though they have not received much attention (Perekhvalskaya 2016).

Example (6) illustrates the alternating use of personal and demonstrative pronouns (in bold); the personal pronouns refer to a young male hornbill, and the demonstratives point to his mother-in-law. The reference remains constant independent of the distance to the character's prior mention or the pronoun's grammatical function. In this particular excerpt, the contrast between demonstratives and third person pronouns is the only clue—in the absence of gender-sensitive pronouns—for distinguishing between the story's protagonist and the secondary character.

(6) *ké* *[**ɓé** yrē* *kɛ̄* *é* *kɛ̄* *mą́* *mɔ̰̄],* *ɓé* *gà* *é*
DEICT.SHIFT that work this DEF gave to PRT that go CNV
dō *mɔ̰̄,* *ké* ***è*** *ŋ* *bò* *préŋ!*
one PRT DEICT.SHIFT 3SG PERF finish IDPH
'And **she$_{\text{DEM}}$** gave him that work, then when **she$_{\text{DEM}}$** once went [to the field] – **he$_{\text{PERS}}$** had already finished, preng!'

ké ***è*** ***ɓé*** *éŋ* *mɔ̰̄* *yą́* *gɛ̄,* *parce-que* ***ɓé***
DEICT.SHIFT 3SG that voice heard here PRT because that
á *zò* *lé* *cɔ̰̄ŋ,* *sá* *gɛ̄,* *ɓé* ***ɓé*** *é* *dīnɑ̰̄*
COP come PROG far.away there PRT then that REFL stopped
wānɛ̀ *ńcè* *ōó* *ńcè,*
there greetings! CNJ greetings!
'[for] **he$_{\text{PERS}}$** had heard **her$_{\text{DEM}}$** voice there, since **she$_{\text{DEM}}$** comes from far away there, then **she$_{\text{DEM}}$** stops down there: greetings-oh-greetings!'

ɓé ***è*** *lāá* *é* *kɑ̰̄ŋ* *mū* *é* *yrō* *blèyā,* *ɓé* *ą̰*
then 3SG SUBJ>OBJ REFL hair PL DEF called quickly then 3PL
zò *klà* ***à*** *mì*
PROSP put 3SG at
'then **he$_{\text{PERS}}$** quickly calls his hair, in order for them to place themselves [back] on **him$_{\text{PERS}}$**'

The use of demonstratives with fixed reference is an effective tool that allows speakers to tell long stories without repeatedly naming participants. Efficient reference-tracking strategies are in high demand in narrative performance, yet inexperienced storytellers do not feel at ease using demonstratives consistently in this function. They are commonly ridiculed for being unable to explain properly who did what to whom.

Deictic Shift Markers

Another strategy that is essential to narrative performance serves to establish temporal relations between events. Unlike European languages, Wan disprefers lexical encoding of temporal relations. It has no clause-joining markers that could encode specific types of temporal relation, such as English *while* or *since*. To indicate such relationship, speakers deploy combinations of temporal and aspectual forms, and a special *deictic shift marke*r (Nikitina 2007).

When used in isolation, aspectual forms of Wan describe states that are current at the moment of speaking: the perfect describes states that result from an earlier event (7a), the progressive describes events that are ongoing at the time of speaking (7b), and the prospective describes preparatory states that are expected to result in an event (7c).

(7) a. *è ŋ̀ gà*
3SG PERF go
'He has left.'

b. *yàá pɔ̄ lɔ̄ lé*
3SG+COP thing eat PROG
'He is [presently] eating.'

c. *è zòŋ̀ gà-ŋ*
3SG PROSP go-PROSP
'He is about to leave.'

Crucially, all these states are obligatorily associated with the moment of speaking, and past tense auxiliaries must be used to relate a state to a moment in the past (8a,b).

(8) a. *è bī pɔ̄ lɔ̄ lé*
3SG PAST thing eat PROG
'He was eating [at that point].'

b. *è bī zòŋ̀ gà-ŋ*
3SG PAST PROSP go-PROSP
'He was [then] about to depart.'

In narrative performance, aspectual constructions rarely appear in isolation. They tend to be anchored to other clauses by two types of interclausal connector. Sometimes, aspectual constructions are linked to a preceding form by a general-purpose connector 'then, and', as in (9); such constructions must be independently tensed, i.e. they must be of the type introduced in (8) above.

(9) *Yōlɛ̄ bō pɔ̄ trɔ́ yā* ***ɓé*** *è bī̄ lālɛ̄ glà lé*
Y. finished thing pound PPS then 3SG PAST song take PROG
'Yole finished pounding and was singing.'

More often, aspectual constructions do not combine with a past tense marker, in spite of describing a state in the past. Instead, they are anchored to the reference time of the preceding clause, and this relationship is signaled by a special deictic shift marker. The marker points to shifted temporal reference: instead of being interpreted

relative to the moment of speaking, the clause is interpreted relative to a previously established reference time.

