



Vortrag im Rahmen des Linguistischen Kolloquiums

7. Mai 2013

Victoria Apel

(Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

Dissertation: „Informationsstruktur im Fulfulde: Theticity“

My dissertation aims at analyzing the information structure (IS) of the Fulfulde dialect of Fuuta Jaloo in Guinea (Atlantic-Niger-Congo). Although this dialect is spoken by around 3 million people, compared to other Fulfulde dialects it is still little described. In this talk, I present how thetic statements are expressed and in which contexts they occur, while the dissertation itself will concentrate on the entire IS system (e.g. thetic vs. categorical statements, topic-comment structure and focus-background structure).

Following Güldemann (2010), thetic statements are defined as “a grammatical device to cancel a sentence internal information structure that is induced by the morphosyntax of an unmarked sentence”. This means that no element has a higher information status than the other, in that a situation is presented as a whole. Regarding their occurrence, thetic statements can be “salient against the rest of the discourse, e.g. as “all-new” sentences, but they can also be used as the background against other sentences of the context” (Güldemann 2010).

Languages use different strategies for thetic statements, for instance subject accentuation, incorporation, verb nominalization, inversion or split structures (Sasse 1987). Their goal is to mark the subject as the non-topic of the sentence, which may lead to the identical form of thetic statements and subject focus statements since in both constructions the subject does not represent the topic of the sentence (Lambrecht 1987). This seems to be the case also in Fulfulde; example (1) can be interpreted both as thetic utterance and as subject focus:

- (1) Ko suud-u ndun yan-i
ID house-7 DEF.7 fall-A.PFV2
'(What happened?) The house collapsed.' Or
'(What collapsed?) The HOUSE collapsed.'

In this talk, I will first provide a short theoretical background on the opposition thetic vs. categorical statements, before presenting different strategies to express thetic statements in Fulfulde. I will examine the contexts for thetic utterances (e.g. existential statements, explanations, weather expressions, background descriptions, etc.) in order to investigate a possible relation between form and function.

Güldemann, Tom. 2010. The relation between focus and theticity in the Tuu family. In Fiedler, Ines and Anne Schwarz (eds.), The expression of information structure: a documentation of its diversity across Africa. Typological Studies in Language 91. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 69-93.

Lambrecht, Knud. 1987. Sentence focus, information structure, and the thetic-categorical distinction. BLS 13, 366-382.

Sasse, Hans-Jürgen. 1987. The thetic/categorical distinction revisited. Linguistics 25, 511-580.

**Ort: Institut für Asien- und Afrikawissenschaften,
Invalidenstr. 118, Raum 410**

Zeit: 16:15 Uhr

Alle Interessierten sind herzlich eingeladen!