The Emergence of an Optative Marker
in Jóola Fóoñi (Atlantic)

Denis Creissels

Université Lumière Lyon 2
Dynamique du langage (DDL – CNRS et université Lumière Lyon 2, UMR 5596)
denis.creissels@univ-lyon2.fr

Alain Christian Bassène

Cheikh Anta Diop University, Dakar
alain.bassene@ucad.edu.sn

Abstract: This article analyses the evolution of the construction commonly used in Jóola Fóoñi to express the speaker's wish about a state of affairs beyond the control of the speech act participants. Originally, this construction is a biclausal construction in which the matrix clause is *Emɪtɛy ɛkaan* 'Let God make (that)', but the possibility of repeating *Emɪtɛy* 'God' as the subject of the subordinate clause referring to the desired state of affairs shows that it is being reanalysed as a monoclausal construction in which the former matrix clause acts as an optative particle whose internal structure, although still obvious, is not relevant anymore.

Résumé : Cet article analyse l'évolution de la construction communément utilisée en jóola fóoñi pour exprimer le souhait du locuteur concernant un état de choses qui échappe au contrôle des participants à l'acte de langage. À l'origine, il s'agit d'une construction bi-propositionnelle dans laquelle la proposition principale est Emɪtɛy *ɛkaan 'Fasse Dieu que', mais la possibilité de répéter* Emɪtɛy *'Dieu' comme sujet de la proposition subordonnée référant à l'état de choses souhaité montre que la construction a été réanalysée en tant que construction monopropositionnelle dans laquelle l'ancienne proposition principale joue le rôle d'une particule optative, dont la structure interne, bien qu'encore visible, n'est plus pertinente.*

1. Introduction

Jóola Fóoñi (aka Diola-Fogny), spoken in Southwestern Senegal by approximately half a million speakers, belongs to the Bak group of languages included in the Atlantic family.[1] Three overall presentations

---

1.   Jóola languages can be divided into Central Jóola, a dialect continuum within the limits of which it is difficult (if not impossible) to decide what is a language and

of Jóola Fóoñi grammar are available: Weiss (1939), Sapir (1965), and Hopkins (1995).

The present article describes the evolution affecting the optative construction of Jóola Fóoñi, by which the sequence *Ɛmɪtɛy ɛkaan* 'May God grant' (lit. 'Let God make'), originally the matrix clause in a biclausal causative periphrasis, tends to freeze into an optative particle devoid of internal structure.

The paper is organised as follows. Section 2 provides the necessary background about some basic aspects of Jóola Fóoñi morphosyntax. Section 3 describes the use of the tense form we designate as the zero-tense in the coding of directive speech acts. In sections 4 and 5, we analyse the emergence of an optative particle via reanalysis of an originally biclausal construction specifically used in Jóola Fóoñi to express the speaker's wish about a state of affairs beyond the control of the speech act participants, in which what was originally the matrix clause is being reanalysed as an optative particle. Section 6 summarises our conclusions.

2. Clause structure and verb inflection in Jóola Fóoñi

In this article, we will not be interested in non-verbal predication, which consequently need not be discussed here. As regards verbal predication, Jóola Fóoñi is an unproblematic "accusative" language in which there is no problem with the recognition of a grammatical relation "subject" conflating the single core argument in intransitive predication and the agent in the basic transitive construction. As in the other Atlantic languages, the basic constituent order in Jóola Fóoñi is Subject-Verb-Objects-Obliques, but the relative order of objects and obliques allows for some flexibility.

Depending on the verb form that constitutes the nucleus of the clause, the coding of subjects and objects varies as follows:

- subject indexation is obligatory with some of the verb forms that have the ability to act as the nucleus of independent clauses, impossible with some others;

- regardless of the nature of the verb form acting as the nucleus of the clause, the subject NP is syntactically optional; this means that, when the nucleus of a clause is a verb form devoid of subject indexation, the

what is a dialect, and peripheral Jóola varieties, such as Karon, Kwaataay, Mulomp-North, or Bayot, whose status as separate languages is hardly disputable, in spite of their close relationship to Central Jóola. Jóola Fóoñi is part of the Central Jóola dialect continuum.

subject argument may remain completely unexpressed, provided the speaker estimates that its identity can be retrieved from the context;

- object indexation is always syntactically optional, in the sense that object indexes are only used with reference to topical objects that are not simultaneously encoded as object NPs.

Example (1) illustrates the coding of subjects with verb forms that obligatorily index the person and the number (and in the third person, the gender)[2] of their subject:

1.a. Ɐniinɐɐw pan awañ bajangataab.[3]

ɐ-niinɐ-ɐ-w   pan   a-wañ   ba-jangata-a-b

SG-man(A)-D-clA   FUT   sI.clA-cultivate   SG-peanuts(B)-D-clB

'The man will cultivate peanuts.'

b. Pan awañ bajangataab.

pan   a-wañ   ba-jangata-a-b

FUT   sI.clA-cultivate   SG-peanuts(B)-D-clB

'(S)he will cultivate peanuts.'

