

MORPHOSYNTACTIC STUDY OF VERB: THE CASE OF FULFULDE

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ABSTRACT

Verb is a fundamental element of Fulfulde language. It is of a high concern that this language, despite of its spread across West and Central Africa, remains among the less studied, both in its literature and in its grammar. This study therefore sets highlight the infinitive form and diverse syntactic behaviors of the Fulfulde verb. The simple sentences in the imperative and subjunctive moods are used for the examples. The study also discovers the categorization of Fulfulde verbs in three categories: verbs of –ugo, verbs of –aago and verbs of –eego. This grouping has always been based on the fact that verbs of –ugo are active, verbs of –aago are semi active and those of –eego are passive. However, this study discovers that some –aago verbs are of full active voice while equally some -ugo verbs are of semi active voice.

KEYWORDS: Verbs of –Ugo, Verbs of –Aago, Verbs of –Eego

INTRODUCTION

Verb is one of the grammatical elements that play a major role in the speech of Fulfulde. Mukoshy (1) holds that Fulfulde communicates its message through verbal system more than nominal system. This is true in that many names are formed from verbs through derivational process, just as it is advocated by the site *Grammaire du peul, Un article de wikipedia, l'encyclopédie libre* (juin 2009): “Ainsi la forme la plus simple, le nom pular peut-il être schématisé comme suit: Base radicale + suffixe nominal” that translate as: (*Thus the most simple form, the Fulfulde noun can be schematized as follows: Base radical + nominal suffix*). And in most cases, the radical base is a verb, as in *Ardô* which is *Ard+o* from *Ardaago* (*diriger*). However, this study is concerned with the changes verbs undergo in the Fulfulde syntax. The imperative and subjunctive moods will be used to illustrate the points. Meanwhile, the main aim of the study is to contribute to the efforts being made to establish the infinitive form of the Fulfulde verb with the sole desire of establishing a Fulfulde standard across its numerous dialects.

Considering the fact that the question of Fulfulde infinitive form is yet to be settled, this study will analyze the positions already held by some linguists to enable us come out with an infinitive form that may be more acceptable by linguists, Fulfulde specialists and Fulfulde native speakers. Therefore, the Fulfulde verbs will be classified into three groups and each group will be identified by some grammatical criteria.

FULFULDE INFINITIVE FORM OF VERB

From the Fulfulde lexicography, verb infinitive remains the most controversial. We consulted two Fulfulde-English Dictionaries; one is a collection by a Veterinary Doctor F.W. de St. Croix and edited by a team Fulfulde native speakers of a high level of education in Linguistics; and the second is written by a Linguist and a native speaker. These dictionaries are very rich both in lexicography, grammar and in culture, but the authors did not make reference to the

infinitive form of the Fulfulde verb. That is to say that linguists and specialists of Fulfulde language are yet to agree on what constitute the infinitive form of Fulfulde verb.

Al-amin Abu-manga, a linguist and a Fulfulde native speaker, analyzed and rejected three positions on Fulfulde infinitive form from different authors, and then he gave his own position as for what he thinks should be the infinitive form of Fulfulde verb. We will review all these positions before making our stand known on this issue.

The first position is from Klingenheben which holds that verbs should be treated based on their radical as: *waal-* from *waalugo* (lie down), *nyaam-* from *nyaamugo* (eat), *jood-* from *jodaago* (sit down), *juut-* from *juutugo* (become long). This position has been rejected because according to the researcher, Al-amin Abu-manga, (1-2):

- Psychologically speaking, these morphological units sound mutilated, awkward and sometimes clumsy, especially to the ear of the Fulfulde native speaker.
- Practically, their meanings are not easy to recall. One always needs to wait, think and remember. This is true even for the native speaker of the language.
- Some roots/radicals do not distinguish between verbs, adjectives, and participles. For instance the root “juut-” can be “juuta” (become long - verb) or “juutngol” (with “laawol” –long roads, adjective.) Similarly, “yoor-” can be “yoora” (to dry - vb) or “yoorbe” (pl. of *joordo-* stingy person- adj.).

