

## **Fula inside and beyond the context of Guinean languages**

### *Summary*

The Fula variety under consideration here is known as the Fuuta Jaloo. It is mainly spoken in Guinea, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau as well as in some regions of the Gambia. Two kinds of descriptions will be given: (i) a sociolinguistic synopsis of the usage of Fula inside of Guinea and (ii) a description of the Fuuta Jaloo variety in the context of dialectal diversification.

In Guinea Fula belongs to the twenty different local languages. Its main areas of diffusion are the plateau of Fuuta Jaloo and - most recently - the coastal region. Demographically it belongs to the three most important *linguae francae* and was thus embedded in the formal education from 1968 to 1984. Since its independence, Guinea has adopted two types of language policies: an endoglossic and an exoglossic one (Reh & Heine 1982). The first type incorporated the major local languages (8 out of 20) in the educational system and promoted them to teaching languages throughout the primary school. The second one adopted the usage of French, the formerly colonial language, in all spheres of the government, including the entire formal education. Amongst the advantages of the endoglossic language policy is the implementation of a program of mass education to fill the vacuum left by the abrupt pull out of the then existing administrative staff members, consecutive to the independence of Guinea. The alphabetization of adults, as well as the generation of didactic tools for teaching and writing the local languages, belongs to the achievements of that period. However, this language policy has been abruptly stopped by a military coup, without any formal evaluation. The exoglossic policy has then been re-established. One of its major problems is the lack of efficiency in the formal education. It is also perceived as discriminative towards the majority of the population for the benefit of a small portion of the French educated people.

The second part of this presentation is devoted to a dialectal study of the Fula varieties. Fula belongs to the Niger-Congo phylum and is classified as an Atlantic language of the northern branch. Its most salient properties are noun class suffixes, verbal extensions as well as an extensive system of consonant alternation. Fula is widespread in the West African area and covers a vast geographical belt reaching from the western Atlantic coast to the Central African Republic. It is divided in some 6 different dialects, forming a light range of western-eastern disjunctions: western varieties are generally supposed to be represented by the Fuuta Jaloo, Fuuta Tooro and Maasina, whereas the Liptaako-Jelgooji complex, Gombe as well as the Adamawa varieties are seen to belong to the eastern varieties. This rather areal based position is partly reflected in some linguistic features, but some others allow different sub-categorizations (Gottschligg 1995). The main dialect studies in the last three decades (Josh 1979, Miyamoto 1993, Leger 1998, Paster 2005, Gottschligg, 2009, amongst others) have provided significant insights on phonological and morpho-syntactic aspects of differentiation. The present study aims at extending this task to the investigation of syntactic structures. It will therefore be devoted to non-verbal focus constructions. Data sources are primarily both the available grammars and descriptions and diverse types of reliable written sources; to these are joined additional empirical data gathered on the main dialects.

## References

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