

## **A Study of the Attitudes of Minianka towards the Use of Mamara Language in Bamako**

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### **Abstract**

Mali is populated by several ethnic groups that often speak different languages. Speakers of those languages generally have attitudes towards either their own languages or the languages of others. The attitudes that may be positive or negative usually affect policy design in that understanding them can help shape the language policy and planning of a government. In Mali, it is often assumed that the Minianka ethnic group tends to give up their own Mamara mother tongue in favor of the dominant Bamanankan language. This paper addresses the issue of the attitudes of Minianka towards Mamara. Three research instruments were used to collect the data. The interview was used for triangulation purposes to collect attitude data from Minianka; the matched-guise test was used with Minianka to collect data about possible hidden attitudes of Minianka towards Mamara; and the questionnaire was used with non-Minianka participants to get data about how they feel about Minianka and Mamara. The findings show that the ethnic group has some rather negative attitudes towards Mamara, and that these attitudes are the result of some stereotypes linked to their culture.

Keywords: attitudes, Bamanankan, Mamara, Minianka.

### **Résumé**

Le Mali est peuplé de plusieurs groupes ethniques qui parlent généralement différentes langues. Les locuteurs de ces langues ont en général des attitudes soit envers leurs propres langues soit envers les langues des autres. Ces attitudes qui peuvent être positives ou négatives affectent souvent l'élaboration de politiques dans le sens que leur compréhension peut aider à orienter la politique et l'aménagement linguistique d'un état. Au Mali, le Minianka a tendance à abandonner sa propre langue maternelle, le Mamara au profit de la dominante langue Bamanankan. Cette étude traite de la question des attitudes du Minianka envers le Mamara. Trois outils de recherche ont été utilisés pour la collecte des données. L'interview a été utilisée avec des objectifs de triangulation pour la collecte des données sur les attitudes des Minianka; la technique du matched guise a été utilisée avec les Minianka pour la collecte des données sur leurs attitudes profondes envers le Mamara; et le questionnaire a été utilisé avec des sujets non-Minianka pour obtenir des données sur leurs attitudes sur le Minianka et le Mamara. Les résultats montrent que cette ethnie a effectivement des attitudes plutôt négatives envers le Mamara, et que ces attitudes sont le résultat de certains stéréotypes liés à leur culture.

Mots-clés: attitudes, Bamanankan, Mamara, Minianka

## **Introduction**

Mali is a multilingual and multicultural nation. Multilingualism is recognized by law N°96-049 of August 2<sup>nd</sup> 1996 which confers on thirteen native languages the status of national languages allowing their use as media of education. Since the first days of independence, the Malian authorities have become aware of the importance and the role that native languages can play in the lives of the citizens, especially in the field of education and therefore have begun to design policies that could facilitate their use.

The linguistic picture of Mali displays some twenty languages (I. Skattum, 2008). The languages can be located in three African language phyla (out of four for the continent), two in the North (Afro-Asiatic and Nilo-Saharan) and one in the South (Niger Congo). The Afro-asiatic phylum is represented by the Semitic language, Hasaniya, and the Berber language, Tamasheq. The Nilo-Saharan phylum is represented by the Soṅay language. The Niger-Congo phylum is represented by the Mande languages (Bamanankan, Maninkakan, Soninke, Xasongaxanoo, and Bozo) and the Voltaic languages (Bomu, Syenara, Mamara). Over the country, but more specifically in the centre of Mali, a West Atlantic branch of the Niger-Congo phylum is represented by Fulfulde. Some of these languages appear, at least in terms of use, as minority languages (Bomu, Mamara, Syenara, and Bozo); others would be seen as majority languages, either in terms of use or in terms of area covered (Bamanakan, Songhay, and Fulfulde).

In addition to these thirteen national languages, the French language inherited from colonisation is present everywhere in the daily lives of the citizens. It is present and dominant in every sphere of the public administration; it has been the language of education, mass media, the government, politics, etc. In short, French has been the language of educated people who use it to communicate with about eighty per cent of the population (who unfortunately, do not understand it), and to dominate them.

The native users of the different languages generally come and meet in the capital city, Bamako, as civil servants, students or just as ordinary workers, bringing, by the same token, both language and culture. In that capital city, the lingua franca is Bamanankan, used by almost everyone for communication. The rest of the languages would be kept as home languages only.