In (10a), the perfect construction is anchored to a clause in the past tense, and the state of the animals being absent (as a result of departing) is interpreted relative to the time of the hare's arrival, not relative to the time of speaking. The event of the second clause (the animals' departure) is understood as preceding the event of the first clause (the hare's arrival). In (10b), a similar shift is associated with the progressive: the ongoing process of scratching characterizes the time established by a preceding adverbial phrase ('at that time'), and the interpretation of the progressive is shifted into the past (since 'that time' refers to events described in preceding clauses by past tense forms).

(10) a. *è zō ké à ŋ gà*
3SG came DEICT.SHIFT 3PL PERF go
'When he [the hare] came, they [the animals] were [already] gone.'

b. *wātí kɛ̄ ē gó ké yàá kàgà lé mì yą́*
time this DEF in DEICT.SHIFT 3SG+COP scratch PROG at here
'At that time, he was [all] scratching'

The strategy of using aspectual forms with a shifted deictic center is extremely popular in narrative performance. Not only does it allow the speaker to encode temporal relations between events without resorting to explicit lexical markers such as 'after' or 'while'—it also renders narration more vivid by actualizing the time of events as the temporal deictic center (the "now" of narration).[14] Similar deictic shift markers are attested in other West African languages (Bearth 1971, 1986), yet their use is largely restricted to oral narratives.

Deictic shift markers provide the speaker with a convenient way of departing from the iconic ordering of events without explicitly describing temporal relations. For example, the excerpt in (6), repeated below (partially) as (11), illustrates two rather typical uses of the deictic shift marker. In the first sentence, the marker signals the reversal of iconic event ordering, which produces the mirative effect when the story's protagonist witnesses the results of an utterly unexpected event: 'when she once went to the field—he had [already] finished, preng!'[15] In the second sentence, the same marker introduces the event's cause: '[for] he had heard her voice'; here, again, the deictic shift marker participates in the encoding of an event sequence that departs from the iconic ordering.

(11) *bé gà é dō mɔ̄, **ké** **è** ŋ bò préŋ!*
that go CNV one PRT DEICT.SHIFT 3SG PERF finish IDPH
'then when she$_{DEM}$ once went [to the field]—he$_{PERS}$ had already finished, preng!'

ké *é bé éŋ mɔ̄ yą́ gɛ̄*
DEICT.SHIFT 3SG that voice heard here PRT
'[for] he$_{PERS}$ had heard her$_{DEM}$ voice there. . .'

Speakers who have not been sufficiently exposed to traditional storytelling often avoid using deictic shift markers; they tend to use constructions with temporal postpositions ('after', 'before') or to simply omit the dectic shift marker.

Constituent Insertion and Repetition

The last type of construction considered here involves a complex pattern of left-dislocation, which is often associated with the major relativization strategy of Mande languages, the construction with correlative clauses (Creissels 2009; Nikitina 2012a). From the European perspective, the structure in (12) may appear to involve a

disfluency; speakers of Wan, however, accept it as a construction that does not need to be corrected in the context of oral discourse.

(12) *ɓé à gɛ̄ pɔ̄ kɛ̄ é, ɓé pɔ̄ kɛ̄ é, à̰ gɛ̄*
then 3PL COP thing this DEF that thing this DEF 3PL COP
blèkɔ́ lé ɓé klā, ɓé à̰ ɓé kɛ̄ à̰ mą́ yą́ gɛ̄
run PROG that after then 3PL that gave 3PL to here PRT
'And they gave them that thing that they were running after.'
(Literally, 'And they—the thing, that thing—they're running after it—then they gave it to them there.')

The construction involves multiple dislocated constituents, some of which correspond to pronouns in their original loci. First of all, the noun phrase 'that thing, that very thing' appears in a topic position between the subject noun phrase and the verb phrase; the subject and the auxiliary are later repeated, to maintain syntactic continuity (they can also be omitted). Second, a demonstrative pronoun introduced by a postposition refers back to the topicalized noun phrase ('that thing, they were running after that'). Thirdly, another demonstrative refers back to the same constituent from the following clause ('they gave them that').

The entire construction is a variation on the standard structure of a Southeastern Mande correlative clause (see 13). Such clauses are themselves rather complex, and are rarely encountered in ordinary talk.

(13) *ɓé à dè gé [kɔ̄lɛ̄ kɛ̄ é gɛ̄ ɓāā bā é*
then 3SG father said man this DEF COP LOG.ALN field DEF
ɔ́-ŋ élì dō], ɓāá ɓā nùŋ é kɛ́-ŋ ɓéè mą́
finish-PROSP day one LOG+COP LOG daughter DEF give-PROSP that:EMP to
'And her father said: I'm going to give my daughter [only] to the man that is going to finish [cultivating] my field in one day.'
(Literally, 'And her father said: this man is going to finish my_{LOG} field in one day, I_{LOG} am going to give my_{LOG} daughter to him_{FOCUS}').

