Focalization in Fulfulde of Fuuta Jaloo (Guinea)

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1 Basic information on Fulfulde of Fuuta Jaloo (Guinea)

- **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 Jaloo dialect in Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, Gambia, Mali, Sierra Leone (Lewis 2009)

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

### 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)–TAM–(subject pronoun)–(IO pronoun)–(DO pronoun)

- **Verb paradigms:**
  - Three perfective paradigms vs. five imperfective paradigms
  - 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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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.
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 (dabba-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-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 (≠ 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 clitizises 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 hannnde (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_{-S} Z \hspace{1cm} \text{SUBJECT FOCUS}
[\[Ko\] nominal object/emphatic pronoun\]_{Foc} S V_{-S(S)} Z \hspace{1cm} \text{OBJECT FOCUS}
[\[Ko\] X\]_{Foc} S V_{(-S)} Z \hspace{1cm} \text{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 hannnde Aali sood-i pucc-u ngu (Senegal)
ko hannnde Aali sood-i pucc-u ngun (Guinea)
TF today Aali buy-PFV.BG horse-10 DEF.10\(^4\)
',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 Jallow, but not in the Senegalese variety) in the out-of-focus clause

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\(^4\) The above gloss is my own adaptation of this example.
For the Fulfulde of Fuuta Jaloo, the term focus construction is rather cleft-like than a real cleft

B. THE GRAMMATICALIZATION HYPOTHESIS:
As for other languages (e.g. Kikuyu, Niger-Congo > Bantu, cf. Heine & Reh 1984: 151f.), it can be assumed that the ex-situ 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 came into use used only for term focus:

\[(6)\]

\[
\begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\text{RELATIVE} & \text{Gerto-gal} & \text{ngal  be  hirs-i  hanki} & \text{ngal  no  rawni.} \\
\text{chicken-11} & \text{REL.11  3P  slaughter-PFV.BG  yesterday} & \text{DEF.11  COP  white} \\
\hline
\text{*Ko} & \text{gerto-gal} & \text{ngal  be  hirs-i} & \text{hanki.} & \text{*FORMER CLEFT}\textsuperscript{5} \\
\text{chicken-11} & \text{REL.11  3P  slaughter-PFV.BG  yesterday} & \text{TODAY'S} \\
\hline
\text{*Ko} & \text{gerto-gal} & \text{Ø  be  hirs-i} & \text{hanki.} & \text{TERM FOCUS} \\
\text{chicken-11} & \text{3P  slaughter-PFV.BG  yesterday} & \text{FOCUS} \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

'It is a CHICKEN (that) they slaughtered yesterday.' [cf. Baldé, Caudill & Diallo 2000: 91]

Grammaticalization of ko from a copula to a term focus marker, always identifying and focusing the following element:

\[(7)\]

\[
\begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\text{COPULA} & \text{TERM FOCUS MARKER} \\
\hline
\text{a. Klaus [ko almanjo].Foc} & \text{TF tomorrow 3s go-IPFV.BG} \\
\text{German} & \text{S/he will go TOMORROW.}\textsuperscript{6} \\
\text{klaus is a German.}\textsuperscript{7} & \text{[Diallo forth.: 44]} \\
\hline
\text{b. [Ko janno].Foc o yah-ata.}\textsuperscript{6} \\
\text{Klaus COP German} & \text{TF tomorrow 3s go-IPFV.BG} \\
\text{S/he will go TOMORROW.}\textsuperscript{7} \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

Deletion of the relative marker during the grammaticalization process: the deletion of the relative marker is not unusual; 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):

\[5\] The asterisk denotes that this form is not attested today.

\[6\] Examples without any references are made up by myself with native speakers in Berlin.
C. THE IDENTIFICATIONAL AND VERB SYSTEM HYPOTHESIS:

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:

\[\text{(9)}\]
\[
\text{COPULA} \quad \text{topic} \quad \text{topic} \quad \text{[ko X]} \\
\text{IDENTIFICATION} \quad \text{TOPIC} \quad \text{[COP NP]} \\
\text{[ko X]} \quad \text{TERM FOCUS} \\
\text{ID} \quad \text{NP} \\
\text{TF} \quad \text{NP}
\]

\[\text{(10)}\]
\[
\text{[Ko \quad kot-o \quad \text{an.}]_{\text{Foc}}} \\
\text{ID} \quad \text{older.brother-1} \quad 1S.\text{POSS} \\
\text{This is my older brother.}^4
\]

- **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:

\[\text{(11)}\]
\[
\text{RELATIVE CLAUSES} \\
\text{DEPENDENT} \\
\text{BG-CONJUGATION} \\
\text{TERM FOCUS CONSTRUCTION} \\
\text{TEMPORAL CLAUSES}
\]

\(^7\) 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.
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”).”