While all the languages in Mali, including French, look threatened by Bamanankan, minority languages appear to be particularly affected. Bamanankan is gradually spreading over the areas covered by the other languages and speakers of those other languages, but minority languages in particular, tend to give up their own languages for Bamanankan; minority

languages appear definitely endangered, and Mamara is just an illustration. H. M. Batibo (2008, p.1) succinctly describes that situation when he states that,

The degree of endangerment has accelerated due to the increased prestige and dominance of the indigenous languages of wider communication, which have been accorded the status of national or official languages or used as lingua francas. This has resulted in the marginalisation and low prestige of the minority languages. Consequently, many minority language speakers have developed negative attitudes towards their languages, resulting in limited intergenerational transmission.

In fact, Young Minianka (just like Dogon, Bobo, Bozo and Senufo) who move to Bamako often fail to keep on using their mother tongue, but rather keep on leaving space for Bamanankan. The result is that that lingua franca is constantly spreading, while the other languages are retracting. Bamanankan is quickly taking up and is becoming the first language in use even at home. Minianka children would only have a Minianka family name, but will be culturally and linguistically Bamanan. Therefore, it becomes important to address and reverse that situation of language shift the long term consequence of which will be the endangerment of the language and its ultimate death. In other words, negative attitudes from both the native Mamara speakers and non-native Minianka can be reversed using, for instance H. M. Batibo's (2005 p.5) holistic empowerment strategy of minority languages as applied to NaroKhoesan. It is a three component strategy which involves linguistic, socio-political, and economic empowerment of the minority language community, with a cultural empowerment component, very strong among Minianka; but that can be the subject of another investigation.

Increasing awareness about the salient role of language in citizens' lives has led most governments to design policies to regulate the use of one or more language(s) in specific areas. Whether poor or rich, all nations tend to defend their languages because denying a people the use of their own language (s) is tantamount to denying them their identity. Policies seem more urgent in multilingual nations where the choice of one official language and/or one language of education for all children may become a threat to, otherwise, a thorn in the flesh of governments.

When a policy is designed and implemented, it is important to stop sometimes and look back on the people who are affected by that policy and reflect on how they feel about it, i.e., there should be an analysis of their feelings, perceptions or even behaviors about that policy. For C. Baker (1988 p.112) "the success of language policy is partly predicated on attitudes surrounding that language" while E. G. Lewis (1981, p.262) cited by C. Baker (1988, p.112) observes that,

Any policy for language, especially in the system of education, has to take account of the attitude of those likely to be affected. In the long run, no policy, which does not do one of three things, will succeed: conform to the expressed attitudes of those involved; persuade those who express negative attitudes about the rightness of the policy; or seek to remove the causes of disagreement.

This is all the more true that knowledge about attitudes helps understand the degree of success or failure of a language programme or planning and determine how to remedy. C. Crystal (2003, p.256) supports this trend and starts by describing language attitudes as,

the feelings people have about their own language or the language(s) of others. These may be positive or negative: someone may particularly value a foreign language [e.g. because of its literary history] or think that a language is especially difficult to learn [e.g. because the script is off-putting].

Crystal equally posits that “knowing about attitudes is an important aspect of evaluating the likely success of a language teaching programme or a piece of language planning,” and thereby underlines the great importance that should be ascribed to the knowledge of language attitudes among users.

Still in the same direction, H. Schiffman (1997, p.4) proposes that attention should be given to attitude studies in policy design. He maintains that,

They may affect the implementation of policy and cause it to fail. Or results may be obtained that are not anticipated or predicted, THE LAW OF UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES, resources may be wasted, no changes result, with perhaps even backlash against the policy.

V. Webb and J. Kembo-Sure (2000) identify three problem areas that language planning basically focus on: the lack of standardization of the norms of a language, the marginalization of some languages, and cases where negative connotations are associated with certain languages. It is the third and last of these issues which is relevant to this paper. It appears that while law may recognize that all the languages are equal, at least in use, segments of populations may choose to connote that some languages are less equal than others; in other words, Malian languages like Bozo, Bomu, Mamara and Syenara look more equal than do Bamanankan and Mamara.