Constructions with insertions and repetitions (like 12) and syntactically complex constructions in general (like 13) abound in oral performance, where the storyteller is challenged with the task of managing information structure of high complexity, under real-time pressure. Constructions with sophisticated syntax serve precisely that purpose: dislocated constituents reflect high proportions of topicalization, focalization, relativization, and other complex information-structure relations manipulated by the storyteller.[16] They rarely make their way into ordinary conversation.

Analysis of Two Sample Narratives

A Skillful Performance

The phenomena discussed in the previous section are illustrated below with an example of a folktale; readers who are not interested in the analysis of this example are invited to skip this section. The folktale was performed by one of the elders of the village of Kounahiri, a relative of the local chief and a competent storyteller. He had lived in the area all his life, with only brief stays outside the village. A traditional farmer, he was also known to be a traditional healer and fortune-teller, and believed to be one of the few who could still understand "Ancient Wan," an archaizing variety of speech considered to represent an older version of the language.

Although the story does not report historical events, it conforms to the standards of narrative performance, and the performance was positively evaluated by the audience. The audience participated in the performance by singing along (and by filling in some of the lines), laughing, nodding, and otherwise expressing their shared

emotional response. When consulted, both elderly and younger speakers expressed appreciation for the way the narrative was told.[17]

The story was selected from many others due to its short size, hence some of the phenomena addressed above are only represented in it by one or a few examples. It starts with a song, sung by the narrator together with the audience. This structure is typical of Wan folktales, and every folktale is normally associated with a particular song. The same song is repeated several times throughout the story. It is usually attributed to a particular character, and is typically uninterpretable. After the song, an opening line follows, announcing that the story has some significance. Stories end with a short moralizing conclusion, followed by an end-marking phrase such as "That's it."

The story tells how people started using pistachios. The song represents a sort of a military march accompanying the pistachios' invasion of villages. After providing a general setting (explaining how people used to fear pistachios), the narrator introduces the story's main character—a sick child who cannot flee. The story culminates in a battle that turns the pistachios into sauce. In conclusion, the audience is reminded of the story's aitiological significance: the specific event "explains" the actual state of affairs, deriving the entity's current mode of existence (the pistachios' edibility) from an assumed earlier exclusion from culture.

In the story's transcription, linguistic glossing is given under each line, and a translation to the right of each line (with the exception of the song, for reasons discussed above). The line breaks correspond roughly to breaks between prosodic units, but sometimes a line includes more than one unit, to save space. Ends of prosodic units are marked by the sign //. Narrative discourse has its own characteristic prosody, and prosodic units do not always align with syntactic ones (Woodbury 1985). Prosodic units that do not stand on their own, syntactically, are related by hyphens (-) to their missing parts.

1. *srāē-hì-hì-sràē-cèbhɔ̀á-sràéē* (3 times) /SONG/
   sràé-hì-hì-sràé //
2. *bé - bé gò bālē mì ɔ̰* // This - this is not for nothing.
   that that inside insignificance at not
3. *wlēwlē ē yą̰ gēmɔ̀ kà bɛ̰̄nī̀ ą̰ lé bīsɔ̀* // Pistachios there - we once feared them.
   pistachio DEF there PRT 1PL.INCL fear:PAST 3PL on once
4. *ą̰ą́ tī wā* // They were many!
   3PL+COP many PRT
5. *ą̀ kɔ̄ń yā mɔ̄* - When they set up a village -
   3PL village set:PAST PRT
6. *bé wlēwlē kpōń gblέè yą̰ gēmɔ̀* - those round pistachios -
   that pistachio calabash round there PRT
7. *mū gè kɔ̄ŋ̄ á é tà* // people's village is on its own.
   people property village COP REFL on (= They lived separately.)
8. *ké bɛ́ yā ɔ́ kà wlēwlē lɔ̄-ń bī ɔ̀* // Without that, we had not eaten pistachios.
   if that with not 1PL.INCL pistachio eat HAB PAST not
9. *ą̀ą́ kɔ̄ŋ̄ ē gó mɔ̄* - When they were in the village -
   3PL+COP village DEF in PRT
10. *ké wàtí gé bā bó mɔ̄* - when the time comes -
    if time say LOG.SG arrive PRT
11. *bé - wlēwlē mú gōnān wānè* // then - pistachios got up there.
    then pistachio PL get.up:PAST there
12. *ą̀ą́ sréŋ̄ mā yą̰ dé* // It's their feast!
    3PL.ALN feast it.is there really
13. *bé ą̀ą́ tá lé sráè-hì* // and they are starting: /SONG/
    then 3PL+COP say PROG
14. *hì-sràé-cèbhɔ̀á-sràéē-cèbhɔ̀á-sràéē* /SONG/
    sràé-hì-hì-sràé //
15. *ą̀ą́ é dɔ̰̄ŋ̄ yā dé* // They are aligned!
    3PL+COP REFL line with really

16. *ɓé mɔ̄ mū é gé ɛ́! ɓé dè mù má kɛ̄ mū é yā èé? //* And people say: Eh! But who are those?
then people PL DEF say eh! then who PL it.is that PL DEF with Q
17. *dègbè mɔ̄ mū é ą̀ą́ tí dɛ́ //* Friend, those people, they are many!
friend people PL DEF 3PL+COP many really
18. *kɛ́ lāá nè ɓāá nè ɔ̨ - srɔ̀ //* If you're here, I'm not here! Disappeared!
if 2SG+COP place LOG.SG+COP place not IDPH
19. *ɓé kà yā má kɛ́ mìŋ gōnā đīđīą̄-* We're sitting, and I leave right now,
then 1PL.INCL sit.down:PAST STAT.PERF and 1SG get.up:PAST just.now
20. *dè á sɔ̀ lé yɛ̄ɛ́ // ɓé gbràà //* who will be able to stay here? - Dispersed!
who COP be.equal PROG here Q then IDPH
21. *ą̀ą́ éé gò tą̄níí gɛ̄mɔ̀ -* They remained in it until -
3PL+COP that in until PRT
22. *ɓé né dō élì dō mɔ̄ - bą̀nɛ̄ ą̨ mì //* a child one day - was ill with yaws.
then child one day one PRT yaws COP at
23. *ą̄màà à bą̀nɛ̄ é pōlī á à bą̀nɛ̄ á ā lé //* They treated his yaws, his yaws hurt him.
3PL+FOC 3SG yaws DEF wash HAB 3SG yaws COP hurt PROG
24. *ɓé è gé zɔ̨ pɔ̀ é mì-* And he says: because of today's affair,
then 3SG say today thing DEF at
25. *nàà gà-ŋ̄ nè kū̄ nè ɔ̨ //* I'm not going anywhere.
1SG+COP go-PROSP place some place not
26. *ɛ̄é pɔ́ kɛ̄ é gɛ̄ zò lé nàà gbɛ̀ lé zɔ̨ //* Whatever arrives, I'll wait for it today.
that thing that DEF PRES come PROG 1SG+COP wait PROG today
27. *ɓé kà gà-ŋ̄ wá èé, è gé ą̄ gò ŋ̀ lé //* And we don't go? He says: leave me alone.
then 1PL.INCL go-PROSP not Q 3SG say 2PL leave 1SG on
28. *ɓē nɛ̄ é bō yàyà //* And the child remained seated.
then child DEF stay:PAST sitting
29. *kɔ̄ŋ̄ é tā ŋ̄ bò tètè, ą̨ tɛ̀ŋ̄ ą̀ ŋ̄ blèkɔ́ //* The village remained quiet, they all fled.
village DEF surface PERF stay quiet 3PL all 3PL PERF run
30. *nɛ̄ é yā má ɓé: sráè-hì //* The child is sitting, then: /SONG/
child DEF sit.down:PAST STAT.PERF then
31. *hì-sràé-cèbhɔ̀á-sràéē* /SONG/
sràé-hì-hì-sràé-cèbhɔ̀á-sràéē-sràé-hì-hì-sràé //
32. *nɛ̄ é ɓé è kū ē lélō //* The child, he opened the door.
child DEF then 3SG house DEF open:PAST
33. *nɛ̄ é ɓé légɛ̄ mɔ̄ -* The child, he looked -
child DEF that look:PAST PRT
34. *à légè é kɛ́ wlɛ̄wlɛ̄ kpóŋ̄ gblɛ́è á zò lé mlíŋà yā é ɔ̀ŋ̄ klā //* When he looks, here are the round pistachios coming, rolling one after another.
3SG look CNV and pistachio calabash round COP come PROG roll with REFL REC after
35. *ɓé è gé cípą̄ // ɓé è yrɛ̄ɛ́ gbòtògbò è glā //* Then he says: damn! And he took a stick.
then 3SG say damn then 3SG wood average 3SG take:PAST
36. *à è mlá é mɔ̄ - kɛ̄ è gé ɓá bɔ̀, gbó //* When he came out, whoever passes - gbo!
3SG 3SG come.out CNV PRT that 3SG say LOG.SG pass IDPH
37. *pòóò-gbó-pòó ą̄ zòó ą̄ zò, wlɛ̄wlɛ̄ mū má //* Poo-gbo-poo, come oh come! It's pistachios!
IDPH 2PL come-PRT 2PL come pistachio PL it.is
38. *ą̀ą̨ kpūnūkpūnū - kpó kpó kpó kpó ālé //* They are round-round. Kpo-kpo-kpo! Go!
3PL+COP round IDPH IDPH IDPH IDPH /go/
39. *wlɛ̄wlɛ̄ wɔ̀gɔ̀ɔ̄ //* The pistachios died a terrible death.
pistachio die.brutally:PAST
40. *ɓē wlɛ̄wlɛ̄ wō kàà ɓlɛ́ì yā ó //* And pistachios became our sauce.
then pistachio make:PAST 1PL.INCL.ALN sauce with PRT
41. *kɛ́ bhɛ̄́ɛ yā ɔ́ wlɛ̄wlɛ̄ é kà bī́ á blèkɔ́ lé bìsɔ̄ɔ́ //* If not, pistachios, we used to flee from them once.
if that REFL with not pistachio DEF 1PL.INCL PAST COP run PROG once.upon.at.time-PRT
42. *ɓɛ̄é mā yą́ //* That's it.
that it.is there

