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Our goals for today

▷ To provide a sketch of focal syntax in Burkinabé Bambara (=Dioula), an underdescribed Mande language

▷ To (quickly) reflect on which focus categories are realized cross-linguistically
We’ll be looking at …

▶ Focus Marking Strategies in Italian (for a macro cross-linguistic comparison)
▶ Focal Syntax in Bambara (to better understand Dioula)
▶ Focal Syntax in Dioula
Focus Marking Strategies in Italian

Run-of-the-mill constituent-focus constructions:

1) “Who did you see?”
   - Ho visto URSULA
   - I-have seen URSULA Information
   - “I saw Ursula”

2) URSULA ho visto!
   - Ursula I-have seen Mirative/Corrective
Focus Marking Strategies in Italian

Polarity Focus: “Did you see her?”

3) Sí, l’ho vista  
Yes $\text{CL}_{\text{ACC}}$ I-have seen  
“Yes, I saw her”

4) Sí che l’ho vista!  
Yes that $\text{CL}_{\text{ACC}}$ I-have seen  
“Yes, of course I saw her!”

Information, Mirative/Corrective
Focus Marking Strategies in Italian

- Different pragmatic types of focus are marked differently => the type of focus counts.

- Different strategies for polarity and constituent focus, but within these two categories it’s always the same type of focus (mirative/corrective) which triggers the most complex configuration.
The Manding Continuum
Manding Languages

- A group of closely related languages part of the West Mande (Niger-Congo) group

- The Manding language group includes Bambara (Mali), Dioula (Ivory Coast/western Burkina Faso), Mandinka (Gambia), Maninka (Guinea), and Bolon (Burkina Faso).
Bambara
Bambara

▷ SOV syntax
Question Formation

5) A: I ka mun dumu?
    You ASP what eat
    “What did you eat?”

B: N’ ka sise dumu
    I ASP chicken eat
    “I ate chicken”
Focus Syntax in Bambara

▷ Several Niger-Congo languages mark focus by means of focus particles (Bearth 1999; Aboh, Hartmann & Zimmermann (eds) 2008).

▷ Bambara has three focus particles (Bailleul 2007, Dumestre 2003, 2011; Masiuk 1986, 1987; Prokhorov 2014): de, dɛ and kɛ
De

- Placed immediately to the right of the constituent over which it scopes
- This can an argument or an adjunct, a subject or an object, it can even be the verb
6) A: “What did Amadou slaughter?”
B: A ye saga de faga
He ASP sheep PRT slaughter
“He slaughtered a sheep”

(Prokhorov 2014:4)
Also used for corrective focus:

7) A: “Seydou slaughtered the sheep”
   B: Amadou de ye saga faga!
      Amadou PRT ASP sheep slaughter
      “(No), it was AMADOU who slaughtered the sheep!”

(Prokhorov 2014:8)
Ké

- Fixed position: always sentence-final
- Often used in the answer to polarity questions to mark the answer as obvious
Kέ́

8) A: “Do you want some cake?”
B: N’ b’ a fe kέ́!
   I ASP it want PRT
   ‘Of course I want it!’

(Bird 1977:129)

Prokhorov (2014): focus on the truth value
→ polarity focus
Dɛ

▷ “Intensification particle” (Donaldson 2019): used to express the concepts of ‘very’, ‘really’, ‘super’
▷ Fixed position: always sentence-final (= kɛ)
He is very tall!

→ “He IS tall!” = Polarity Focus a possible analysis

(Prokhorov 2014:8)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>De</th>
<th>Information &amp; Corrective Focus</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kε</td>
<td>Emphasis on Polarity (Pol Foc)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dε</td>
<td>Intensifier (Pol Foc)</td>
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Dioula
Data collected over 2019 - 2020

Community of speakers from the province of Tougan (Drabo village) but with ties to Abidjan (Côte d’Ivoire)

Refer to the language they speak as “Bambara”

Dioula and Bambara are considered variants of the same language by the local speakers (Donaldson 2019)
An Optionally WH-in-situ language

“What did the table merchant sell to the children?”