F. L. Siregar (2010), in an investigation of the attitudes of English majors towards a number of English varieties, uncovers that it is the American and British varieties that score higher with the former still scoring higher again. Participants in the study are found to score high in all the items proposed for the American variety. Actually, these are the most used varieties for teaching and learning. A lot of positive attitudes have been expressed with regard to the American variety. Likewise, Minianka might prefer Bamanankan because it is the most widespread language in southern Mali and one of the most important West African languages.

P. Aziakpono and I. Bekker (2010) examine the South African language context and analyze the attitudes of Rhodes University isiXhosa speaking students toward issues of

language of education. The investigation uncovers positive perceptions toward English as a language of education (instrumental motivation) coupled with a positive attitude toward a bilingual use of isiXhosa along with English (both instrumental and integrative motivations). In the same vein, M. Minkailou (2017, pp.277-86) analyses the attitudes of Songhay towards the use of their mother tongue as a medium of education for their children and finds out negative attitudes. What is specific about these studies is the researchers' interest in attitudes toward the language (s) of education, while this paper is focusing on the attitudes toward language use and the possible social stereotypes those attitudes are associated with.

K. U. Ihemere (2006, p.206) emphasizes both language attitudes and shift among the Ikwerre community of Port Harcourt in Nigeria and shows the existence of “a rapid inter-generational language shift from Ikwerre monolingualism to NPE dominant bilingualism”. Age appears as a significant variable with the adults who will tend to continue to use Ikwerre only leading to monolingualism, while younger people who would embrace NPE (Nigerian Pidgin English), leading to bilingualism. Another variable found significant in this study is the very language used by individuals: language attitudes vary according to whether the person speaks Ikwerre only or both Ikwerre and NPE. The situation of minority language users in Bamako may not be so different in the sense that speakers of those languages may think that it would be better for them to master the majority language of the country and hide their own minority languages. Findings by H. M. Batibo (2008) tend to support this trend with Khoesan people in the settlements of Manxotae and Nata in Botswana who express a preference for Setswana, the lingua franca of the area, as the language to be used in their daily lives, including the family, the community and cultural activities; that implies that there is a desire to shift from the mother tongue to Setswana, even in terms of cultural identity. That could also explain the possible desire for some minority language speakers like Miniankato wish a shift to the majority language, Bamanankan. But such attitudes need to be reversed in order to ensure and enhance the intergenerational transmission of the language. That could possibly be the reason why C. Dyers (2008, p.114) citing M. Tannenbaum (2003, p.375) observes that, “most researchers agree that daily intergenerational use of a minority language is crucial for its survival, both at the individual and family level as well as at community level”. Therefore, for the survival of Minianka people with a Minianka identity and language, the use of Mamara becomes a necessity.

Of course, some Malian languages resist to Bamanankan. Native speakers of Songhay, Fulfulde, and Soninke in particular would not give up their mother tongues for Bamanankan. Songhay speakers of northern Mali would leave some space for French, but not for other

national languages. They would be open to other languages, but would keep on using their own respective languages.

Studies on language attitudes in the Malian context are scanty or even non-existent. The studies that have been conducted deal with the use of mother tongues as media of formal education concomitantly with French, the official language of the country. They include S. Traoré (2001), *La Pédagogie Convergente: son expérimentation au mali et son impact sur le système éducatif*, Y. Haidara (2003), *Contribution aux Etats Généraux de l'enseignement du et en français : la Pédagogie Convergente ou enseignement bilingue au Mali.*, M. Konaté and P. Tamboura (1999), *Le défi de la qualité de l'éducation : Expérience de la pédagogie convergente de l'enseignement des langues nationales et du français*, M. L. Haidara (1998), *La perception des parents d'élèves sur l'utilisation de la langue nationale dans l'enseignement : cas de l'inspection d'enseignement fondamental de Ségou I*, etc. Therefore, this investigation becomes a real need in that it will help fill out that gap in knowledge.

The study aims to determine the attitudes of Minianka in Bamako towards the use of their mother tongue, Mamara; it further seeks to understand the reasons lying behind those attitudes.

The following hypotheses have been developed:

1. Alternative Hypothesis: Minianka and Non-Minianka in Bamako have a positive image of Minianka and Mamara.
2. Null Hypothesis: Minianka and Non-Minianka in Bamako have a low image of Minianka and Mamara.

