

Focalization in Fulfulde of Fuuta Jalloo (Guinea)

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1 Basic information on Fulfulde of Fuuta Jalloo (Guinea)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 **22 million people** (Gajdos 2004: 9-11)
- There are around **3 million speakers** of the Fuuta Jalloo dialect in Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, Gambia, Mali, Sierra Leone (Lewis 2009)



Map 1: The Fulfulde dialect of Fuuta Jalloo (Guinea)²

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** paradigms³
 - 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)

¹ This work is based on my PhD research on Information Structure in Fulfulde, which is realized in affiliation to the Integrated Graduate School in the SFB 632 'Information Structure' and is funded by the DFG.

² Harrison, Annette. 2003. *Fulfulde language family report*, SIL Electronic Survey Reports 2003-009. <http://www.sil.org/silesr/2003/silesr2003-009.html>. (11 October, 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.

2 Focalization 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)

2.1 Term focus

2.1.1 In-situ

- In-situ term focus is possible, but rarely found (additional prosodic marking?):

(2) A: Sammba, hida yah-a **honto?**
Sammba, 2S go-IPFV2 where
,Sammba, WHERE do you go?‘

B: Mido yah-ude **do’o** (daββ-it-oy-gol hode-re no
1S go-IPFV1 here search-REP-DIST-INF pearl-5 COP
bug-aa ka tumbe-re maay-o).
throw-PASS.PFV.BG PREP middle-5 river-9
,I’m going HERE (to get back a pearl which has been thrown into the middle of the river).‘ [Salvaing 1985: 156]

2.1.2 Ex-situ

The most frequent construction for term focus is the ex-situ construction [Ko X]_{Foc} S V Z

- When a pronoun is in focus, it must be the emphatic pronoun
- The verb needs to be either in PFV.BG or in IPFV.BG (\cong restriction in contrast to in-situ term focus), all voices are possible; in these verb forms, the subject pronouns of 1S, 2S, 1P.INCL and 2P cliticize to the verb

(3) ADVERB FOCUS:

A: **Ko** **honde tuma** yah-u-**daa** ka maakiti?
TF when go-PFV.BG-2S PREP market.1
,WHEN did you go to the market?‘

B: **Ko hannde** (mi yah-i ka maakiti).
 TF today 1S go-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]_{Foc} V_{BG} Z SUBJECT FOCUS
 [Ko nominal object/emphatic pronoun]_{Foc} S V_{BG(-S)} Z OBJECT FOCUS
 [Ko X]_{Foc} S V_(-S) Z OTHER TERM FOCUS

- Syntactic marking by using the sentence-initial position
- Morphological marking by the focus marker
- Restriction of verb forms in the out-of-focus clause (only PFV.BG and IPFV.BG, no negation)
- Change of the melody of the sentence (Diallo & Ermisch 2010)
- The focus can be on a **question word**, a **subject**, an **object**, an **adverb** or a **prepositional phrase**
- Only one element per clause can be focalized
- Both assertive and contrastive focus can be expressed

2.1.3 Hypotheses regarding the ex-situ term focus construction

A. THE CLEFT HYPOTHESIS:

Sylla (1993) claims for the Senegalese dialect that term focus constructions are **cleft sentences** (*‘clivés’*); this could be assumed for the Guinean dialect as well, as they look highly similar:

(5) ko hannde Aali sood-i pucc-u ngu (Senegal)
 ko hannde Aali sood-i pucc-u ngun (Guinea)
 TF today Aali buy-PFV.BG horse-10 DEF.10⁴
 ,it is TODAY that Ali has bought the horse‘ [Sylla 1993: 110]

- Following the definition of a prototypical cleft of Lambrecht (2001: 467) (matrix clause headed by a copula + relative or relative like clause), the out-of-focus clause should be a relative or relative-like clause
- **But here: no relative pronoun** (which is obligatory in the subject and object relative in the Fulfulde of Fuuta Jaloo, but not in the Senegalese variety) in the out-of-focus clause

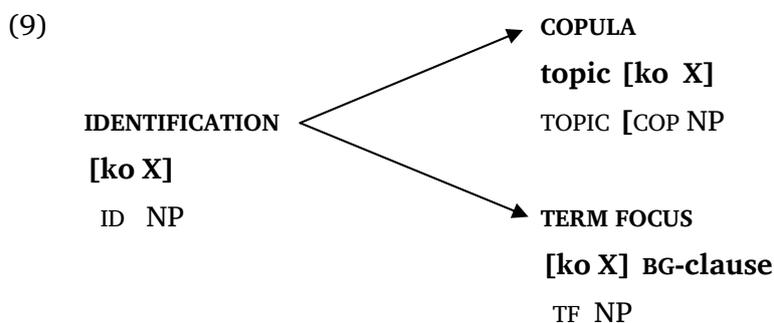
⁴ The above gloss is my own adaptation of this example.