---

2. Jóola languages have a gender system of the type commonly found in several branches of the Niger-Congo family, in which the affixes marking the number of nouns vary from gender to gender, and gender agreement cannot be dissociated from number agreement. Agreement markers are designated as "classes", and glossed clX. In the glosses of the examples, the agreement patterns to which noun forms are associated are indicated between parentheses immediately after the lexical gloss of the noun. For example, *ɐ-niine* |SG-man(A)| means that *ɐ-* is the singular prefix selected by the lexeme 'man', and that the singular form of this lexeme triggers class A agreement. In particular, *ɐ-niine* requires the A form of the suffixed definite article and the A form of the subject index. The corresponding plural form *ku-niine* triggers class BK agreement, and would accordingly be glossed |PL-man(BK)|. There are 13 possible agreement patterns governed by noun forms, conventionally labelled here by means of capital letters that evoke the phonological form of agreement markers: A, BK, E, S, F, K, B, U, J, M, Ñ, T, and D´. For the other abbreviations used in the examples, see the list at the end of this article. For more details on number inflection and gender in Jóola Fóoñi, see Creissels *et al.* (2021).
3. All the examples quoted in this article are from the authors' personal documentation; they have been either extracted from a corpus of oral texts, or elicited from native speakers. The transcription of Jóola Fóoñi used in this article departs from the standard orthography in the notation of vowels: the IPA symbols are used for vowels, whereas in standard orthography, words with +ATR (advanced tongue root) vowels are marked by an acute accent on the first vowel, as in *Jóola* [joolɐ].

c. (Inje) pan ɩwañ bajangataab.

(inje)   pan   ɩ-wañ   ba-jangata-a-b

PRO.1SG FUT sI.1SG-cultivate SG-peanuts(B)-D-clB

'I shall cultivate peanuts.'

Example (2) illustrates the case of clauses whose nucleus is a verb form (in example 2: *ɛ-wañ*) that does not index the subject argument. In the absence of a subject NP, as in (2.c), such clauses give no clue as to the identity of the subject argument, which must be retrieved from the context.

2.a. ∀niinɛɛw ɛwañ bajangataab.

ɐ-niinɐ-ɐ-w   ɛ-wañ   ba-jangata-a-b

SG-man(A)-D-clA INF-cultivate(E) SG-peanuts(B)-D-clB

'The man is cultivating peanuts.'

b. Inje ɛwañ bajangataab.

inje   ɛ-wañ   ba-jangata-a-b

PRO.1SG INF-cultivate(E) SG-peanuts(B)-D-clB

'I am cultivating peanuts.'

c. Ɛwañ bajangataab.

ɛ-wañ   ba-jangata-a-b

INF-cultivate(E) SG-peanuts(B)-D-clB

'I am / you are / (s)he is / we are / they are cultivating peanuts.'

The verb form acting as the nucleus of the clause in example (2) is also found in other contexts with properties that justify labeling it "infinitive". Morphologicaly, Jóola Fóoñi infinitives are formed by combining a verb stem with a nominal prefix, like deverbal nouns. However, they differ from deverbal nouns in some details of their morphological structure. Syntactically, Jóola Fóoñi infinitives can be found in typically nominal positions in which, like nouns, they act as agreement controllers, but also in positions that cannot be occupied by canonical NPs (for example, in the complementation of the verb *-maŋ* 'want').

Infinitival clauses such as (2) above are independent clauses expressing the TAM (Tense, Aspect, Mood) value "present" without any additional modal or discursive nuance. The infinitive can also fulfill the function of nucleus of assertive clauses in combination with the

multifunction preposition *dɪ*, as in (3), or with the allative preposition *bɛɛ*, as in (4). The presence of the preposition *dɪ* does not seem to modify the meaning of the clause, whereas with *bɛɛ*, the TAM value of the clause is interpreted as "near future".

3. Bʋkanak tuu dɪ ejoo ɛbɛŋ.

bʋk-an-a-k	tuu	dɪ	e-joo	ɛ-bɛŋ
PL-person(BK)-D-clBK	all	PREP	INF-come(E)	INF(E)-gather

'All the people are coming to the meeting.'

4. Aw b'ɛɛkaan bʋʋ man ʋkaan bʋsaana?

aw	bɛɛ	ɛ-kaan	bʋʋ	man	ʋ-kaan	bʋ-saana
PRO.2SG	ALL	INF-do(E)	how	so.that	sI.2SG-make	SG-boat(B)

'What are you going to do to make a boat?'

Contrary to the superficially similar clauses found in European languages, in terms of modality and / or discursive implications, the infinitival clauses of Jóola Fóoñi are as neutral as the English translations given in (2)-(4). They do not lend themselves to various types of syntactic operations with the same freedom as the clauses whose nucleus is a verb form agreeing with its subject, which can be viewed as a kind of syntactic deficiency justifying to analyse them as non-finite, in spite of their use as independent clauses. However, given the topic of the present article, it is not necessary to enter into the details of this question.