#### 1. Research Methodology

This investigation is a mixed-method study. It uses of three research instruments, namely the interview, the questionnaire (a direct method) and the matched guise technique (an indirect method). That is expected to ensure triangulation. A basic characteristic of a mixed-method research is that it uses at least one quantitative method and one qualitative method (J. W. Creswell, 1999, p.455).

Language attitude interviews generally require from informants to report their own feelings about particular languages or language varieties. While the interview has the advantage of rephrasing questions for better understanding, the presence of the interviewer may negatively affect the quality of the data to collect. In this particular context, participants are expected to report their attitudes about Mamara and its use in Bamako.

The type of interview adopted is the semi-structured one. The question types used are the closed ones interspersed with open questions. Interviews were conducted with thirty-four native speakers of Mamara living in Bamako. The collected data were qualitative and were manually analyzed.

The questionnaire was administered to a random sample of thirty-four non-Minianka participants living in Bamako. The participants were required to report their attitudes about Minianka and their use of Mamara in Bamako. They were submitted a grid of the thirteen languages recognized by law and the corresponding ethnic groups. For both the language and the ethnic group, they were required to give a grade going from 5 (I like very much) to 1 (I totally dislike) as follows:

5 = Like very much;

4 = Like;

3 = neither Like nor Dislike;

2 = Dislike;

1 = totally Dislike.

The use of the questionnaire aims to give time and freedom to informants to reflect and answer the questions, but at times, misunderstanding of question items may crop up. The questionnaire has been particularly advocated with non-Minianka participants to find out how the other ethnic groups feel about Minianka and their Mamara language. The strategy appears all the more important that the findings can confirm or refute the feelings that Minianka think the other ethnic groups have about them and their mother tongue, Mamara.

The indirect method used with the matched guise technique was applied to twenty-five Minianka participants living in Bamako. The history of that technique in attitude studies can be traced back to the sixties with W. E. Lambert et al. (1960). A traditional matched-guise experiment has the characteristics that participants are not aware that they are being inquired (H. Cheng and C. Cao, 2013). Experimental candidates listen to apparently different voices (guises) and assess those speakers across different personality traits such as likability, kindness self-confidence, etc. It has successfully been used as a tool in comparing language attitudes, but also in dialect and accent variations. In fact, language users' accent, speech patterns, vocabulary, intonation and the likes can all serve as markers to assess different traits such as appearance, personality, social status and character.

M. S. Obiols (2002, p.3) identifies seven variables regarding the use of the matched-guise technique: the age, sex and first language of the judges who assess the recorded voices are taken into account; the age, sex and linguistic variety of the people recorded are accounted

for; the interviewees have no information about the voices; there is full control over the ‘voice’ variable with the exclusion of features like volume, timbre, tone, etc.; the duration of the recorded material is between 2 to 3 minutes; the judges assess the personal qualities of the recorded respondents on the basis of their voices; a questionnaire is used to determine the personality traits of the voices assessed (intelligence, leadership, etc.).

A host of weaknesses (and remedies), however, surround the use of the matched guise technique (K. U. Ihemere, 2006). One of the major issues regarding the use of the technique is its artificiality in the sense that judging people on the sole basis of their voices makes it far removed from real-life situations. B. Soukup (2013) even tends to show that whether ‘matched guise’ or ‘open guise’ (i.e., whether judges are informed or not about the guises), that will not affect the responses. Nevertheless, the matched guise does give enough control over the other variables.

For this study, three Mamara-Bamanankan guises are used. They are all Minianka higher education graduates who have received literacy training in both Bamanankan and Mamara. They have been living among Bambara speakers for years. The telephone was used as the recording instrument. The earphone use was to ensure effective listening. The duration of the six recorded voices is around two minutes. But K. U. Ihemere (2006) recognizes that that duration may vary.

The group of judges is composed of twenty-five Minianka university students and recent graduates who have been in Bamako or other Bambara speaking areas for years. Each judge listens to the three guises in the two languages and receives six questionnaires to fill in. At the beginning of the listening task, the judge is told that s/he will be listening to six recordings in two languages. The recordings are presented in such an order that they cannot normally have even the slightest doubt about the guises. The site for the recording and listening activities is university.

The material is a short passage initially written in English, re-arranged and adapted in French to facilitate its translation, and finally translated into Mamara by the Mamara lecturer at university, and into Bamanankan by another university lecturer, a specialist of Bamanankan. The content of the passage is about monkeys and their life in the African forest. The passage has been selected because of its direct connection to an aspect of African wildlife well known to both Minianka and Bamanan. Two filler voices, one in Bamanankan, the other in Mamara, were recorded and are used for practice before each judge embarks on listening to the recordings and filling in the questionnaire.



The analysis of the data collected through the matched guise technique has required the use of an SPSS software to carry out a paired samples t-test (also known as paired t-test, dependent t-test, repeated measures t-test). The results of the test were analyzed following the principle: if the mean score difference between Bamanankan and Mamara is proved to be statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ), the Alternative Hypothesis will be considered true; but if the mean score difference is proved to be statistically non-significant ( $p > .0$ ), the Null Hypothesis will be considered true.

The matched guise questionnaire that follows each listening task is made up of the personality traits to evaluate on a rating scale of five points, going from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). The statement “*the person who speaks looks,*” precedes each trait to rate. The judge circles out his/her choice of a number according to his/he degree of agreement or disagreement.

5 = strongly Agree;

4 = Agree;

3 = neither Agree nor Disagree;

2 = Disagree;

1 = strongly Disagree.

The questionnaire ends with a short background information section on the participants. While there are several personality traits, ten of them have been selected for the study, taking into account how easy or difficult the traits might be for the participants to understand.

The theoretical framework that shapes the investigation is H. Giles, R. Y. Bourhis and D. M. Taylor's (1977) Theory of Language in Ethnic-group Relations within a mentalist perspective to attitude study. In fact, when researching language-attitudes, the specificities of the nature of multilingual communities should be accounted for (U. Smit, 1996). H. Giles, R. Y. Bourhis and D. M. Taylor's (1977) Theory of Language in Ethnic-group Relations appears particularly useful in determining why attitudes are formed as a result of those relations. The theory sees language as one of the principal bases whereby people are categorized into social groups. Language in intergroup contexts may represent in-group inclusion or solidarity or out-group exclusion. Inferior or subordinate group members usually have negative perceptions about their language or speech style. In the same vein, Edwards (1994) cited in P. Aziakpono and I. Bekker (2010, p.41) indicates that in a multilingual/variety area, the high-status language/variety group is often positively perceived by the in-group and out-group (lower-status) members; that of the lower-status group is negatively perceived by either group.

In terms of inter-group comparison, language holds a significant role in the sense that the importance of the language of a group seen as a symbol of group identity appears highly striking when the in-group is compared to the other groups. Members of an inferior group who through intergroup comparison, perceive options to the prevailing situation generally embark on linguistic strategies to improve their social identity. The consequence at the individual level will be social mobility that often involves the adoption of the high-status language or variety, while at the group level, there will be the alternatives of assimilation and redefinition of negative characteristics that respectively involve the shift of a whole subordinate group to the language of the dominant group or a re-evaluation of the language of the group in a more positive light. That re-evaluation may inspire in the relevant language variety and positive attitude toward it (H. Giles, R. Y. Bourhis and D. M. Taylor, 1977). That could explain the attitudes expressed by some minority language speakers. Minianka people in Bamako may simply find Bamanankan as a high-status/prestige language the speakers of which they do their best to integrate.

The mentalist perspective to attitude study adopted in this paper, as opposed to the behaviorist, postulates that language is a mental phenomenon, not directly observable, but that may be inferred using the right stimuli. The approach divides 'attitude' into cognitive, affective and conative constituents (C. Baker, 1992), makes it possible to predict linguistic behavior and remains the one that has received general acceptance in language attitude research (M. S. Obiol, 2002).

## 2. Results and Discussion

### 2.1. Attitudes of Native Minianka: the Interview Results

The participants are all educated people. 88.23% are from higher education, 5.88% from high school and another 5.88% from basic education. As to their language use before coming to Bamako, 82.35% used both Mamara and Bamanankan (and even Bomu and Fulfulde, in rare cases), 11.76% used Mamara only, and 5.88% spoke Bamanankan only. In plain words, Bamanankan was in use in the home town by 88.23% of native Minianka. In gender terms, 88.23% of the informants are male and 11.76% only are female, all of whom randomly selected and organized into three age groups: 5.88% are between 18 and 20 years old, 82.35% are between 21 and 29 and 11.76% are 30 years old or more. Table N0 1 illustrates.

Table N0 1: Background information about Minianka interview participants.