Four of the five narrative features discussed above are present in the story. The only strategy that is not present is the use of demonstrative pronouns with fixed reference. As already discussed, demonstratives help distinguish the main character from secondary ones: the main character is referred to by third-person pronouns, while secondary characters are referred to by demonstratives. The distribution of demonstratives is in fact more complex: they sometimes refer to the main character where their presence is required by the grammar. Thus, demonstratives are used in constructions with dislocations, where an argument has been displaced within the same sentence, and its canonical position is filled by a demonstrative (cf. 33: "the child, he looked," literally "the child, that one looked"). The relevant demonstrative is attested in the story both in this function and with reference to the story itself (2, 42) or the events being narrated (8, 41). It is not used to refer to secondary characters for the simple reason that the story does not feature singular participants apart from the protagonist. All secondary characters are represented by pluralities (people, pistachios), and they can be referred to by third-person plural pronouns. No special effort is required to distinguish them from the main character at the moments of their interaction, and there is no need to use demonstratives with fixed reference in this story.

Ideophones appear, predictably, at the story's culmination: they represent the beating pistachios receive (36–38). Note that the ideophones are the only means used to express the idea of beating; the event is never named by a verb. In the performance, the ideophones are accompanied by gesture.

In addition to the culmination point, ideophones appear in the scene-setting portion of the narrative, in the illustration of how people used to behave with respect to pistachios (18, 20). They represent emphatically the way villagers flee. The events of disappearing (in a sudden and frightened manner) and of dispersing (rapidly and as a mass) are again described exclusively by ideophones, with no help from verbs, nouns or adverbs. As already discussed, proficient storytellers make use of large inventories of very specific ideophones, some of which are unknown to younger speakers.

Logophoric reports appear in the story in two different functions: in reported speech proper (18), and in two kinds of intention-marking construction (10, 36). Besides the logophoric strategy, the story also features first-person reporting. The hypothetical participants of the scene-setting portion ("people") start out by using logophoric reporting, then—when the discourse has been attributed to a character—switch to first-person reporting (19). The main character, on the other hand, from the very beginning refers to himself by a first-person pronoun (25–27). Hence, logophoric reporting is present in reported speech along with first-person reporting, even though the storyteller does not explore, in this very short narrative, the full range of opportunities offered by this device (he does not refer to himself in the narrator's role, except for in 3, 8, 40–41, where he uses a first-person inclusive pronoun, because he also includes his audience).

The nonspeech uses of the logophoric pronoun are rather remarkable. The use in (36) describes intention: "as soon as someone passes" is presented, literally, as "when someone says let me pass," with the logophoric pronoun used for self-reference. This is a common extention of reported speech constructions cross-linguistically. The other instance shows an even greater degree of extension, this time to an aspectual meaning: in (10), "When the time comes" is presented as "When the time says: let me arrive."

In short, logophoricity appears in a number of constructions, and the reported speech use illustrates typical switching from logophoric to first-person reporting within the speech of the same character. More generally, the story—in spite of being very short—features all personal pronouns, with the exception of the rare first-person dual ('you and I') and first-person exclusive ('we excluding you'). Pronominal richness is typical of traditional narratives which abound in speech reporting and perspective-marking.

The temporal shift marker appears twice: within reported speech, and in the culmination portion. In (19), the first—temporally anchoring—part of the

construction is in the stative perfect, the second—temporally dependent—part is in the past tense. The temporal shift marker suggests that leaving took place before the state of sitting was over, highlighting that leaving was sudden and unrealistically rapid: "we are sitting here—and I am [already] gone."

In (34), the anchoring part of the construction is nonfinite "[at] his looking"; the second part is in the progressive ("the round pistachios are coming"). The temporal shift marker emphasizes the fact that the moment of the main character's looking was situated within the continuous event of the pistachios' approaching: the pistachios had already started approaching, and were menacingly close at the time when the boy looked out of his hut (hence his emotional reaction in 35).

As with pronominal reference, the story shows a great diversity of temporal-aspectual constructions: in addition to simple past tense, it features the progressive (also with a shift into the past, in 41), the imperative, the negative and the non-negative habitual (the former with a shift into the past, in 8), the prospective, the perfect, and the stative perfect, not to mention nominal constructions. This variety virtually exhausts the grammatical possibilities offered by the language, suggesting that the speaker actively exploits the linguistic resources and manipulates temporal reference just as efficiently as pronominal reference.

The last phenomenon considered in this study is the use of complex constructions with dislocations. This particular text does not feature as many of them as longer and more complex stories normally do; yet some examples of dislocations can be found. In (3), (21–22) and (33), one of the constituents is dislocated, to signal early in the sentence the sentence's topic and to help listeners manage the information flow and relate the content of the sentence to the right character. The dislocated topic in (3) introduces the story's subject: "[those] pistachios there, once upon a time we feared them." In (21–22), the dislocated constituent introduces the main participant: literally, "They are in it until—one child one day, yaws is at [him]."

In sum, four of the five phenomena are attested in the short narrative, and the absence of the remaining feature is due to the fact that the story, rather unusually, only features one singular participant, and all secondary participants are plural entities.

An "Ordinary" Narrative

The example of a compentent performance can be contrasted with an example of a short narrative that is not associated with the genre of narrative performance. The story presented below was told by a speaker who does not claim competence in traditional storytelling. It is an amusing short story "based on a real event," told by a middle-aged speaker living in Kounahiri who makes his living by small commerce and is used to travelling outside the Wan-speaking area. He describes his own linguistic abilities as "mediocre" and does not dare perform a traditional narrative, offering this "story from daily life" instead.

The story does not include a song and does not end with evaluation; the rhythmic pattern is different from that of narrative performance. It does not feature the devices discussed in this study: ideophones are not used; characters' speech is consistently in the first-person, without alternating stretches of logophoric and first-person discourse; demonstratives are only used to refer to topicalized elements within the same sentence, not to disambiguate reference; no deictic shift markers or complex constructions with inserted or repeated contituents are used. The syntax is overall very simple, and the inventory of temporal-aspectual forms is poor (the narrative events are reported in the past tense, in the iconic order).

1. *làklù wiá-ŋ yɛ̄ é bō yą́* //
   school enter-NMLZ time DEF arrive:PAST PRT
   It was time to get enrolled at school.

2. *bé né dèè mù é gā yrą̄mū ē tɔ́ yɔ̨̀ŋtɛ́ nè làklù kɔ̄ŋ ē gó //*
then child father PL DEF go:PAST children DEF name write PURP school village DEF in
And parents went into town to enroll their children.
3. *bé ą̀ą́ tɛ̄ŋ tú tɔ́ yɔ̨̀ŋtɛ̄ //* And they were all enrolled.
then 3PL+COP every all name write:PAST
4. *bé Dègbè - bé é gbè è bé pā bé tɔ́ yɔ̨̀ŋtɛ́ lé ɔ̀ – gɔ̀lí zàgó //*
then D. then REFL son 3SG that be.able:PAST that name write PPS NEG money because.of
But Degbe, he could not enroll his son, because of money.
5. *bé è zō kūlézīlé bé è gé é gbè lèŋ dóō -* And he came home and said to his son:
then 3SG come:PAST home then 3SG say REFL son to QUOT
6. *á! nrą́ yą́, ŋ̀ zòŋ̀ pá-ŋ gɔ̀lí è lé bé nàá lā tɔ́ yɔ̨̀ŋtɛ́ ɔ̀ //*
INTJ this.year PRT 1SG PROSP be.able-PROSP money see PPS then 1SG+COP 2SG name write NEG
"Oh, this year now, I won't be able to have money to enroll you at school.
7. *kà à bò tólì vī é mì //* We'll leave it for next year."
1PL.INCL 3SG leave tomorrow year DEF at
8. *àà nḗ é - bé siā yó yā //* His child, he fell down crying
3SG.ALN child DEF that fall:PAST cry with
9. *ŋ̀ dèè, bé pá-ŋ wò lé ɔ̀ //* "Father, it cannot happen.
1SG father that be.able-NEG do PPS NEG
10. *nàá gà lé kɔ̄trą̄ kó nè -* I'll go do temporary work,
1SG+COP go PROG temporary.work cut PURP
11. *bé nà ŋ gé gɔ̀lí è bé ą̄ lāá ŋ̀ tá làklù gó! //*
then 1SG 1SG property money see then 2PL SUBJ>OBJ 1SG put school in
and I promise to get my own money so that you'll put me in school!"

Conclusion

At the center of this study is the distinction between ordinary talk and narrative performance. I used several phenomena to illustrate differences in the grammar of the two types of discourse: the complex linguistic strategies motivated by performance needs are easily dispensable in ordinary language. Speakers inexperienced in narrative performance do not feel confident using such specialized linguistic devices, and linguists describing the grammar of the language based on elicited data have little chance of noticing them or documenting them properly.

The contrast between the relatively impoverished grammar of ordinary talk and the traditional narrative grammar is grounded in the notion of performance, or *full* performance—a type of textual production that is subject to evaluation according to the socially recognized standards of virtuosity (Hymes 1981; Bauman 1977; Duranti 1984). The speaker performing a traditional story assumes accountability to an audience for a display of verbal prowess. Some of the perfomer's authority issues from the ability to traditionalize his discourse (Briggs and Bauman 1992:148). Linguistic strategies that were originally motivated by functional considerations of performance serve, in part, this traditionalizing purpose, helping the storyteller create textual authority (cf. Kuipers 1990 on Weyewa ritual speech). Inasmuch as mastering these strategies requires extensive practice, they become perceived as virtuosity markers. Decreasing ability of new generations of speakers to use such strategies is depreciated as deteriorating language competence.