As already mentioned above, object indexation is syntactically optional, and in this respect, the infinitival clauses, in which the subject cannot be indexed, behave in the same way as the clauses whose nucleus is a verb form including an obligatory subject index. The object indexes are suffixed, and they belong to a distinct paradigm, also used to index adnominal possessors on nouns.[4] Example (5) illustrates the complementarity between object NPs and object indexes.

5.a. Ɐniinɛɛw najʋjʋk kʋñɪɩlak.

ɐ-niinɛ-ɐ-w	n-a-jʋ-jʋk	kʋ-ñɪɩl-a-k
SG-man(A)-D-clA	PPF-sI.clA-see-RDPL	PL-child(BK)-D-clBK

'The man saw the children.'

---

4.   In the examples, subject indexes are glossed sI, whereas non-subject indexes are glossed I.

b. Ɐniinɛɛw najʊkʊjʊk.

ɛ-niinɛ-ɛ-w   n-a-jʊk-ʊ-jʊk

SG-man(A)-D-clA   PPF-sI.clA-see-I.clBK-RDPL

'The man saw them [the children].'

The verb forms including an obligatory subject index differ in their syntactic properties. Some of them (for example, the future form illustrated in example (1)) have the ability to act as the nucleus of plain assertive clauses, whereas others are syntactically dependent: the relative verb forms (whose use is conditioned by relativisation or focalisation) and the hypothetical (exclusively used in the protasis of conditional sentences).

The relative verb forms and the hypothetical need not be discussed in more details, since they play no role in the question that constitutes the central topic of this article.

The independent verb forms expressing agreement with their subject are characterised by TAM-polarity inflection involving both markers suffixed to the verb stem and markers preceding the obligatory subject index. The markers preceding the subject index are *pan* 'future', illustrated in example (1), and its negative counterpart *lɛt*. We do not write them as prefixes, since they are not strictly bound to the verb form. It is true that *pan* and *lɛt* are almost always found immediately before the subject index, but the possibility of inserting a subject NP between a future marker and the verb form, although quite exceptional, is nevertheless attested in our corpus.

In this article, we will be mainly interested in a particular verb form that plays a crucial role in the expression of directive speech acts. Morphologically, this form can be characterised as the *zero-marked tense form* (or simply the *zero-tense*), since it includes no overt TAM-polarity marker.

3. The zero-tense

Morphologically, the zero-tense includes no other formatives than the verb stem, the obligatory subject index, and optional object indexes. This form cannot act as the nucleus of independent assertive clauses. Its uses can be classified as follows:

- the zero-tense is the form taken by non-initial verb(s) in coordinative verb chains, i.e., in verb chains referring to events presented as the successive phases of a single event;

- the use of the zero-tense in subordinate clauses is broadly similar to that of European "subjunctives";

- the zero-tense is the form required by some TAM auxiliaries;

- the zero-tense is required by modal particles such as *takʊm* (prohibitive);

- the zero-tense is used in independent clauses expressing directive speech acts that show no overt modality marking.

In order to facilitate the understanding of the examples quoted in this section, the zero-tense forms whose use is being illustrated are in bold.

3.1. The use of the zero-tense in coordinative verb-chains

In Jóola Fooñi, events conceived as the successive phases of a single complex event can be encoded by means of verb chains with no linking element between the successive verbs. In such chains, the first verb is overtly inflected for TAM, whereas the following verbs are invariably in the zero-tense.

> 6. Pan ʊbʊjɪ **ʊsɛn** sigutumɛs **sɪrɪ**.
>
> pan ʊ-bʊj-ɪ   **ʊ-sɛn**   si-gutum-ɐ-s   **sɪ-rɪ**
> FUT sI.1PL-kill-I.2SG sI.1PL-give PL-vulture(S)-D-clS sI.clS-eat
>
> 'We will kill you, we will give you to the vultures, and they will eat you.'

Note that such a coordinative use of a verb form otherwise used much in the same way as European subjunctives (see the following sections) is an areal feature, also found for example in Balant (Atlantic, see Creissels & Biaye 2016), Mandinka (Mande, see Creissels & Sambou 2013), etc.

3.2. The zero-tense in subordinate clauses

The use of the zero-tense in subordinate clauses is comparable to that of European "subjunctives", in the sense that it is conditioned by the conjunctions used to mark various types of subordination. For example, the zero-tense is the only verb form that can feature in clauses introduced by the conjunction *man* 'so that' or its negative counterpart *takʊm ~ jakʊm*.[5] It is also used with *yɔk* 'until', *bala* 'before', etc.

_____

5. *Takʊm* and *jakʊm* are free variants of the same conjunction.

7. Pan ɩkatɩ m'**ʋʋjaw**.

pan ɩ-kat-ɩ   man **ʋ-jaw**
FUT sI.1SG-leave-I.2SG so.that sI.2SG-go

'I'll let you go.'

8. Ulusaal etuuey takʋm bawɔlab **bʋlɔnbɔ**.

u-lus-aal   e-tuu-e-y   takʋm
sI.1PL-remove-INCL SG-weeds(E)-D-clE so.that.NEG

ba-wɔl-a-b   **bʋ-lɔn-bɔ**
SG-mosquito(B)-D-clB sI.clB-sit-there

'Let's remove the weeds so that the mosquitoes do not sit there.'