Level of education			Languages used before Bamako			Gender		Age groups		
Higher education	High school level	Basic education	Mamara	Bamanankan	Mamara, Bamanankan (and rarely Bomu and Fulfulde)	Male	Female	18-20	21-29	30+
88.23%	5.88%	5.88%	11.76%	5.88%	82.35%	88.23%	11.76%	5.88%	82.35%	11.76%

Most informants (94.11%) maintain that their family members speak Mamara (may be as a family language of communication) and like to speak it because of pride, love for their mother tongue, its culture, and the safeguard of the Minianka culture and identity. For one participant, he likes the language because he grew-up in it. Another participant states that both his father and mother speak Mamara; and a last one maintains that only the father does. That implies that for these two respondents, Mamara is not the family language of communication.

The participants all agree that Minianka should use Mamara in Bamako; that way, the language and their identity will be preserved and valued. In their eyes, Mamara being endangered, the language needs to be promoted; and as the saying goes, “no matter how long a piece of wood stays in water, it will never turn into a crocodile”; in other words, no matter how long Minianka stay among Bamanan, they will never turn Bamanan.

The majority of the participants (64.70%) maintain that the speakers of the other languages (sometimes) mock at Minianka when they use Mamara; 29.41% support the converse view, and a remaining 5.88% have expressed no opinion. Reasons for mockery may stem from the cousinship relations existing between Gana and Senufo, lack of comprehension, but more significantly from some stereotypes related to aspects of Minianka and their culture. Mamara is also said to sound like Chinese (or Bomu), so does not sound good. Some may even repeat what they hear in Mamara. Additionally, some people may just look surprised when they hear Mamara because of accent; others may think that people speak ill of them, that Mamara is not a good language, that it is an inferior language. It is good to underline that some participants equally report that there are Minianka who think that when they come to Bamako, they should give up Mamara and adopt Bamanankan, the language of ‘civilized people’. The language is also assumed to be difficult, and to stress the extent to which it is assumed to be difficult, a

mocking piece of advice suggests that “before starting speaking Mamara, one has to eat a sack of rice”.

94.1% of the participants ascertain that Minianka hide themselves behind Bamanan. The reasons for that are various: 67.64% maintain that it is because of their food, drinking and worshipping habits; Minianka are also said to have a low image of themselves and their language because of those habits and have ultimately come to grow feelings of inferiority of themselves. Additionally, handful respondents consider that Minianka do not very much speak Mamara because of inter-ethnic marriage; they rather speak Bamanankan.

Most participants (91.17%) have expressed their worries about the future of Mamara. First, Minianka are ashamed of their language because of their food, drinking and worshipping habits (dog meat eating people, traditional beer drinking people and traditional ja god worshipping people) usually rejected by the other ethnic groups; that is the reason why they have developed a low image of themselves and their language and prefer to hide themselves behind Bamanan. As a result, they do not like to speak Mamara. A quoted participant even warns that “someone who is ashamed of his culture will witness the death of his language”.

Second, one reason why Minianka do not use Mamara is that Bamanankan is often seen by the younger generation of Minianka as a ‘civilized language,’ and Mamara, an old-fashioned, a backward language used by village people. Young Minianka who come to Bamako should show, on their return to the village, that they are ‘civilized’ now and should be able to demonstrate that through the abandonment of Mamara and the adoption and use of Bamanankan (29.41%). In addition to that, parents, giving no real importance to the language, do not pass on Mamara to their children.

As to strategies for the maintenance and use of Mamara, participants advise to use the language in public and in the family, to do research on the language, to ignore those who may have negative perceptions about Minianka and Mamara, to create linguistic and cultural associations and festivals. Minianka are advised to be proud of their language and culture, to pass it on to children, to sensitize other Minianka to value and promote the language. Other strategies include the use of sketches in the village and on TV, and the necessity to convince people to use the language and everywhere.