10) Tabalitigi be mu feere denw ma?
    Table-merchant ASP what sell children to

11) Mu lo tabalitigi be feere denw ma?

“Where did Seydou drink water?”

12) Seydou ka dji mi mini?
    Seydou ASP water drink where

13) Mini lo Seydou ka dji mi?
What is “lo”?

▷ There is no “lo” morpheme in BAM
▷ If it is a focus particle, it doesn’t look similar to the ones BAM has (de, dε & kε)
What is “lo”?

14) A ka neiguesso lo san,
He ASP bicycle PRT buy,
fani te
dress NEG
“She bought a bicycle, not a dress”
“Lo” = don?

Lo occurs in presentational constructions:

15) “Who is it?”
Seydou lo
Seydou PRT
“It’s Seydou”

In the same environments, BAM uses “don”:

16) “What is it?”
Tabali don
Table PRT
“It’s a table”

DIOULA

BAMBARA
Is “lo” (=don) the copula?

▷ Lo/don is not the only way to realize the copula:

17) Seydou yi cě ye (DUL)
Seydou ASP man to
“Seydou is a man”

▷ Use of lo/don to express the copula is restricted to positive-polarity environments (both DUL and BAM), 3rd person (both DUL and BAM) and present-tense constructions (BAM)
Is “lo” (=don) the copula?

“Lo” structures don’t have the appearance of clefts. Compare with Zulu (Nguni, Southern Bantu):

18) U- bona ini?
    2ndSG- see what9
    'What do you see?'

19) Y- ini o- yi- bona- yo?
    COP- what9 RC OC9- see- RS
    'What is it that you see?'
Is “lo” (=don) the copula?

▷ No. Grammatically speaking, it makes little sense to treat “lo” as the copula: tense/person/polarity restrictions, no cleft markers...

▷ A focus analysis seems more sensible.

If “lo” is a focus particle, what kind of focus does it mark?

If “lo” is a focus particle, so is “don”.
Dioula’s Focus Architecture

How does Dioula express what Bambara marks through the use of de, dɛ and kɛ?
Dioula’s Focus Architecture

Information & Corrective Focus (De) = LO

20) A ye saga de faga
He ASP sheep slaughtered (BAM)

“He slaughtered the sheep”

21) A ye saga lo faga
He ASP sheep slaughtered (DIL)

→ Further evidence in favor of a focus analysis of “don”
Dioula’s Focus Architecture

Intensifier (Pol Foc) \(dɛ\) = DEH

22) A ka jugu \(dɛ\) (BAM)
He ASP nasty
“He is very nasty”

23) A ka jugu deh (DIL)
He ASP nasty
Dioula’s Focus Architecture

Emphasis on Polarity (Pol Foc) \( (k\varepsilon) = KEH \)

24) \( N' \quad b' \quad a \quad \text{fe} \quad k\varepsilon! \)  \( (\text{BAM}) \)
I ASP \( CL_{3\text{SING}} \) want
“Of course I want it”

25) \( N' \quad b' \quad a \quad \text{fe} \quad \text{keh}! \)  \( (\text{DIL}) \)
I ASP \( CL_{3\text{SING}} \) want
Dioula’s Focus Architecture

In Dioula, unlike in Bambara:

- “Keh” and “deh” are mostly interchangeable, the main difference relating to degrees of politeness
- The particle for information focus is the same for presentational focus: “lo”
### Manding Focus Architecture

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<tr>
<th>BAMBARA</th>
<th>Focus type</th>
<th>DIOULA</th>
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<td>Don</td>
<td><em>Presentational Focus</em></td>
<td>Lo</td>
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<tr>
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A Different Division of Labor

ITALIAN
- The pragmatic type of focus matters! Strong distinction between information (non-empathic) and mirative/corrective (empathic) foci

BAMBARA
- Clear distinction between polarity vs constituent focus
- Within the constituent-focus category, no distinction between information and corrective focus. Type of focus doesn’t matter!
- Separate strategy for presentational focus

DIOULA
- The distinction between polarity focus vs constituent focus seems to be the only one relevant: keh/deh are not specialized, no distinction between presentational focus and information focus
Thanks!

Any questions?

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References