

Noun

Natural gender can be indicated by affix: *kè* (male), *muso* (female): e.g. *denkè* 'son'; *denmuso* 'daughter'. There is no inflection. A plural marker is *-ul-Cu*, where C is, for example, *r*: e.g. *mogo* 'man', *mogou* 'men'; *den* 'child', *denu* = */dēu/*, 'children'; *bááràkèlà* 'worker', *bááràkèláu* 'workers'.

POSSESSION

X of Y = YX: e.g. *nègè sira* 'way of iron' = 'railway'; *Mali bááràkèláu* 'the workers of Mali'.

Adjective

As attribute, adjective follows noun, and appears in doublets: XØ and Xman: e.g. *kòrò* = *kòròman* 'old'; *misira ba* 'the big mosque'; *tasuma ble* 'the red light'.

COMPARATIVE

X *ka* . . . *ni* Y *ye* 'X is . . . er than Y'.

Pronoun

	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
1	<i>ne</i>	<i>an</i>
2	<i>i, e</i>	<i>au</i>
3	<i>a</i>	<i>u</i>

When using these as possessives, a distinction is made between material and non-material possession (often inalienable): for the former *ka* is added: e.g. *n'teri* 'my friend'; *n'fa* 'my father'; *n'ka fali* 'my donkey'; *n'ka faliu* 'my donkeys'. But see also postpositions *fè, la, na*.

DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUN/ADJECTIVE

nin 'this'; *o* 'that'. These may precede or follow the noun; if following, they take the plural marker: e.g. *nin watiri kurau* = *watiri kurau ninu* 'these new cars'.

RELATIVE PRONOUN

min, pl. *minu*: e.g. *dunan min na.na* 'the foreigner who came'.

Verb

Brauner (1974) distinguishes four predicating particles: *do* and *ye* identify; *ka* is descriptive; *bè* localizes. The infinitive marker is *ka*: e.g. *ka cike* 'to plough'.

TENSE MARKERS

Present: *bè*, negative *tè*: e.g. *m'be taga* 'I go' (*/n'/* → */m'/* before */b/*); *n'tè taga* 'I don't go'.

Perfect: *-ra, -la, na* depending on stem final: e.g. *ne taga.ra* 'I went'; *a yele.la* 'he laughed'.

These are negated by *ma*: *m'ma taga* 'I didn't go'. The future marker is *dilbe na*: negated by *te na*.

There are forms for imperfect, immediate present, and pluperfect.

IMPERATIVE

Singular expressed by bare stem; plural marked by *a ye*: e.g. *a ye ta(g)a!* 'go!'

CONDITIONAL

tunna: e.g. *n'tunna a fò* 'I'd say it'.

SUBJUNCTIVE

Affirmative *ka*; negative *kana*: e.g. *n'ka a fò* 'that I should say'; neg. *n'kana a fò*.

VERBAL NOUN

E.g. from *mi* 'to drink': *mini* 'drinking'.

PARTICIPLES

Present *-tò*; past *-le/-ne* (with passive sense): e.g. *Mali tlale do yòrò saba* 'Mali was (= is) divided into three regions'; *Liwru kalanna an fè* 'The book was read by us' (*kalan* 'to read').

Postpositions

Examples:

bè 'with', 'at': used to express possession: e.g. *so bèn'fè* 'I have a house (*so*)';

fè 'by': e.g. *an fè* 'by us';

la, kònò 'in', 'within': e.g. *so kònò* 'inside the house';

cè, cè la 'among'.

Word formation

Mainly by suffixation, though prefixes and compounding are also found.

Examples:

-ni: forms diminutives, e.g. *den* 'child', *denni* 'small child';

-ya: forms abstracts, e.g. *muso* 'woman', *musoya* 'femininity';

-lal-na: indicates agent, e.g. *sènè* 'agriculture', *sènèla* 'peasant';

-bali is privative, e.g. *balo* 'life', *balobali* 'lifeless'; *balobaliya* 'lifelessness';

-tò makes qualitative adjectives, e.g. *kongo* 'hunger', *kongotò* 'hungry';

-ta gives potential sense, e.g. *ye* 'see', *yeta* 'visible';

-lan indicates instrument or means, e.g. *gosi* 'strike', *gosilan* 'hammer'.

Word order

SOV