## 2.2. Attitudes of Minianka: the Matched- guise Results

The participants in this second group are twenty-five people. They have been organized into three age groups: 72%, are aged between 20 and 25; 16% are between 26 and 28; and 12% are between 33 and 39. Their language use displays the following: 68% of them have Mamara as

their only first language. If added to the Mamara-Bamanankan combination, the two languages become the first languages for 80% of the participants. 60% use Mamara as the family language of communication; but only 4% use it as the usual language of communication. Bamanankan is the first language for 20%, the family language of communication for 16%, but the usual language of communication for 64%. Last, the Mamara-Bamanankan combination is the first languages for 12% of them, the family language of communication for 24%, and the usual language of communication for 32%. Shortly put, Bamanankan is present in the daily life of Minianka at 30% as the first language (sometimes in combination with Mamara), at 96 % either as the only usual communication language or in combination with Mamara. Table N 02 gives more details.

Table N02: Characteristics of the judge participants.

Language use									Age groups		
First language			Family language use			Usual language of communication			20-25	26-28	33-39
Bamanankan	Mamara	Mamara-Bamanankan	Bamanankan	Mamara	Mamara-Bamanankan	Bamanankan	Mamara	Mamara-Bamanankan	72%	16%	12%
20%	68%	12%	20%	60%	24%	64%	4%	32%			

An analysis of the mean scores indicates that the judges have scored Bamanankan higher than Mamara in seven traits out ten - intelligent, proud and humorous have been more valued in Mamara. The mean scores of the two languages clearly show that the participants have some positive inclination for Bamanankan. In other words, Minianka seem to have some negative attitudes towards their own Mamara language.

If we however look at the level of significance of the mean scores, we will notice that there is no statistically significant difference ( $p > .05$ ). In fact, apaired-samples t-test was calculated to compare the mean score of Bamanankan to that of Mamara. The mean of Bamanankan was 3.99 (sd = .5968) and the mean of Mamara was 3.95 (sd = .5708). No significant difference was found between the two mean scores ( $t = 1.220, p > .05$ ). On this ground, the null hypothesis postulated is maintained at the expense of the alternative one which is rejected. Table N0 3 presents the matched-guise statistics of the two languages.

Table N0 3: The matched-guise statistics of languages.

Variables	Bamanankan			Mamara		
	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Intelligent	4.61	75	.70	4.71	75	.54
Friendly	3.71	75	.90	3.64	74	.90
Educated	4.53	74	.67	4.49	74	.80
Reliable	3.95	74	.89	3.79	75	.93
Open-minded	4.31	75	.88	4.28	74	.93
Proud	3.66	74	1.09	3.80	74	1.09
Polite	4.35	75	.80	4.24	74	.93
Humorous	2.56	75	1.35	2.64	74	1.34
Hardworking	4.24	74	.87	4.03	75	.97
Orderly	3.96	75	1.10	3.89	75	1.17
Total	3.99	746	.5968	3.95	744	.5708

Table NO 4: Paired Samples Statistics

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Paired Bamanankan	3.99	746	1.091	.040
Mamara	3.95	744	1.117	.041

Table NO 5: Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Paired Bamanankan - Mamara	.043	.964	.035	-.026	.113	1.220	740	.223

Wholly considered, the t-test results have demonstrated that the judge participants have scored Bamanankan higher than Mamara in every single personality trait they have been

submitted save for three. That implies that they have definitely expressed positive feelings towards Bamanankan at the expense of Mamara. But at the same time, those t-test results have failed to demonstrate any statistical significance of the mean score difference. That situation might stem from possible sampling errors and the size of the sample.

### 2.3. Attitudes of non-Minianka: the Questionnaire Results

The sample is made up of twenty-six male and eight female participants with the following age groups: 70.58% are aged between 21 and 25, and 29.41% are aged between 26 and 29. The participants represent nine ethnic groups for six languages, the dominant one being the Bamanan-Maninka combination with the Bamanankan-Maninkakan language combination. Additionally, 58.82% of them have Bamanankan as their first language and 41.17% (made up of six dogon, one bobo, two khassonké, and two bamanan informants) have either their own language or the languages of the other ethnic groups as their first languages. That clearly shows the extent of the spread of Bamanankan language. While this language is in constant conquest of territories from other languages, those languages tend to be in constant withdrawal, leaving space for it.

Table N06: Characteristics of the non-Minianka participants.