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]

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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.)
In the **imperfective** there is no special verb form denoting exclusively verb focus, instead the IMPF3 (future events) is used (ex. 16); additionally the existential verb *wonugol* in the background form may be used in order to situate the event in the present (ex. 17):

(16) **O hocc-ay o wujuj-ataa.**

3S pick.up-IPFV3 3S steal-IPFV.NEG

,A: Will he PICK it UP or will he STEAL it? B: He will PICK it UP, he will not steal it.‘

[Apel 2012: 8f.]

(17) **O naɓ-ay won-i.**

3S take.away-IPFV3 exist-PFV.BG

,A: Is he BRINGING the table or TAKING it AWAY? B: He is TAKING (it) AWAY.’

[OB-FT-073-B]

### 2.2.2 TAM focus

There are four possibilities to express the contrast between perfective and imperfective.

**A COMPLETED EVENT IN THE PAST VS. AN ONGOING EVENT IN THE PRESENT**

- The preterite suffix seems to anchor the event stronger in the past
- The future verb form plus the existential verb express an ongoing event in the present

(18) **Be ndaar-ii-no baree-ru nduun kaa**

3P look-PFV1-PRET dog-7 DEF.7 or

**be ndaar-ay ndu won-i?**

3P look-IPFV3 7 exist-PFV.BG

,A: at a veterinary] HAVE they already looked at the dog or ARE they still looking at it?‘

[OB-FT-113-A]

**A COMPLETED EVENT IN THE PAST VS. AN ONGOING EVENT IN THE PRESENT (PROGRESSIVE)**

- The perfective background form is used
- The progressive inherently focuses aspect (Güldemann 2003)

(19) **Himo naam-ude nebb-e den kaa o naam-i de?**

3S eat-IPFV1 beans-3 DEF.3 or 3S eat-PFV.BG 3

,IS she still eating the beans or HAS she eaten them already?‘

[OB-FT-191-A]

**A COMPLETED EVENT IN THE PAST VS. AN EVENT IN THE FUTURE**

- As in (18), the PFV1 + the preterite suffix express a completed event in the past
- The distal suffix + the IPFV3 (optionally with the existential verb) express a future event
(20) A ɲaam-ii-no kaa a ɲaam-oy-ay won-i?
2s eat-PFV1-PRET or 2s eat-DIST-IPFV3 exist-PFV.BG
‘HAVE you already eaten or ARE you going to eat?’ [SS-FT-195-A]

(21) O hocc-oy-ay.
3s pick.up-DIST-IPFV3
‘[A: WILL he pick it up or HAS he picked it up? B:] He WILL pick it up.’
[Apel 2012: 9]

2.2.3 Truth value focus

**PERFECTIVE**
The background form contrasts with the negation form, both occur with the preterite suffix:

(22) a. O’o, ɓe wujj-u-no.
no 3p steal-PFV.BG-PRET
‘[A: They didn’t steal it (, didn’t they)? B:] No, they DID steal it.’ [SS-FT-121-B2]

b. Hi’i ɓe wujj-aa-no.
yes 3p steal-PFV.NEG-PRET
‘[A: They didn’t steal it (, didn’t they)? B:] Yes, they DIDN’T steal it.’ [SS-FT-121-B1]

**IMPERFECTIVE**
The IPFV3 (future events) contrasts with the negation form, both occur with the distal suffix:

(23) a. Pellet, o yah-oy-ay Mali!
true 3s go-DIST-IPFV3 Mali
‘[A: I don’t believe that he will go to Mali. B:] Yes, he WILL go to Mali.’ [Apel 2012: 9f.]

b. Oo’woye, o yah-oy-taa Mali.
no 3s go-DIST-IPFV.NEG Mali
‘[A: I don’t believe that he will go to Mali. B:] No, he will NOT go to Mali.’ [Apel 2012: 9f.]

2.2.4 PCF: Summary

Table 1 summarizes the verb forms used for PCF:

- For PCF, the verb forms can be extended by verbal suffixes (preterite in the perfective, distal in the imperfective)
- In the imperfective, the existential verb wonugol occurs always in its PFV.BG form
- In the perfective, the background verb form can be used for all PCF 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 PfV3 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 grounding function
- It is used in narratives (where the verb cannot be grounded 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 (Beart 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
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

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tr>
<td>*</td>
<td>not attested today</td>
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<tr>
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5 References