9. Kʋtɛtɛy yɔk balaab **bʋrab**.

kʋ-tɛ-tɛy   yɔk ba-la-a-b   **bʋ-rab**
sI.clBK-run-RDPL until SG-sun(B)-D-clB sI.clB-be.late.in.the.morning

'They ran until late morning.'

10. Kupʋrempuren ɛsadaay bala **kʋjaw**.

ku-purem-puren   ɛ-sada-a-y   bala **kʋ-jaw**
sI.clBK-bring.out-RDPL SG-sacrifice(E)-D-clE before sI.clBK-go

'They made the sacrifice before leaving.'

3.3. The zero-tense in combination with TAM auxiliaries

The zero-tense is the form of the verb required by some TAM auxiliaries.[6] The auxiliaries that combine with the zero-tense of the auxiliated verb include -*baj* 'have the opportunity to do', -*mus* 'have already done at least once', -*bɩl* 'eventually do', -*ŋɔɔlɛn* 'be able to do', etc.

11. Nɩbabaj **ɩjʋkɔɔ**.

n-ɩ-ba-baj   **ɩ-jʋk-ɔɔ**
PPF-sI.1SG-have.the.opportunity-RDPL sI.1SG-see-I.clA

'I had the opportunity to see him / her.'

---

6. The TAM auxiliaries of Jóola Fóoñi divide into two subsets according to the form they require for the auxiliated verb: some of them require the zero-tense, whereas others require the infinitive.

12. Nabɩbɩl **ajaw** di ɐdoktoor.

   n-a-bɩ-bɩl   **a-jaw**   dɩ   ɐ-doktoor

   PPF-sI.clA-do.eventually-RDPL   sI.clA-go   PREP   SG-doctor(A)

   '(S)he eventually went to the doctor's.'

13. Iŋɔɔlɛnʊt **ɩsɔf** ɛyɛnɛy.

   ɩ-ŋɔɔlɛn-ʊt   **ɩ-sɔf**   ɛ-yɛn-ɛ-y

   sI.1SG-be.able-NEG   sI.1SG-catch   SG-dog(E)-D-clE

   'I was not able to catch the dog.'

3.4. The use of the zero-tense with modal particles

The zero-tense is used in independent clauses marked by one of the modal particles *mbɩ* (potential), *fɔk* (obligative), or *takʊm ~ jakʊm* (prohibitive). Like the future markers, the particles in question are most commonly found in immediate pre-verbal position. The difference is, however, that constructions with a subject NP inserted between a future marker and the verb, although attested, are quite exceptional in our corpus, whereas constructions with a subject NP inserted between a modal particle and the verb are relatively common. Moreover, *takʊm ~ jakʊm* and *mbɩ* can also be used as conjunctions in complex constructions.

3.4.1. Mbɩ

Mbɩ has the ability to act as a modal particle in independent clauses and as a conjunction. Example (14) illustrates its use as a modal particle:

14. Mbɩ **kʊrambɛnɩ**.

   mbɩ **kʊ-rambɛn-ɩ**

   POT   sI.clBK-help-I.2SG

   'Maybe they could help you.'

3.4.2. Fɔk

French *(il) faut que* 'it is necessary that' has been borrowed by Jóola Fóoñi as an obligative particle (*fɔk*) whose presence requires the zero-tense form of the verb.

15. Fɔk inje **ɩtɛb** kɐrumbɐɐk.

   fɔk   inje   **ɩ-tɛb**   kɐ-rumbɐ-ɐ-k

   OBLG   PRO.1SG   sI.1SG-carry   SG-pot(K)-D-clK

   'I must be the one who carries the pot.' (lit. 'It is necessary that I carry the pot')

3.4.3. Takʋm ~ jakʋm

Takʋm ~ jakʋm, already mentioned above as the negative counterpart of the conjunction *man* 'so that', also acts as a prohibitive marker in independent clauses that constitute the negative counterpart of the imperative / hortative clauses described in section 3.5, as in (16):[7]

16. Woli kɔɔkʋ dɩ kɛsɛli, an takʋm **asancɛn**!

    woli   k-ɔɔ-kʋ   dɩ   kɛ-sɛli   Ø-an
    PRO.1PL.EXCL   clBK-LCOP-clBK   PREP   INF(K)-pray   SG-person(A)

    takʋm **a-sancɛn**
    PROH   sI.clA-speak

    'We are praying, nobody should speak!'

3.5. The zero-tense in independent clauses
expressing directive speech acts and showing no overt modality marking

The use of the zero-tense in independent clauses showing no overt modality marking implies a directive meaning whose precise nature depends on the person of the subject. As already mentioned above, in principle, the negative counterparts of the constructions described in this section can be formed by adding the prohibitive marker *takʋm ~ jakʋm*, with, however, an interesting exception: the addition of *takʋm ~ jakʋm* does not seem to be possible in the construction described in section 3.5.1.

3.5.1. The independent use of the zero-tense
with a first person (singular or plural) exclusive subject

As illustrated in (17), the use of the zero-tense with a first person singular or a first person plural exclusive subject in independent clauses showing no overt modal marking implies an interrogative or deliberative meaning: either the speaker asks for confirmation of an order or instruction, or s/he asks him / herself what s/he should do.

17. **ɩkaan** bʋʋ?

    ɩ-kaan   bʋʋ
    sI.1SG-do   how

    'How should I do?'

---

7. We have no evidence that this might be a case of insubordination, but we cannot exclude this hypothesis either.

3.5.2. The independent use of the zero-tense
with a first person plural inclusive subject

Independent clauses whose nucleus is a verb in the zero-tense with a first person plural inclusive subject are normally interpreted as conveying a request to the addressee(s) to perform the action denoted by the verb jointly with the speaker. In general, the subject index of first person plural inclusive is the combination of the prefix ʊ- (first person plural) and the suffix -aa (inclusive),[8] but in this use of the zero-tense, the prefix ʊ- can be dropped, as in (18):

> 18. **Nɔcɛnaa** dɪ karɛŋak!
>
> **Ø-nɔcɛn-aa**   dɪ   ka-rɛŋ-a-k
>
> sI.1PL-enter-INCL PREP SG-forest(K)-D-clK
>
> 'Let's go into the forest!'

The same construction is possible with reference to states of affairs beyond the control of the speech act participants, in which case it is interpreted as expressing a wish rather than a command. However, an explicitly optative formulation of the type described in section 4 tends to be preferred, as in (19.b).

> 19.a. **Ʊmɔɔraal** suum!
>
> **ʊ-mɔɔr-aal**   suum
>
> sI.1PL-spend.the.night-INCL well
>
> 'Let's have a good night!'
>
> b. Ɛmɪtɛy ɛkaan ʊmɔɔraal suum!
>
> Ɛmɪtɛy   ɛ-kaan   ʊ-mɔɔr-aal   suum
>
> God(E) sI.clE-make sI.1PL-spend.the.night-INCL well
>
> 'Let God make that we'll have a good night!'

3.5.3. The independent use of the zero-tense
with a second person (singular or plural) subject

Independent clauses whose nucleus is a verb in the zero-tense with a second person subject (singular or plural) are the usual way of expressing a request to the addressee(s) to perform the action denoted by the verb (imperative). In this use of the zero-tense, the second person singular

---

8. The inclusive suffix -aa is incompatible with prefixes other than first person plural.

prefix ʊ- can be dropped, as in (20.a),[9] whereas in the plural, the prefix jɩ- must be maintained (20.b).

    20.a. **Nɔcɛn** dɩ karɛŋak!

        Ø-nɔcɛn   dɩ   ka-rɛŋ-a-k

        sI.2SG-enter PREP SG-forest(K)-D-clK

        'Go (sg) into the forest!'

    b. **Jɩnɔcɛn** dɩ karɛŋak!

        jɩ-nɔcɛn   dɩ   ka-rɛŋ-a-k

        sI.2PL-enter PREP SG-forest(K)-D-clK

        'Go (pl) into the forest!'

As in the use of the zero-tense described in section 3.5.2, the same construction is possible with reference to states of affairs beyond the control of the addressee(s), in which case it is interpreted as expressing a wish rather than a command. However, an explicitly optative formulation of the type described in section 4 tends to be preferred, as in (21.b).

    21.a. **Jɩ-lakɔ** dɩ kɐ-suumɐɣy!

        jɩ-lakɔ   dɩ   kɐ-suumɐɣy

        sI.2PL-be PREP SG-peace(K)

        'Stay (pl) safe!'

    b. Ɛmɩtɛy ɛkaan jɩ-lakɔ dɩ kɐ-suumɐɣy!

        Ɛmɩtɛy   ɛ-kaan   jɩ-lakɔ   dɩ   kɐ-suumɐɣy

        God(E) sI.clE-make sI.2PL-be PREP SG-peace(K)

        'Let God make that you'll stay safe!'

---

9. The homonymy between the subject indexes of second person singular and first person plural in Jóola languages may have a historical explanation. The fact that second person singular ʊ- has cognates in Atlantic languages that do not belong to the Jóola group, whereas first person plural ʊ- seems to be isolated, suggests a development from second person singular to first person plural. The generic reading of second person subjects may have constituted the intermediate stage in this evolution, since the evolution GENERIC SUBJECT > FIRST PERSON PLURAL SUBJECT is a well-known grammaticalisation path (attested in particular in French and other Romance languages), but we are aware of no concrete evidence supporting this hypothesis.

3.5.4. The independent use of the zero-tense
with a third person (singular or plural) subject

In the absence of overt modal marking, independent clauses whose nucleus is a verb in the zero-tense with a third person subject, such as examples (22) to (24), are interpreted as conveying the speaker's wish about the state of affairs to which the clause refers. This construction implies nothing about the speech act participants' ability to control the realisation of the state of affairs in question, but does not exclude it either. In other words, the choice between a hortative and an optative reading entirely relies on the context. For example, depending on the situation in which a sentence such as (24) is uttered, it may be understood as a pure wish (it would be better for them to let the girls study) or as an indirect command (I want them to let the girls study, and I invite you to help achieve this goal).

22. Asɛɛk anɔɔsan, añɯlaw ɯya **akaan** apaalɪ!

    a-sɛɛk   Ø-anɔɔsan a-ñɯl-a-w   Ø-ɯya   **a-kaan**
    SG-woman(A) clA-every   SG-child(A)-D-clA clA-your sI.clA-become

    a-paal-ɪ
    SG-friend(A)-I.2SG

    'For every woman, her child should become her friend!'

23. Kɔm kuniinɛɐk kʊyɛtʊt, **kʊkat** kʊsɛɛkak man kʊkʊr kʊñɯlak!

    kɔm ku-niinɛ-ɐ-k   kʊ-yɛtʊt   **kʊ-kat**
    since PL-man(BK)-D-clBK sI.clBK-be.incapable sI.clBK-let

    kʊ-sɛɛk-a-k   man kʊ-kʊr   kʊ-ñɯl-a-k
    PL-woman(BK)-D-clBK so.that sI.clBK-educate PL-child(BK)-D-clBK

    'Since the men are incapable of doing that, they should let the women educate the children!'

24. Kʊñɯlak kuniinɛɐk kʊmaŋʊtʊjaa kakaraŋak, **kʊkat** kʊñɯlak kʊnaaraak man kʊkaraŋ.

    kʊ-ñɯl-a-k   ku-niinɛ-ɐ-k   kʊ-maŋ-ʊt-ʊ-jaa
    PL-child(BK)-D-clBK clBK-male-D-clBK   sI.clBK-want-NEG-EP-HYP

    ka-karaŋ-a-k   **kʊ-kat** kʊ-ñɯl-a-k   kʊ-naara-a-k
    INF(K)-study-D-clK sI.clBK-let PL-child(BK)-D-clBK clBK-female-D-clBK

    man   kʊ-karaŋ
    so.that sI.clBK-study

    'If the boys don't want to study, they should at least let the girls study.'

3.5.5. The independent use of the zero-tense with Ɛmɪtɛy 'God' in subject role

In general, independent clauses in the zero tense with a third person subject are ambiguous between a hortative and an optative reading. However, examples (25) to (27) illustrate the case of clauses instantiating the same construction but obligatorily interpreted as optative, for the simple reason that neither the speaker nor the hearer are likely to have the ability to exert any coercion on the referent of the subject Ɛmɪtɛy 'God'.[10]

25. Ɛmɪtɛy **esʊtʊraɔlaa**!

Ɛmɪtɛy **ɛ-sʊtʊra-ɔlaa**

God(E) sI.clE-protect-I.1PL.INCL

Lit. 'Let God protect us!'

26. Ɛmɪtɛy **ebɛnɛnʊʊl** sɪmayaay dɪ ejuey!

Ɛmɪtɛy **ɛ-bɛnɛn-ʊʊl** sɪmaaya-a-y dɪ e-ju-e-y

God(E) sI.clE-increase-I.2PL lifetime(E)-D-clE PREP SG-health(E)-D-clE

Lit. 'Let God increase your lifetime and health!'

27. Ɛmɪtɛy **ɛcaamɔɔ** bʊrɔkab bɔɔla!

Ɛmɪtɛy **ɛ-caam-ɔɔ** bʊ-rɔk-a-b b-ɔɔl-a

God(E) sI.clE-pay-I.clA SG-work(B)-D-clB clB-POSS-I.clA

Lit. 'Let God pay him for his work!'

Although unambiguously optative, such clauses cannot be analysed as instantiating a dedicated optative construction, since the construction by itself is ambiguous between a hortative and an optative reading, and the optative reading follows from the impossibility of conceiving the subject 'God' as receiving orders. However, independent clauses in the zero-tense with Ɛmɪtɛy 'God' in the role of subject differ from the other instances of the same construction in that they lack negative counterparts.

─────────

10. Ɛmɪtɛy 'God' is also the definite form of the common noun ɛ-mɪt (plural sɪ-mɪt) 'sky, rain, year'.

4. The optative use of the causative periphrasis
with *-kaan* 'do, make' in the role of causation verb

Jóola Fóoñi has a causative periphrasis in which the verb expressing causation is *-kaan* 'make, do',[11] the caused event being encoded as a subordinate clause with the verb in the zero-tense, as in (28):

28. Pan ıkaan añılaw amanj matı inje ıcılɔɔ.

pan ı-kaan a-ñıl-a-w a-manj matı inje
FUT sI.1SG-make SG-child(A)-D-clA sI.clA-know that PRO.1SG

ı-cıl-ɔɔ
sI.1SG-have.authority-I.clA

'I'll make the child know that I have authority over him.'

The same construction with *Ɛmıtɛy* 'God' in the role of subject of *-kaan* in the zero tense is a usual way of expressing the speaker's wish about a state of affairs unambiguously presented as being beyond the control of the speech act participants, as in (29) to (36):

29. Ɛmıtɛy ɛkaan ataı alɔŋı dı karambaak!

Ɛmıtɛy ɛ-kaan a-ta-ı a-lɔŋ-ı dı
God(E) sI.clE-make SG-husband(A)-I.2SG sI.clA-forget-I.2SG PREP

ka-ramba-a-k
SG-bush(K)-D-clK

Lit. 'Let God make that your husband will forget you in the bush!'

30. Ɛmıtɛy ɛkaan mɛcaay ɛcıla ɛnafaı fanfaŋ!

Ɛmıtɛy ɛ-kaan mɛca-a-y ɛ-cıla ɛ-nafa-ı
God(E) sI.clE-make job(E)-D-clE clE-ANA sI.clE-be.profitable-I.2SG

fanfaŋ
really

Lit. 'Let God make that this job will really be profitable to you!'

---

11. The same verb *-kaan* is also used intransitively with the meaning 'become, be', as in example (33) below.

31. Ɛmɪtɛy ɛkaan ʊjaal ɔlaal burom aljana!

Ɛmɪtɛy ɛ-kaan ʊ-jaal ɔlaal burom aljana

God(E) sI.clE-make sI.1PL-go.INCL PRO.1PL.INCL all paradise(E)

Lit. 'Let God make that all of us will go to paradise!'

32. Ɛmɪtɛy ɛkaan ʊkɔy!

Ɛmɪtɛy ɛ-kaan ʊ-kɔy

God(E) sI.clE-make sI.2SG-recover

Lit. 'Let God make that you(sg) will recover!'

33. Ɛmɪtɛy ɛkaan ɪkaan an atɪ fʊbaj!

Ɛmɪtɛy ɛ-kaan ɪ-kaan Ø-an Ø-atɪ fʊ-baj

God(E) sI.clE-make sI.1SG-be SG-person(A) clA-GEN SG-wealth(F)

Lit. 'Let God make that I'll be a wealthy person!'

As regards negation, consistently with the observation on the impossibility of negating the simple optative clauses described in section 3.5.5, in the optative use of the causative periphrasis, it is possible to negate the subordinate clause by inserting the prohibitive marker, as in (34.a), but not the matrix clause.

34.a. Ɛmɪtɛy ɛkaan takʊm ɪjʊkɔɔl!

Ɛmɪtɛy ɛ-kaan takʊm ɪ-jʊk-ɔɔl

God(E) sI.clE-make PROH sI.1SG-see-I.clA

Lit. 'Let God make that I won't see him/her!'

b. *Ɛmɪtɛy takʊm ɛkaan ɪjʊkɔɔl!

*Takʊm Ɛmɪtɛy ɛkaan ɪjʊkɔɔl!

Lit. *'Let Got not make that I see him/her!'

5. The emergence of an optative particle
via reanalysis of the optative use of the causative periphrasis

At least etymologically, the optative construction described in section 4 is a biclausal construction consisting of a matrix clause *Ɛmɪtɛy ɛkaan* 'Let God make (that)' and a subordinate clause referring to the desired state of affairs. However, in most of the examples we have in our corpus, we observe that *Ɛmɪtɛy* 'God' seems to be repeated as the subject of the subordinate clause, as in examples (35) to (38):

35. Ɛmɪtɛy ɛkaan Ɛmɪtɛy ɛbɔncɛtɔɔ!

Ɛmɪtɛy ɛ-kaan   Ɛmɪtɛy ɛ-bɔncɛt-ɔɔ

God(E) sI.clE-make God(E) sI.clE-forgive-I.clA

Lit. 'Let God make that God will forgive him/her!'

36. Ɛmɪtɛy ɛkaan Ɛmɪtɛy ɛpɔɔyɔlaa dɪ kɛsumutɛk ʊkʊ!

Ɛmɪtɛy ɛ-kaan   Ɛmɪtɛy ɛ-pɔɔy-ɔlaa   dɪ

God(E) sI.clE-make God(E) sI.clE-preserve-I.1PL.INCL PREP

kɛ-sumut-ɛ-k   ʊ-kʊ

SG-illness(K)-D-clK DEM-clK

Lit. 'Let God make that God will preserve us from this illness!'

37. Ɛmɪtɛy ɛkaan Ɛmɪtɛy ɛsʊtʊraɪ!

Ɛmɪtɛy ɛ-kaan   Ɛmɪtɛy ɛ-sʊtʊra-ɪ

God(E) sI.clE-make God(E) sI.clE-protect-I.2SG

Lit. 'Let God make that God will protect you!'

38. Ɛmɪtɛy ɛkaan mbɪ Ɛmɪtɛy ɛtankaɪ sɛɛtaanaay dɪ bʊrʊŋab.

Ɛmɪtɛy ɛ-kaan   mbɪ Ɛmɪtɛy ɛ-tanka-ɪ   sɛɛtaana-a-y

God(E) sI.clE-make POT God(E) sI.clE-protect-I.2SG misfortune(E)-D-clE

dɪ   bʊ-rʊŋ-a-b.

