

In 2018, I spent one year at Lacito as a postdoctoral researcher. This was for me a valuable opportunity to pursue a number of research questions that had emerged during my recently completed PhD project. It also provided new possibilities for making accessible the multi-media documentation data that I had been collecting and processing for many years.

Since 2008, I have been working on Kakabe, a Mande language that had not been studied before. Kakabe is spoken in about thirty villages that are scattered on the plateau of Fouta-Djallon, a highland region in the central part of Guinea. The number of Kakabe speakers is approximately fifty thousand. My PhD project, financed by the ELDP program (<https://www.eldp.net>) resulted in the publication of Kakabe-French dictionary, the completion of the thesis including a grammar sketch and a detailed analysis of the phonology and the creation of an annotated corpus time-aligned with audio and video.

By the end of my year as postdoc at LACITO I prepared the Kakabe corpus for the inclusion into the Pangloss collection <http://lacito.vjf.cnrs.fr/pangloss/corpus/search.php?keywords=kakabe>. Apart from that, based on my video shot in Guinea from 2013 to 2018, together with Franck Guillemain, we produced a short documentary about Kakabe: [https://www.canal-u.tv/video/cnrs\\_ups2259/sasha\\_vydrina\\_la\\_langue\\_kakabe\\_en\\_guinee.50573](https://www.canal-u.tv/video/cnrs_ups2259/sasha_vydrina_la_langue_kakabe_en_guinee.50573)



Figure 1. A gathering in the Kouroupampa village, Futa-Djallon, Guinea.

## Prosodic negation

Is there anything special about negative utterances as compared assertive utterances? The way that intonation is realized in Kakabe negative utterances suggests that yes. While carrying out my doctoral research I came across an intriguing phenomenon hardly ever attested in linguistic literature: in Kakabe, negation is associated with an intonational raising at the end of the utterance, the same raising as found in non-final utterances. See the contrast in the tonal curve of an assertive utterance with final Low tone as opposed to the corresponding negative sentences that is pronounced with a final H tone:

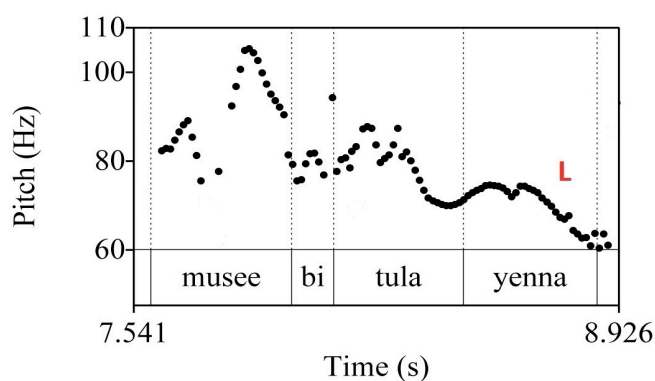


Figure 1. 'The woman sees the mouse'

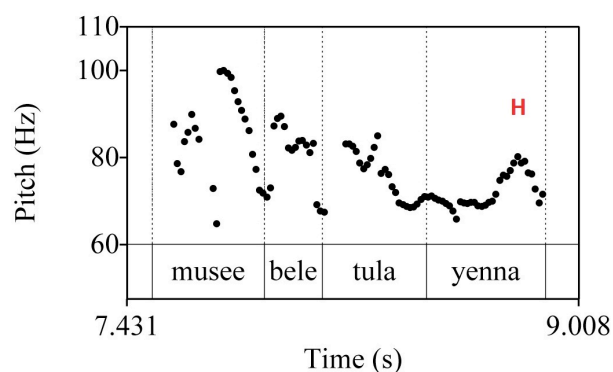


Figure 2. The woman doesn't see the mouse'

Nevertheless, even though that particular grammaticalized form as found in Kakabe may indeed be a cross-linguistic rarity, some recent studies suggest that, at least as a statistical tendency, negation-conditioned intonation phenomena are more widespread than though before and are present even in such languages as English and Spanish. Crucially, the effect of negation on intonation suggests that negative utterances are special in the perspective of verbal interaction.

I started exploring two hypotheses concerning the possible motivation of prosodic marking of negation. First, the prosodic marking of negation might be motivated by its role in the organization of hearer- speaker interaction and the possibility that the non-segmental marking of negation is a wider phenomenon than has been reported so far. Second, there may be a historical link between the raised H tone and the second part of a bipartite negation construction, as in French *ne ... pas*, *ne ... rien*, that stems from pragmatically marked lexical words that are often associated with prosodic salience. More generally, this will provide a new perspective for the analysis of prosodic and pragmatic properties of bipartite negative constructions cross-linguistically.

More generally, the evidence from Kakabe supports the intuition about negation formulated in the framework of conversational analysis, negative utterance are represented as units which lack completion and therefore demand further elaboration. Negative utterances and continuation utterances, supposedly, play a similar role in the inter-speaker negotiation of meaning. The evidence from Kakabe can therefore shed light on the fundamental question of the role of negation in verbal communication.

## Small-scale multilingualism from the perspective of Kakabe

In most of European countries the question about native language of a person is usually not problematic and is rather informative about a person's background and identity. Yet in many areas of the world it can be confusing, since, often, several languages can be treated as native for one

single person. In the Fouta-Djallon area a number of other languages are spoken apart from Kakabe, all of which often coexist within the limits of one village or one town. Most of Kakabe speakers are also proficient in Pular, an Atlantic language, in Maninka and Susu, both Mande languages, and finally, in French, the language of school education. It is not always easy to predict what language would be the dominant in their linguistic practice neither is it always possible to define the 'first' language for each particular person. During my postdoctoral research at LACITO I started investigating the question of how Kakabe is inserted in this linguistically diverse landscape that is represented by the Futa-Djallon. I focus on three different levels: at the level of the biography of an individual, at the level of geographical distribution and as the component genre diversity of verbal practices.

To begin with the linguistic biography, it can be illustrated by the rather complex repertoire of my main Kakabe collaborator Ansoumane Camara. Though Ansoumane fluently speaks Kakabe, he considers himself Susu. This identification is inherited from his father who arrived to Futa-Djallon from an area dominated by Susu. Ansoumane's mother is Pular, her two co-wives are Maninka, the grandfather with whom he spent a lot of time in his childhood was Pular. As a result, both Pular and Maninka were part of his linguistic repertoire from early on. As for Kakabe, this is the main language of his peer group: he spoke it with his friends in the street and at school. Finally, Susu, despite being the primary language of his identification, Ansoumane started speaking it only when he moved to a different town to study in college where he lived in a district where Susu was an actively used language.

As for the geography of multilingualism, first, there is a contrast between mostly monolingual settlements, as opposed to more linguistically diverse village and *especillay* towns. