Term focus in Fulfulde

Arguments for a grammaticalization of former cleft constructions

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1   Basic information on Fulfulde[1]

- **Classification:** Niger-Congo > Atlantic-Congo > Atlantic > Northern > Senegambian > Fulani-Wolof > Fula > West Central (Lewis 2009)

- **ISO 693-3:** fuf

- Fulfulde is spoken in **18 countries** from Western to Central Africa by around **18 million people** (Gajdos 2004: 9-11)

- There are around **3 million speakers** of the Fuuta Jaloo dialect in Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, Gambia, Mali, Sierra Leone (Lewis 2009)

Map 1: The Fulfulde dialect of Fuuta Jaloo (Guinea)[2]

1.1   Basic morphosyntax

- SVO

- Head-initial

- **24 agreement classes:** Agreement between the noun and definite articles, demonstratives, adjectives, numerals and pronouns

- **Verbal morphology:**

  (1)   **stem**–(derivational suffix$_n$)–**TAM**–(subject pronoun)–(IO pronoun)–(DO pronoun)

- **Verb paradigms:**
  - **Three perfective** paradigms vs. **five imperfective** paradigms[3]
  - In each paradigm the verbs are classified in three voices: **active**, **middle**, **passive**
  - As in many Atlantic languages, the TAM-markers merge tense, aspect, voice and focus (cf. Robert 2010)

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[2] Harrison, Annette. 2003. *Fulfulde language family report*, SIL Electronic Survey Reports 2003-009. http://www.sil.org/silesr/2003/silesr2003-009.html. (10 May, 2012.)

[3] The asymmetry of 3 vs. 5 paradigms is due to the fact that in the traditional Fulfulde literature, moods as imperative and subjunctive are part of the imperfective paradigm.

o Relevant for term focus constructions are two paradigms which I call PERFECTIVE and IMPERFECTIVE BACKGROUND (BG) because they occur in background clauses:

  ▪ PFV.BG[4]: term focus, relative clauses, interrogatives, temporal clauses
  ▪ IPFV.BG: term focus, relative clauses, interrogatives, temporal clauses

Voice	PERFECTIVE BACKGROUND		
ACTIVE	**-i**	-(u)[5]-mi	(1S)
		-(u)-ɗaa	(2S)
		-(u)-ɗen	(1P.INCL)
		-(u)-ɗon	(2P)

Table 1: The PERFECTIVE BACKGROUND in active voice

- In both verb forms, the subject pronoun of 1S, 2S, 1P.INCL and 2P clitizises to the verb:

(2) a. Ko   hanki   **o**   wind-**i**.   b. Ko   hanki   wind-**u**-**mi**.
         TF   yesterday   3S   write-A.PFV.BG   TF   yesterday   write-A.PFV.BG-1S
         'S/he wrote YESTERDAY.'   'I wrote YESTERDAY.'

[cf. Diallo 2000: 119]

2   Term focus in Fulfulde

DEFINITION OF FOCUS:

"A focal information in a linguistic expression is that information which is relatively the most important or salient information in the given communicative setting, and considered by S [the speaker] to be most essential for A [the addressee] to integrate into his pragmatic information."   (Dik 1997: 326)

PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS OF FOCUS:

Closing an information gap (completive/assertive focus); Rejecting, replacing, expanding, restricting, selecting information (contrastive focus)[6]

TERM FOCUS comprises here focus on the **subject**, the **object**, **adverb**, **prepositional phrase** (no sentence or predicate-centered focus)

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4   The verb form PFV.BG is also used in narrated utterances and in stative and durative expressions.

5   The TAM-suffix -u- is deleted after a derivational suffix.

6   The following example shows contrastive (replacing) focus on the object:

A: John bought apples.

B: No, he bought **BANANAS**.   [Dik 1997: 333]

2.1 The construction

The most frequent construction for term focus[7] is the ex-situ construction $\boxed{[\textit{Ko}\ \text{X}]_{\text{Foc}}\ \textbf{S V Z}}$

- The verb needs to be either in PFV.BG or in IPFV.BG
- When a pronoun is in focus, it must be the emphatic pronoun

(3) ADVERB FOCUS:

    A: **Ko** **honde tuma** yah-**u-ɗaa** ka maakiti?

         TF when go-A.PFV.BG-2S PREP market.1

         'WHEN did you go to the market?'

    B: **Ko** **hande** (mi yah-**i** ka maakiti).

         TF today 1S go-A.PFV.BG PREP market.1

         '(I went) TODAY (to the market).'   [cf. Baldé, Caudill & Diallo 2000: 36]

Summary of the pattern:

(4)   [*Ko* nominal subject/emphatic pronoun]$_{\text{Foc}}$ V$_{\text{BG}}$ Z   SUBJECT FOCUS

      [*Ko* nominal object/emphatic pronoun]$_{\text{Foc}}$ S V$_{\text{BG(-S)}}$ Z   OBJECT FOCUS

      [*Ko* X]$_{\text{Foc}}$ S V$_{\text{(-S)}}$ Z   OTHER TERM FOCUS

- ➢ Syntactic marking by using the sentence-initial position
- ➢ Morphological marking by the focus marker
- ➢ The focus can be on a **question word**, a **subject**, an **object**, an **adverb** or a **prepositional phrase**
- ➢ Only one element can be focalized in a clause
- ➢ Both assertive and contrastive focus can be expressed
- ➢ In the out-of-focus clause no negated verb is allowed

- ➢ On the surface these constructions look like '*It is X …*' constructions, with X the element in focus and a background clause following

2.2 The cleft hypothesis

Sylla (1993) claims for the Senegalese dialect that term focus constructions are **cleft sentences** ('*clivés*'), which are closely related to his so-called pseudo-clefts, interrogatives, relative and temporal sentences; Indeed, they look similar to their Guinean counterpart:

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[7]   *In-situ* focus is also attested, but seems to be quite rare.

(5)   ko   hannde   Aali   sood-i   pucc-u   ngu   **(Senegal)**

      ko   hande   Aali   sood-i   pucc-u   ngun   **(Guinea)**

      ID   today   Aali   buy-A.PFV.BG   horse-10   DEF.10[8]

      'it is today that Ali has bought the horse'   [Sylla 1993: 110]

DEFINITION OF A PROTOTYPICAL CLEFT:

> "A CLEFT CONSTRUCTION (CC) is a complex sentence structure consisting of **a matrix clause headed by a copula** and **a relative or relative-like clause** whose relativized argument is coindexed with the predicative argument of the copula. Taken together, the matrix and the relative express a logically simple proposition, which can also be expressed in the form of a single clause without a change in truth conditions."
>
> (Lambrecht 2001: 467)

➤   Prototypical cleft sentences are formed using a relative marker; This is not the case in term focus constructions, although "normal" relative clauses do have such a marker:

(6)   OBJECT RELATIVE:

      Gerto-gal   [**ngal**   ɓe   hirs-i   hanki]$_{Rel}$ ngal …

      chicken-11   REL.11   3P   slaughter-A.PFV.BG   yesterday   DEF.11

      'The chicken [that they slaughtered yesterday], … .'

                           [cf. Baldé, Caudill & Diallo 2000: 91]

⇒   As at this point term focus constructions look like clefts, with the restriction that no relative marker is needed, I would call them therefore rather **cleft-like**

2.3   *The grammaticalization hypothesis*

As for other languages (e.g. Kikuyu, Niger-Congo > Bantu, cf. Heine & Reh 1984: 151f.), it can be assumed that the term focus construction is **derived** from a cleft construction, where the relative marker has been deleted and the copula grammaticalized to a term focus marker (Heine & Reh 1984: 174 describe that the latter happened e.g. in Somali, Afro-Asiatic). Since cleft sentences inherently promote the clefted element, this construction became used only for term focus:

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[8]   The above gloss is my own adaptation.

(7) *Ko   gerto-gal   **ngal**   ɓe   hirs-i   hanki.   *FORMER CLEFT[9]
     COP   chicken-11   REL.11   3P   slaughter-A.PFV.BG   yesterday

     Ko   gerto-gal   ɓe   hirs-i   hanki.[10] TODAY'S TERM FOCUS
     TF   chicken-11   3P   slaughter-A.PFV.BG   yesterday
     ⏟ IDENTIFICATIONAL CLAUSE ⏟   ⏟ BACKGROUND CLAUSE ⏟

     'It is a chicken (that) they slaughtered yesterday.'

2.3.1 In favor of the grammaticalization hypothesis: The identificational clause (in-focus part)

➤ *Ko* is used as a copula (with an identifying meaning):

(8) Klaus   [**ko**   almanjo.]$_{Foc}$
     Klaus   COP   German
     'Klaus is a German.'   [Diallo forth.: 44]

➤ *Ko* is also used as an identificational marker in presentational sentences in order to highlight/identify the following element:

(9) [**Ko**   kot-o   an]$_{Foc}$ nii.
      ID   older.brother-1   1S.POSS   PRES
     'That's my older brother.'   [Baldé, Caudill & Diallo 2000: 15]

➤ In term focus constructions, *ko* grammaticalized to a term focus marker, still identifying the focused element:

(10) [**Ko**   janngo]$_{Foc}$ o   yah-ata.
       TF   tomorrow   3s   go-A.IPFV.BG
     'S/he will go TOMORROW.'

➤ Apart from the hypothesis that the term focus marker grammaticalized from a copula, it is also possible that the identificational marker developed to a copula

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[9] The asterisk denotes that this form is not attested today.

[10] Examples without any references are made up by myself with native speakers in Berlin.

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2.3.2 In favor of the grammaticalization hypothesis: The background clause (out-of-focus part)

➢ The same verb paradigms (PFV.BG and IPFV.BG) are used as well in (subject and object) relative clauses for backgrounding the relative clause towards the matrix clause:

(11) Rew-ɓe [ɓe   mi taw-**i**   ɗoo]_{Rel}   ɓen   kan-aa.
     women-2 REL.2 1S find-A.PFV.BG-1S   here   DEF.2   be.ugly-A.PFV.NEG
                    ‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾BACKGROUND‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾
     'The women [that I found here] are not ugly.'

➢ This general background function is therefor also used in term focus constructions, still backgrounding the out-of-focus part and thus foregrounding the in-focus part:

(12) Ko   honde tuma   yah-**u**-ɗaa   ka   maakiti?
     ID   when   go-A.PFV.BG-2S   PREP   market.1
            ‾‾‾FOREGROUND‾‾‾   ‾‾‾‾BACKGROUND‾‾‾‾
     'WHEN did you go to the market?'

➢ In the Malian dialect the verb form is reanalyzed as focus marking: Focus does not need to be marked morphologically (the focus marker can be dropped), the syntactic fronting as well as the verb form are sufficient:

(13)   Segu   njipp-**ii**-mi.   **(Mali)**
     Ko   Segu   mi   cipp-ii.   **(Guinea)**
     TF   Segu   1S   get.out-M.PFV.BG-1S
     'I got out (of the car) at SEGU.'   [Gajdos 2004: 108]

➢ The deletion of the relative marker is not unusual and can be historically explained. E.g. in the Malian and in the Senegalese dialect the relative marker is already optionally deletable in relative clauses (whereas it is still obligatory in the Guinean dialect):

(14) Rew-ɓe   [**(ɓe)**   taw-∅-mi   ɗo]_{Rel} ɓe   ko   yontaaɓe. **(Senegal)**
     Rew-ɓe   [ɓe   mi taw-i   ɗoo]_{Rel} ɓen   no   labaa.   **(Guinea)**
     women-2   REL.2 1S find-A.PFV.BG-1S   here   DEF.2 AUX   be.beautiful
     'The women [that I found here] are beautiful.'   [Sylla 1982: 174]

3   Summary

⇒ Following Heine & Reh (1984: 156), a cleft may be seen as the source of the *ex-situ* focus strategy (in what they call 'weakly grammaticalized systems'); This is why the out-of-focus part shows resemblances to relative clauses

⇒ The term focus construction in Fulfulde may thus be derived from a former cleft sentence:

(15) a.   Fatu   [yah-**u**-**ɗo**   ka   maakiti]$_{Rel}$ no   welt-ii.   **RELATIVE**
         Fatu   go-A.PFV.BG-REL.1 PREP   market.1   AUX   be.happy-M.PFV.BG
         'Fatu [who went to the market] is happy.'

      b.   ***Ko**   Fatu   [yah-**u**-**ɗo**   ka   maakiti]$_{Rel}$.   ***FORMER CLEFT**
         COP   Fatu   go-A.PFV.BG-REL1 PREP   market.1
         'It is Fatu [who went to the market].'

      c.   **Ko**   Fatu   yah-**i**   ka   maakiti.   **TERM FOCUS**
         TF   Fatu   go-A.PFV.BG   PREP   market.1
         'FATU went to the market.'

4   Abbreviations

*	not attested today		PFV	perfective
A	active voice		POSS	possessive pronoun
AUX	auxiliary		PREP	preposition
BG	background		PRES	presentational marker
CC	cleft construction		REL	relative marker
COP	copula		Rel	relative clause
DEF	definite		S	singular
DO	direct object		S	subject
FOC	focus		-S	suffixed subject pronoun
ID	identificational marker		TAM	tense-aspect-mood
INCL	inclusive		TF	term focus marker
IO	indirect object		V	verb
IPFV	imperfective		X	focused element
M	middle voice		Z	other elements of a clause (adverbs, prepositional phrases etc.)
n	number of elements			
NEG	negation			
P	plural			

5   References

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