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Focus markers in an optionally WH-in-situ language:
the case of *Burkinabé Bambara*.

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

“I saw Ursula”

Information

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 CL_{ACC} I-have seen

“Yes, I saw her”

Information

4) Sí che l’ho vista!

Yes that CL_{ACC} I-have seen

“Yes, of course I saw her!”

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).

Manding language continuum

Dakar



Mandinka

Maninka

Bamanan

Bamako



Ouagadougou



Maninka

Kankan

Bobo-Dioulasso

Jula

Conakry



Bouake

Jula

Abidjan



Local language

Lingua franca



Bambara



Bambara

- ▷ SOV syntax
- ▷ No *wh*- movement. Koopman (1992: 556): a language “with extremely rigid word order”. No scrambling, no heavy-NP shift.

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 be an argument or an adjunct, a subject or an object, it can even be the verb

De

6) A: “What did Amadou slaughter?”

B: A ye *saga* **de** faga

He ASP sheep PRT slaughter

“He slaughtered a *sheep*”

(Prokhorov 2014:4)

De

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)

Κέ

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

Κέ

8) A: “Do you want some cake?”

B: N' b' a fe **κέ!**
I ASP it want PRT
'Of course I want it!'

(Bird 1977:129)

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

Dε

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

Dé

9) A ka jan dɛ!
He ASP tall PRT

“He is very tall!”

(Prokhorov 2014:8)

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

De, Kε & Dε

De

Information & Corrective Focus

Kε

Emphasis on Polarity (Pol Foc)

Dε

Intensifier (Pol Foc)

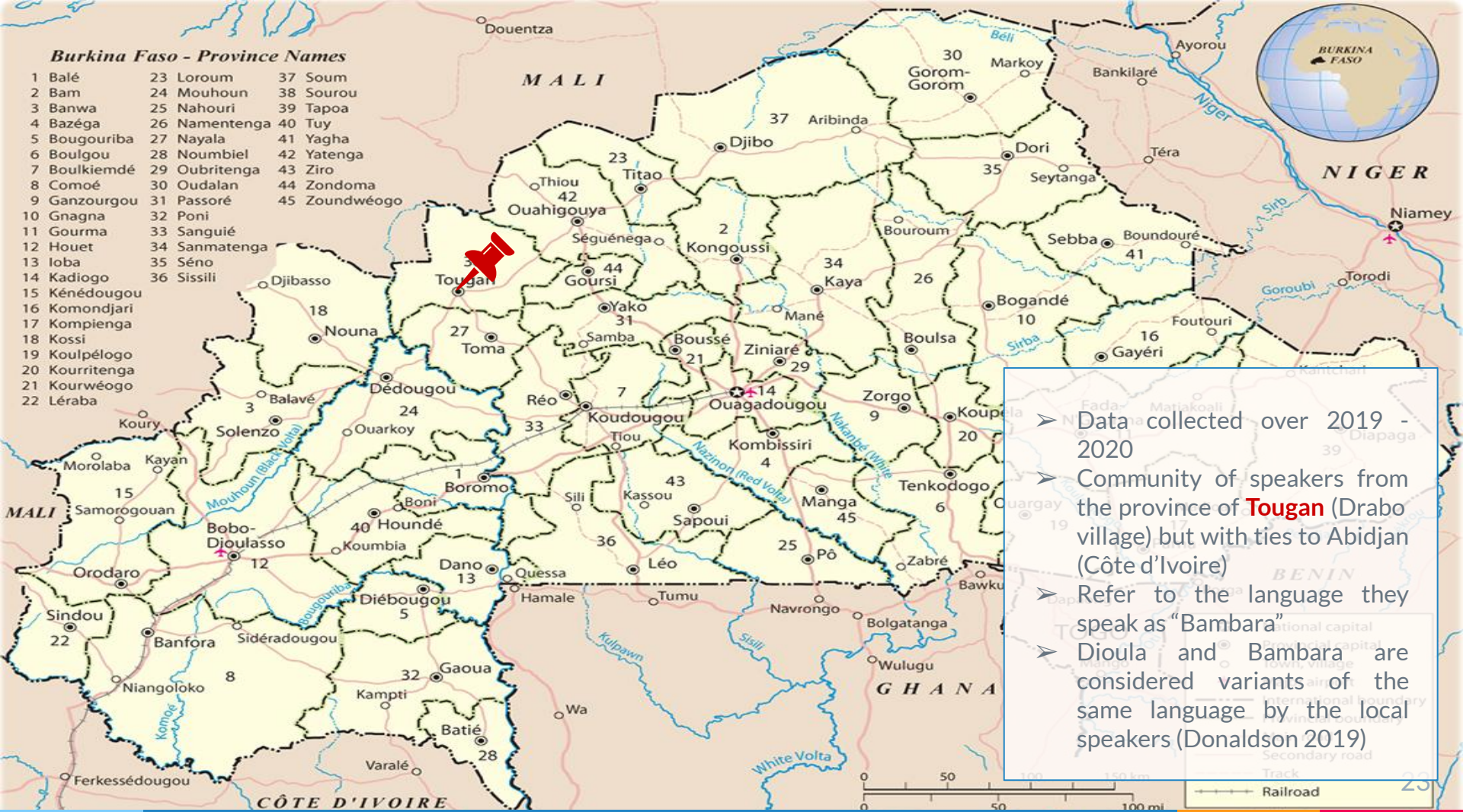


Dioula



Burkina Faso - Province Names

1 Balé	23 Loroum	37 Soum
2 Bam	24 Mouhoun	38 Sourou
3 Banwa	25 Nahouri	39 Tapoa
4 Bazéga	26 Namentenga	40 Tuy
5 Bougouriba	27 Nayala	41 Yagha
6 Boulgou	28 Nounbiel	42 Yatenga
7 Boulkiemdé	29 Ouhritenga	43 Ziro
8 Comoé	30 Oudalan	44 Zoundma
9 Ganzourgou	31 Passoré	45 Zoundwéogo
10 Gnagna	32 Poni	
11 Gourma	33 Sanguié	
12 Houet	34 Sanmatenga	
13 Ioba	35 Séno	
14 Kadiogo	36 Sissili	
15 Kénédougou		
16 Komondjari		
17 Kompienga		
18 Kossi		
19 Koulpélogo		
20 Kouritenga		
21 Kourwéogo		
22 Léraba		



- 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)

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Lingua franca

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”

DIOULA

In the same environments,
BAM uses “don”:

16) “What is it?”

Tabali **don**

Table PRT

“It’s a table”

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 what?
 'What do you see?'

19) Y- ini o- yi- bona- yo?
 COP- what? RC OC- 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 , $d\epsilon$ and $k\epsilon$?

Dioula's Focus Architecture

Information & Corrective Focus (De) = LO

20) A ye saga **de** faga (BAM)
He ASP sheep slaughtered
“He slaughtered the *sheep*”

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

→ 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) (kɛ) = KEH

24) N' b' a fe **kɛ!** (BAM)
I ASP CL_{3SING} want
"Of course I want it"

25) N' b' a fe **keh!** (DIL)
I ASP CL_{3SING} 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

BAMBARA	Focus type	DIOULA
Don	<i>Presentational Focus</i>	Lo
De	<i>Information Focus</i>	Lo
De	<i>Corrective Focus</i>	Lo
Kε	<i>Intensifier (Pol Foc)</i>	Keh/Deh
Dε	<i>Emphasis on Polarity (Pol Foc)</i>	Keh/Deh

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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