PREP SG-road(B)-D-clB

Lit. 'Let God make that God may protect you from misfortune on the road.'

In their literal reading, examples (35) to (38) violate the constraint according to which, normally, in similar configurations, the subject NP of the matrix clause is not repeated as the subject of the subordinate clause, and coreference with the subject of the matrix clause is simply marked by the subject index, as shown by the impossibility of repeating *Ɛmɪtɛy* in the subordinate clause in a sentence such as (39):

39. Ɛmɪtɛy ɛŋaŋar bʊkap man (*Ɛmɪtɛy) ɛtɛɛp ɛniine.

Ɛmɪtɛy ɛ-ŋa-ŋar   bʊ-kap   man   (*Ɛmɪtɛy) ɛ-tɛɛp

God(E) sI.clE-take-RDPL SG-mud(B) so.that God   sI.clE-build

ɛ-niine.

SG-man(A)

'God took some mud so that he/*God would form a man out of it.'

This suggests that, in a construction that was originally a biclausal construction with *Emɪtɛy ɛkaan* as the matrix clause, the verb of the subordinate clause is being reanalysed as the nucleus of a monoclausal construction, whereas what was originally the matrix clause is being reanalysed as an optative particle. In examples (29) to (34), the biclausal analysis is still possible, but in examples (35) to (38), the repetition of *Emɪtɛy* 'God' as the subject of the verb denoting the desired state of affairs shows that the first occurrence of *Emɪtɛy* is not perceived by speakers as a referential expression. In examples (35) to (38), in spite of its obvious etymology, the sequence *Emɪtɛy ɛkaan* does not behave as a clause decomposable into a subject NP and a verb, but rather as an unanalysed block acting as an optative particle.

6. Conclusion

In this article, after providing the necessary background information on Jóola Fóoñi morphosyntax and describing the use of the TAM form we designate as the zero-tense in the expression of directive speech acts, we have analysed the construction commonly used in Jóola Fóoñi to unambiguously refer to a desired state of affairs beyond the control of the speech act participants. Originally, this construction is a biclausal causative periphrasis in which the matrix clause is *Emɪtɛy ɛkaan* 'Let God make (that)', but the possibility of repeating *Emɪtɛy* 'God' as the subject of the verb denoting the desired state of affairs shows that the construction is being reanalysed as a monoclausal construction in which the former matrix clause acts as an optative particle whose internal structure, although still obvious, is not relevant anymore.

Abbreviations

The letters within parentheses after the lexical gloss of nouns, or after cl in the gloss of words acting as agreement targets, refer to one of the 13 agreement patterns ("classes") that can be governed by Jóola Fooñi noun forms: A, BK, E, S, F, K, B, U, J, M, Ñ, T, and D´.
    The other abbreviations used in this article are as follows:

ALL: allative	DEM: demonstrative
ANA: anaphoric	EP: epenthetic
clX: agreement pattern ('class') X	EXCL: exclusive
D: definite	FUT: future

GEN: genitive

POSS: possessive

HYP: hypothetical

POT: potential

I: index (other than subject index)

PPF: pre-prefix[12]

INCL: inclusive

PREP: preposition[13]

INF: infinitive

PRO: pronoun

LCOP: locational copula

PROH: prohibitive

NEG: negative

RDPL: reduplicative suffix[14]

OBLG: obligative

SG: singular

PL: plural

sI: subject index

References

Creissels D., Sambou P. (2013), *Le mandinka: phonologie, grammaire, textes*, Paris, Karthala.

Creissels D., Biaye S. (2016), *Le balant ganja: phonologie, morphosyntaxe, liste lexicale, textes*, Dakar, IFAN.

Creissels D., Bassène A. C., Sambou B. (2021), "Orphan Classes, Chameleon Stems, Ghost Controllers, Adverbial Classes, and Versatile Relativizers in Jóola Fóoñi (Atlantic)", *Faits de langues*, vol. 52, no. 2, p. 157-176.

Hopkins B. L. (1995), *Contribution à une étude de la syntaxe diola-fogny*, Dakar, Société internationale de linguistique.

Sapir J. D. (1965), *A Grammar of Diola-Fogny*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Weiss H. (1939), "Grammaire et lexique diola du Fogny (Casamance)", *Bulletin de l'IFAN*, t. 1, no. 2-3, p. 412-578.

---

12. The formative designated here as 'pre-prefix' precedes some subject indexes in some tenses. One of its functions is that fulfilled by the sequential marker *di* in the presence of subject indexes incompatible with the pre-prefix, but it also occurs in contexts in which the verb forms including subject indexes incompatible with the pre-prefix show no particular marking.
13. The gloss PREP is used for the multifunction preposition *dɩ* (equally productive in comitative, instrumental and locative uses). The other prepositions are glossed according to their meanings.
14. The reduplicative suffix can be analysed as a marker of syntactic independence, since it is found in two verb forms that have the ability to act as the nucleus of plain assertive clauses, but not in the relative verb forms expressing the same TAM values.