The second position, equally rejected by Al-amin Abu-manga, is that advocated by F. W. Taylor in his Fulfulde-English dictionary. For Taylor, all you need to do is add morpheme – *a* to any verbal root: *nyaam* + *a* to give *nyaama* (to eat), *yah* + *a* to give *yaha* (to go), *jood* + *a* to give *jooda* (to sit), *jog* + *a* to give *joga* (to hold). Al-amin Abu-manga rejected this position with the argument that: “*This presentation, although logically acceptable to the ear, has no grammatical consistency. While “nyaama” and “yaha” are 3rd pers. sing. subjunctive, “jooda” and “joga” are strictly 3rd pers. sing. Imperative.*” (Abu-manga 1-2).

The third position advocates that the imperative present of the 3rd person singular be maintained for the infinitive form of the Fulfulde verb. This position was also rejected because, according to the researcher, “... *even here one is faced with the problem of variation of the verbal suffix endings*” (Abu-manga 1-2). The verbs are not uniform in their imperative present: *jooda* (*joodaago*) and *joga* (*jogaago*) carry –*a*, while *nanngu* (*nanngugo*), *adu* (*adugo*) and *dillu* (*dillugo*) carry –*u*.

However, before going to the position four, which is that of Abu-manga himself, let us express our support for him that all the three positions are defective as infinitive form of Fulfulde verb. Nevertheless, we would like to make a correction on the 3rd person of the imperative mood. Abu-manga, in his explanation on the second and third positions, holds that *jooda* and *joga* are in the present tense of imperative mood 3rd person singular. But in most languages and cultures, including Fulfulde, the imperative mood does not have 3rd person. Imperative is an injunction mood where only those that are present could be addressed. And if an order is to be given to an absent person, which is the third person, that order has to pass through the second person, as in *wi’u o joodoo*. The example given by the author himself (Abu-manga 2).

While rejecting the position of Taylor on the Fulfulde infinitive form, Abu-manga used the non uniformity as point of argument that some verbs carry –*a* whereas others carry –*u*. We wish to underline here that, generally, for the 2nd person singular, Fulfulde verbs in the imperative present tense carry –*a* if they belong to the group of –*aago* and –*u* if they belong to the group of –*ugo* (Arnott 411). Thus, it will be necessary for those who share the above position to revisit their

stand.

The fourth position is that of Abu-manga and it advocates that subjunctive present form be taken for the infinitive form of Fulfulde verbs. For this position, Abu-Manga (2) might have been influenced by the distribution of English syntax where infinitive and imperative present could share the same form : **seat** → *jooda*, **push** → *tubba*, or when English infinitive verb comes as to complete the imperative verb such as in : tell him to eat (*wi'u o nyaama*), tell him to go (*wi'u o yaha*). While supporting this opinion, Abu-manga should not forget that every language has its intrinsic characteristics that may not correspond to those of another language (Yule 239).

What makes this position even more defective is that it eliminates the infinitive form of the Fulfulde verb, replacing it with the present subjunctive. In the example “*wi'u o nyaama*,” the second verb “*nyaama*” is in subjunctive present and it is accompanied by its subject **o**. And a verb in its infinitive form should be able to stand without subject. For instance, in the sentences: *O yidii nyaamugo* (he wanted to eat), *mi salike/ salake yahugo* (I refused to go), *a somii joodaago?* (Are you tired to sit?), the second verbs *nyaamugo*, *yahugo* and *joodaago* are in their infinitive forms and they have no grammatical subject. The infinitive form of a verb could also stand as a noun and assume its function: *joodaago nafataa* (to sit is not helpful), *durugo na'i maa buranii maa* (to feed your cows is better for you.) We can see here that *joodaago* (to sit) stands as subject to the verb *nafataa* and *durugo* (to feed cows) as subject to the verb *buranii*.

WHAT IS THEN THE INFINITIVE FORM FOR FULFULDE VERB?