It should be kept in mind that the boundary between narrative performance and ordinary talk is not always clear-cut. Different kinds of performance vary in the degree to which the speaker assumes responsibility for the presentation (Goffman 1974:522; Hymes 1981:84), and storytellers regularly break the narrative frame to introduce shifts in footing (for example, while addressing new incoming members of the audience).[18] Ordinary talk, on the other hand, necessarily incorporates elements of storytelling. Strategies from narrative performance can leak into ordinary talk and

enrich common grammar. Without occasions for traditional performance, however, such strategies are no longer practiced, and old stories are replaced by new ones, fashioned in ways that are influenced by television and radio broadcasts. This replacement leads to overall marginalization of traditional performance (cf. Kuipers 1998).

The distinction between passive knowledge and active use is central to Hymes's (1981) notion of "assumption of responsibity for knowledge of tradition" as opposed to "assumption of responsibility for performance." The community of Wan speakers finds itself at the threshold between "knowing what" and "knowing how," a moment of transition that prompts them to reflect on the ongoing social and linguistic changes. The speakers' construal of these changes in terms of language loss sheds light on their concept of language in which the highest value is accorded to skillful narrative performance.

The phenomena this study focused on are but a small selection of strategies that are characteristic of traditional storytelling in Wan. The same "oral" strategies are attested in other languages of Africa, the "oral continent par excellence" (Scheub 1985; Finnegan 2007:1–2). Choosing to focus on morphosyntax, I could not treat such striking characteristic phenomena as the incorporation into the story of unintelligible excerpts (either coming from another language or invented) or manipulation of voice quality to highlight certain parts of the story. I could not dwell on peculiar types of metaphor or characteristic uses of gesture. The phenomena discussed above illustrate the dependence on communicative practices of some core morphosyntactic properties, but the loss of traditional practices also leads to impoverishment at other levels of linguistic structure.

From the traditional linguistic point of view, this endangerment situation is unusual. First, the threat does not come from a dominant language; rather, the impoverishment of the grammar reflects changes in language ecology. Second, the threat only concerns some aspects of the grammar; these aspects, however, turn out to be particularly valued by the speakers. Subjectively, the loss of traditional grammar may be perceived more acutely than shifts to a dominant language (in the end, something is gained by shifting to a prestigious language). As one speaker remarked to me, it does not matter much how you call a chicken, but it does matter whether or not you can tell stories properly. Objectively, the loss of performance practices may imply a loss of interesting and unique grammatical features, just like regular language death. In fact, many languages lose their exotic features long before they become endangered, and it is not uncommon for a linguist exploring the structure of a severely endangered language to find out that it has lost most of its defining grammatical properties, sometimes to the point of becoming a dominant language "in disguise" (see, for example, Nevskaja 2000 for a discussion of contact-induced features in a highly endangered language).

In this sense, this case study illustrates once again the complexity of the relation between particular features of Saussurean *langue* and specific forms of *parole*. Not only are communicative practices affected by the loss of grammatical devices (Hale 1992:36; Woodbury 1998), but grammatical features can also be affected by the loss of traditional practices. In both cases, the language loses what Woodbury calls "form-dependent expressions," or its means of creative expression deriving from a conventional association of "arbitrary patterns of lexicogrammatical code" with specific communicative purpose or content. This complex relationship presents a special challenge to the European tradition of documentary linguistics, which is firmly grounded in the Western ideology of language (Foley 2003).

Many linguistic phenomena—and many "exotic" properties of West African languages—cannot be fully understood outside the context of oral performance of particular forms of verbal art. While in modern linguistic research, oral discourse tends to be associated with everyday conversation, that form of interaction is not

universally valued by speakers as a source of linguistic data. Documentary approaches centering on ordinary talk do not work well for cultures with a strong oral tradition, where verbal art is at the center of linguistic self-consciousnesss, and it is in verbal art that the resources provided by grammar are activated to their fullest potential (Sherzer 1983, 1987, 1990). Before engaging in language documentation efforts, linguists should seek to explore more systematically the speakers' perceptions of their language, as the community's attitudes and expectations may not agree with the linguist's. In the case of Wan, speakers' concern with language loss reflects important changes that are not visible through the lense of currently accepted criteria for assessing language vitality.

Abbreviations used in glosses

ALN	alienable possessor
CNJ	conjunction
CNV	converb
COP	copula
DEF	definite marker
DEICT.SHIFT	marker of temporal deictic shift
EMPH	emphatic form
EXCL	exclamative particle
FOC	focus
HAB	habitual
IDPH	ideophone
INCL	inclusive
INTJ	interjection
LOG	logophoric marker
NEG	negation
NMLZ	nominalization
PAST	past tense marker
PERF	perfect
PL	plural
PPS	postposition introducing a non-finite complement
PROG	progressive
PROSP	prospective
PRT	particle
PURP	marker of purpose
Q	question marker
QUOT	quotative marker
REC	reciprocal
REFL	reflexive pronoun

SG singular

STAT.PERF stative perfect

SUBJ>OBJ bidirectional case marker

Notes

1. This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No. 758232).

2. Cf. Grenoble and Whaley (2006:43–44): "One of the driving forces of language endangerment is competition with the language of wider communication"; Mufwene (2004:218): "Languages do not engage in wars either, though they coexist in competition, like biological species."