Ethnic groups	First language						Gender		Age groups	
	Bamanankan	Maninkakan	Fulfuldé	Khassonké	Bomu	Dogoso	Male	Female	21-25	26-29
Bamanan	26.47 %		2.94 %		2.94%		76.47%	23.52%	70.58%	29.41%
Maninka	14.70 %	8.82 %								
Khassonké				5.88%						
Peulh	5.88 %									
Dogon					17.64%					
Soninké	2.94 %									
Bobo	2.94 %				2.94%					
Senoufo	2.94									

	%								
Somono	2.94								
	%								
Total	58.82	8.82	2.94	5.88%	5.88%	17.64%			
	%0	%	%						

An examination of the results displayed reveals that 97.05% of non-Minianka score Mamara language among the three least appreciated languages of the south of Mali. I will not consider much the rankings of Hasaniya and Tamasheq, the least appreciated languages of Mali, because of the Tuareg-Arab led rebellion in the North of Mali as some participants may still keep in their heart some anger against light-skin northerners. Syenara language of the Senuso ethnic group, very close to Mamara, remains the least appreciated, ranked twelfth after Mamara, ranked tenth. While Mamara is not the very last on the list in terms of ranking, it appears as one of the least appreciated languages of Mali. While top ranking languages are not the primary concern of this paper, it is worth noting that the Bamanankan-Maninkakan combination holds the top position in this ranking, immediately followed by Fulfulde. Table N0 7 gives more details about language and ethnic group scores.

Table N07: Language and ethnic group scores.

Language scores				Ethnic group scores			
Languages	Sum of points	Mean	Rank	Ethnic groups	Sum of points	Mean	Rank
Bamanankan	160	4.71	1	Bamanan	162	4.76	1
Bomu	80	2.35	8	Bwa (Bobo)	86	2.53	10
Bozo	75	2.21	9	Bozo	89	2.62	9
Dogoso	90	2.65	7	Dogon	104	3.06	4
Fulfulde	116	3.41	3	Fulani (Peulh)	123	3.62	3
Hasaniya	57	1.68	12	Moore, Arab	76	2.24	12
Khassonké	99	2.91	4	Khassonké	102	3.00	6
Mamara	71	2.09	10	Maninka	125	3.68	2
Maninkakan	125	3.68	2	Minianka	99	2.91	8
Songhay	99	2.91	4	Songhay	103	3.03	5
Soninké	97	2.85	6	Soninké	100	2.94	7
Syenara	57	1.68	12	Senuso	84	2.47	11
Tamasheq	66	1.94	11	Tamasheq	71	2.09	13



The scores allocated to the ethnic groups indicate once more that Minianka are far from being among the appreciated ethnic groups of Mali. They have been ranked eighth out of the ten ethnic groups of the South of Mali. That ranking is in line with the feelings that Minianka participants have already expressed in the interview and the inclination demonstrated in the matched-guise results.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this paper have demonstrated that Minianka do not very much like to use their Mamara mother tongue. While the interview findings have clearly shown that most Minianka prefer to speak Bamanankan at the expense of Mamara and while those of the questionnaire have displayed that non-Minianka do not value much Minianka and Mamara, the matched-guise findings do not appear to be so conclusive in that though most of the participants have scored Bamanankan higher than Mamara, the mean score difference has not proved to be statistically significant as to reject the null hypothesis. But wholly considered, the findings support H. Giles, R. Y. Bourhis and M. Taylor's (1977) Theory of Language in Ethnic-group Relations and the mentalist approach to language attitudes. Minianka have developed a low image of themselves and their own language, Mamara and seem to prefer to be Bamanan and to speak Bamanankan. Mamara appears, therefore, as a low-status language spoken by people who look forward to shifting to the high-status language that Bamanankan represents in their eyes. The reasons as displayed by the interview results are social, cultural, but may also be economic, financial and political, especially for the younger generation of Minianka who may wish to be in the heart of decision-making processes in the capital, but who might be handicapped by their Minianka and Mamara labels.

The uttered negative attitudes that Minianka have expressed towards Mamara should be seen as the consequence of the negative perceptions that non-Minianka are thought to have towards that Minianka ethnic group and Mamara, both of which ranked among the three least appreciated ethnic groups and languages of Mali. Addressing and reversing those attitudes become a need if we want to ensure the survival of that language. The interview informants have suggested a number of strategies aiming at valuing Minianka and promoting their language and their culture; the strategies suggested include the organization of language and cultural festivals and the creation of Mamara language organizations that could incite parents to use and pass on the language to the children. Wholly considered and given the scope of the present investigation, the researcher has no pretention to claim for the generalization of these findings before they are confirmed by further research.

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