Some other linguists and researchers of Fulfulde, such as David W. Arnott and a Christian missionary such as Larry Vandera of The Christian Reformed World Mission in Mali, made efforts to define and determine the infinitive form of Fulfulde verb. In fact Arnott (18), in his *The Nominal and Verbal System of Fula*, gave three forms of infinitive for Fulfulde verb which could be equated to the three verbal groups of Fulfulde as: active verbs that end with **-uki**, semi active verbs that end with **-aaki** and passive verbs that end with **-eeki**. This form is more regular and it applies to all Fulfulde verbs. Applying the examples above, we can obtain the following table 1:

Table 1

Impérative phrases	Infinitive active	Infinitive semi active	Infinitive passive
Wi'u o nyaama	nyaam + <i>uki</i>	nyaam + <i>aaki</i>	nyaam + <i>eeki</i>
Wi'u o yaha	yah + <i>uki</i>	-----	yah + <i>eeki</i>
Wi'u o joodoo	-----	jood + <i>aaki</i>	jood + <i>eeki</i>

In the same vein, Larry Vandera (36-37) in her *A Reference Verbal Grammar of Fulfulde*, differs from Arnott only at the level of the verbal endings where she changes **-uki** to **-ugo**, **-aaki** to **-aago** and **-eeki** to **-eego**, and the reason to this is not farfetched since she only reproduced the dialect from which she learnt Fulfulde. The same table can be maintained in illustrating the Fulfulde infinitive verbal form since the grouping of verbs remains the same for the two authors. From the table above it is clear that a verb can belong to the three groups alternatively depending on the verbal voice it takes: *lootugo* (to wash), *lotaago* (to wash oneself) and *loteego* (to be washed) as advocated by Kiro (92). While we strongly stand with Arnott and Larry Vandera on the infinitive form of Fulfulde verb, we also see it as necessary to make an observation on the classification of the Fulfulde verbs in three groups.

Arnott and many others are of the opinion that verbs of **-aago** form are of semi active voice. We do not dispute

that, but this may be a general rule that must have exceptions. In the course of our research, we realized that many Fulfulde verbs of the **-aago** group are fully active, and we give examples as follows : *jogaago* (to hold), *baggaago* (to go round), *jabbaago* (to welcome), *yinaago* (to swim), *menngaago* (to slap), *waccaago* (to acquire), *jaalaago* (to conquer), *sappaago* (to point at), *yottaago* (to arrive), *cewtaago* (to survey), *wurtaago* (to go out). These verbs are active in that the effect of their action does not fall back on their subject. Meanwhile, this list is far from being exhaustive, but it is grammatically representative enough to support the above argument, that not all **-aago** verbs are of semi-active voice.

It has also been advocated that the verbs of **-ugo** are of active voice. But it is of interest to note here that not all the **-ugo** verbs are of active voice. Just as it happened in the case of **-aago** verbs, there are exceptions where some **-ugo** verbs are also of semi active voice. Consider the following table 2:

Table 2

	<i>Active</i>	<i>Semi active</i>	<i>Passive</i>
(to swim)	Yinaago	-----	Yineego
(to heal)	Hoynugo	Hoyugo	Hoyneego
(to faten)	Faynugo	Fayugo	Fayneego
(to wash)	Lootugo	Lootaago	Looteego

With the above illustrations and arguments, we wish to hold that Fulfulde verb has infinitive form. We uphold this opinion since the two above infinitive forms (**-ugo/-uki**, **-aago/-aaki**, **-eego/-eeki**) are current and common in the Fulfulde speech across her diverse dialects. We also wish to argue that the grouping is not necessarily based on the voice of the Fulfulde verbs as it has been disproved by the above illustrations.

VERB IN FULFULDE SYNTAX

In Fulfulde language, most words are formed from the verb, and the verb is also the pillar of Fulfulde syntax. Having settled on the infinitive form of Fulfulde verb, we will proceed to analyze the verbal variations as they occur in the actualization of verb in the Fulfulde speech. Fulfulde syntax (**svo**) is unique across the dialects, as observed by Arnott (2-3), despite the number of these dialects such as *Futa Toro*, *Futa Jalon*, *Masina*, *Sokoto and Western Niger*, *Central northern Nigeria and eastern Niger* and *Adamawa*. Considering this uniformity across the Fulfulde dialects, Sokoto dialect is here chosen as *outil opératoire*. Therefore, simple sentences of imperative and subjunctive moods will be used for illustrations. The imperative is generally the domain of the simple sentences with only a verb:

dillu (go) $\longrightarrow \emptyset + v + \emptyset$
nangu (catch) $\longrightarrow \emptyset + v + \emptyset$
joga (hold) $\longrightarrow \emptyset + v + \emptyset$

In the above imperative sentences we note an absolute absence of subject and that facultative of the complement, all represented in the formula by the symbol of absence (\emptyset). The complement is facultative because the speaker can decide to indicate it as in the sentences below:

<i>dillu wuro</i> (go home)	→	o + v + place object
<i>nangu mbe'a</i> (catch the goat)	→	o + v + direct object
<i>Joga sawru</i> (hold the stick)	→	o + v + direct object

It is to note that in these sentences too the subject is absent, and it is normal as long as these sentences remain in imperative mood. We can also note that even though the verbs are in the same tense, the same mood, the same person and number, they have different endings as a result of their infinitive group. However, let us put these sentences in plural to observe their behavior:

<i>en ndillu wuro</i> (let us go home)	→	s + v + place object
<i>ndillee wuro</i> (go home)	→	o + v + place object
<i>nanngee mbe'a</i> (catch the goat)	→	o + v + direct object
<i>njogee sawru</i> (hold the stick)	→	o + v + direct object

What is interesting in this analysis is the morphology of the verb. The verb *dillugo* (to go) is formed by the root *dill+u* for the 2nd person singular in the imperative present. The verb *nanngugo* behaves the same way, and it is the case for all the **-ugo** verbs. The verb *jogaago* is formed by the root *jog + a* for the 2nd person singular in imperative present, and all the verbs of **-aago** verbal group behave the same way. But when these sentences are put in plural, these same verbs behave as follows: *dillugo* becomes *ndillu* (**en ndillu**) for the 1st person plural inclusive, which is quite different from French where the subject does not at all appear; and for the 2nd person plural, verb *dillugo* becomes *ndill + ee*, verb *nanngugo* becomes *nanng + ee* and *jogaago* becomes *njog + ee*, where we can observe a uniformity of endings of verbs in imperative form.

From these analyses, it can be observed that some Fulfulde verbs undergo inflection on their initial in plural, as it is the case here for *dillugo* (*ndillee*) and *jogaago* (*njogee*). A conclusion could also be drawn that Fulfulde verbs end by **-ee** in imperative present of 2nd person plural, while for the two other persons of the imperative mood, the ending varies according to the verbal group of the verb concerned: *dill + u* (go), **en ndill + u** (let us go), *jog + a* (hold), **en njog + o** (let us hold).

Nevertheless, the Fulfulde simple sentence is not only limited to imperative mood. Some sentences in the subjunctive mood are also simple:

1 <i>O dey'â</i> (he should keep quiet)	→	s + v + o
2 -- <i>Pumgaa</i> suudu (May you go out of the room)	→	v + s + place object
3 <i>O jooddoo</i> seese seese (he should sit gently)	→	s + v + object manner
4 <i>Mi daanoo</i> (May I sleep)	→	s + v + o
5 -- <i>Lootee ðu</i> (you should be washed)	→	v + s + o
6 <i>Men koowee</i> (May we be married)	→	s + v + o

It is important to note that in the subjunctive present, Fulfulde verbs vary according to the verbal group they belong to. Those in **-ugo** group carry **-a**, as it is the case in sentences 1 and 2; those in **-aago** group carry **-oo**, as it is the case in sentences 3 and 4; and those in **-eego** group carry **-ee**, as it is the case in sentences 5 and 6. Here too, a conclusion could be drawn that this is a general rule for the Fulfulde verbs. And the inversion of the subject-verb in sentences 2 and 5 is common to Sokoto Fulfulde dialect, which is used here as the working tool. It can also be noted that the subject-verb

inversion, as it is the case here, affects the 2nd person singular.

CONCLUSIONS

This work endeavored to identify the infinitive form of Fulfulde verb. Corroborating the positions of Arnott and Vandera on this issue, we have adopted the forms of **-ugo**, **-aago** and **-eego** as infinitive forms of Fulfulde verbs, each one according to the verbal group it belongs to. We have also revealed that all the verbs of **-aago** group are not semi active, contrary to the long time held opinion, that they are of semi active voice. Some verbs of this group are fully active as illustrated here in this work. Likewise, some verbs of **-ugo** group are equally semi active. We also attempted to determine some general rules on Fulfulde verbal behavior at the level of imperative and subjunctive moods.

However, it is our wish that researches in this area be intensified in order to achieve uniformity and standardization of the Fulfulde language. The ball is running in the court of the Fulfulde native speakers, and the African linguists in general to save our languages from gradual decay and endangerment.

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