3. Which is, however, a simplification, as this notion does not apply in the same way to all endangerment situations, cf. Mufwene (2003).

4. For a discussion of linguists' inadequate understanding of the concept of language as a cause of the general lack of success in language preservation efforts, see Mühlhäusler (2013); on the dissociation of documentary linguistics from the ethnographic study of language use, Himmelmann (2008), Wertheim and Ahlers (2009), Whaley (2011), Dobrin and Berson (2011), Perley (2012), Shulist (2013); on tensions between language documentation and language maintenance, see Moore (2006); on culture-specific understanding of language endangerment and the linguist's mission, see Dobrin (2008), Nikitina (forthc.b). The importance of studying discursive practices is emphasized in Woodbury (1998), Ameka and Breedveld (2005).

5. Until recently, a documentation project was expected to result in a dictionary and a grammar, more rarely—in a collection of texts or educational materials (for a discussion of possible documentation formats, see Himmelmann 2006); collections of texts are now becoming a more standard type of outcome.

6. Cf. the attitude expressed by Hymes's language consultant who considered "creative adaptation of the language to have ceased when he was young" (1981:88).

7. This characterization is, however, controversial, and some unwritten languages are more resistant to change than languages with a history of literacy. Introduction of writing may even accelerate the loss of specific discourse practices as it is often accompanied by the introduction of new ways of textual production. Sometimes linguistic strategies representative of oral performance become incorporated into the living literary tradition (for example, in the form of "register markers"). More often, however, linguistic strategies characteristic of traditional genres do not survive the transition to new forms of textual production and fall out of use.

8. Assessing the language endangerment situation in West Africa, Blench (2007:150) describes West African languages as being in general "in a healthy state," threatened primarily by assimilation to local dominant languages (see also Brenzinger, Heine, and Sommer 1991:20; Mous 2003).

9. Work on a Bible translation was started in the 1990s, but has not been completed.

10. As shown by Labov (1972:354–396), many African Americans have better storytelling skills than an average European American. In contrast to West Africa, however, it would be wrong to infer from this that in the United States, better storytellers are considered to know the language better or to be better at speaking properly. The different attitude to linguistic competence is due to the relatively minor role of oral storytelling in modern American culture, as opposed, for example, to writing skills (see also Hymes 2003).

11. The nature of this process might explain why speakers interpret it in terms of "loss" rather than some other kind of change: the traditional aesthetically evaluated speech genres are not being replaced by new ones. As storytelling gatherings give way to modern entertainment practices, speakers lose competence in certain genre-specific uses of language without acquiring any culturally valued skills.

12. Literacy per se should not be blamed for the decline in ideophonic usage, since it is possible for literary genres to incorporate oral features (Mphande 1992). Ideophones, in particular, can make their way into literary genres as stylistic markers contributing a "naturalistic" flavor to speech by illiterate or low-class characters (Nikitina 2012d).

13. In translations of the examples, I use the subscripts "LOG" and "PERS" to indicate whether the participant is referred to by a logophoric or a personal pronoun. Logophoric

pronouns can be translated by first- or second-person pronouns depending on the context, and I do not aim at consistency in this respect.

14. Superficially similar kinds of "present tense" narration of past events are attested in colloquial speech in European languages, yet they differ from the deictic shifts characteristic of narration in Wan. First, temporal reference can only be shifted in Wan with temporal relations that deviate from the default narrative relation; it cannot be shifted when events are presented in the order in which they occurred. Second, constructions with shifted temporal reference are always anchored to a previously introduced reference time; they cannot be interpreted as referring to some unspecified point in the past, nor is such interpretation possible when the constructions appear in isolation.

15. A reviewer rightly points out that the mirative effect is created here by several means: by the non-iconic representation of the events, accompanied by the deictic shift marker, as well as by the ideophone. Yet the deictic shift marker is commonly associated with mirativity in other contexts, cf. (34) from the sample narrative.

16. For further discussion of complexities of Wan clausal syntax, see Nikitina (2009, forthc.a, forthc.c).

17. I have not been able to identify any special metalinguistic terms that are used in Wan to talk about the crucial features of the narratives. The performances conforming to the expectations were generally described as "good," "proper," and "interesting."

18. While narrative performance can be further subdivided into several genres (most importantly, into folktale and historical narrative), such distinctions, in the case of Wan, do not appear to be of particular use for the study of phenomena in question. I therefore do not explore them further (for a discussion of folk genres and problems with their identification, see Briggs and Bauman 1992; Ben-Amos 1976, 1992).

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