- (8) Rew-ɓe [(ɓe) taw-∅-mi dɔ]_{Rel} ɓe ko yontaabe. (Senegal)
 Rew-ɓe [ɓe mi taw-i dɔɔ]_{Rel} ɓen no labaa. (Guinea)
 women-2 REL.2 1S find-PFV.BG-1S here DEF.2 COP beautiful
 ‚The women [that I found here] are beautiful.‘ [Sylla 1982: 174]

C. THE IDENTIFICATIONAL AND VERB SYSTEM HYPOTHESIS:⁷

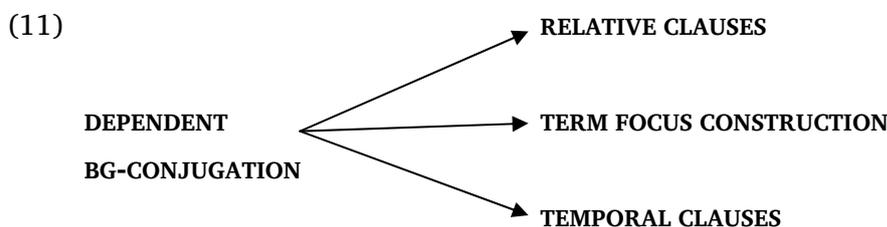
Alternatively, one can assume the development of the ex-situ term focus construction from two different sides which became combined:

- **Development of the term focus marker *ko* and the copula *ko* from the identificational marker *ko*:** *ko*⁸ is also used as an identificational marker in presentational sentences in order to highlight/identify the following element:



- (10) [Ko kot-o an.]_{Foc}
 ID older.brother-1 1S.POSS
 ‚This is my older brother.‘

- **The verb systems possesses a background (BG) verb form which occurs in three different contexts:** the perfective and imperfective background forms are used in relative clauses, interrogatives/term focus constructions and temporal clauses, always backgrounding the respective clause towards the main clause which is thus foregrounded:



⁷ Güldemann (personal communication).

⁸ A homophonous *ko* derived from the nominal system is used in headless relative clauses and as a relative marker (Diallo & Ermisch 2010). The latter can be used to replace the relative pronoun of the noun class with which it is co-indexed.

(12) [Gila mi hewt-i doo]_{Temp} mi yi'-aali jogii-do defte-re.
 since 1S arrive-PFV.BG here 1S see-PFV.NEG hold-1 book-5
 ,[Since I arrived here] I didn't see any person holding a book.' [Diallo 2000: 221]

- o In the Malian dialect the background verb form together with the syntactic fronting of the focal term is strong enough so that focus does not need to be marked morphologically (the focus marker can be dropped):

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

2.2 Predicate-centered focus (PCF)

DEFINITION:

“Predicate-centered focus types subsume different categories which are typically tied semantically and morphosyntactically to the verb or predicate as the carrier of both proposition and illocution. These are focus on the **lexical meaning of the verb** (=“verb focus”) and focus on predicate operators like the **truth value of the utterance** or such **categories as tense, aspect, modality etc.** (=“operator focus”).”⁹

2.2.1 Verb focus

As for PCF, in the literature only the existence of the special verb form in the **perfective** (PFV3) is mentioned, which doesn't have any other function than focus on the lexical meaning of the verb (cf. Diallo 2000: 153ff.):

(14) O hocc-u (o wujj-aa).
 3S pick.up-PFV3 3S steal-PFV.NEG
 ,He PICKED (it) UP (he didn't steal (it)).' [Diallo 2000: 156]

First tests with two native speakers using the questionnaire of Skopeteas et al. (2006), adapted by B7 (2011), showed that there is also the possibility to use the background verb form in combination with the preterite suffix *-no(o)*:

(15) O goll-u-no.
 3S work-PFV.BG-PRET
 ,[A: Did he WORK or did he SLEEP? B:] He WORKED.' [OB-FT-204-B]

⁹ Description of project B7 “Predicate-centered focus types: A sample-based typological study in African languages” of the CRC 632 “Information Structure”, http://www2.hu-berlin.de/predicate_focus_africa/en/project.php. (11 October, 2012.)

focus on	PERFECTIVE	IMPERFECTIVE
verb	PFV3	IPFV3
	PFV.BG-PRET	IPFV3 + <i>woni</i>
TAM	PFV1-PRET ↔ IPFV3 + <i>woni</i>	
	PFV.BG ↔ IPFV1	
	PFV1-PRET ↔ DIST-IPFV3 (+ <i>woni</i>)	
truth value	PFV.BG-PRET ↔ PFV.NEG-PRET (assertion) (negation)	DIST-IPFV3 ↔ DIST-IPFV.NEG (assertion) (negation)

Table 1: The morphological means to express predicate-centered focus types

2.3 On the background verb form PFV.BG

Table 2 illustrates the occurrences of the perfective and imperfective verb paradigms:

- The function of the fields in light grey are not mentioned in the literature
- Asymmetry: in the imperfective, there is no verb form expressing only verb focus; the background form doesn't have another usage
- PFV1 (perfect) and IPFV1 (progressive) inherently focus TAM
- PCF with IPFV3 always needs an additional marking with the distal suffix or a construction with the existential verb

The usages of PFV.BG seem to be contradictory:

- It has a backgrounding function
- It is used in narratives (where the verb cannot be backgrounded as it advances the storyline)
- It can be used for PCF (= foregrounding)

But: A similar polyfunctional verb paradigm can be found e.g. in Toura (Niger-Congo > Mande), where the same construction is used for term focus constructions, relative clauses, narration and verb focus (Bearth 1993: 92).

⇒ In any way, the term PERFECTIVE BACKGROUND may not be very suitable

⇒ At this time, I do not have a better idea how to group these different functions under one term

	PERFECTIVE			IMPERFECTIVE				
	PFV1	PFV.BG	PFV3	IPFV1	IPFV2	IPFV3	IPFV.BG	IPFV5
general usage	perfect	narration, stative verbs		progressive	subjunctive, verb chain	future, habitual		imperative, optative
background		term focus/ interrogative					term focus/ interrogative	
		relative clauses					relative clauses	
		temporal clauses					temporal clauses	
predicate- centered focus		verb focus (V-PFV.BG-PRET)	verb focus			verb focus (V + <i>woni</i>)		
		truth value (V-PFV.BG-PRET)				truth value (V-DIST-IPFV3) (V-DIST-IPFV3 + <i>woni</i>)		
	TAM (V-PFV1-PRET)	TAM		TAM		TAM (V-DIST-IPFV3)		

Table 2: Occurrences of the perfective and imperfective verb paradigms

Note:

- The two negation forms PFV.NEG and IPFV.NEG as well as the infinitive and the preterite are not included in the table
- The IPFV2 and IPFV5 should be excluded from the aspectual category imperfective and be renamed as they are moods

3 Summary

- In the Fulfulde of Fuuta Jaloo, the verb forms merge information on focus, aspect and voice
- On the information structural level, the conjugational suffixes are used in order background **and** foreground terms, clauses and constituents
- In the perfective, the verb form PFV.BG is highly polyfunctional, as it is used in narratives, for backgrounding clauses and focusing on the verb

4 Abbreviations

*	not attested today		elements	S	subject
BG	background	NEG	negation	·s	suffixed subject
COP	copula	NP	noun phrase		pronoun
DEF	definite	O	object	TAM	tense/aspect
DIST	distal	P	plural		/mood
DO	direct object	PASS	passive voice	Temp	temporal clause
Foc	focus	PFV	perfective	TF	term focus marker
ID	identificational marker	POSS	possessive pronoun	V	verb
INCL	inclusive	PREP	preposition	X	focused element
INF	infinitive	PRET	preterite	Z	other elements of a clause (adverbs, prepositional phrases etc.)
IO	indirect object	REL	relative marker		
IPFV	imperfective	Rel	relative clause		
MIDD	middle voice	REP	repetitive		
n	number of	S	singular		

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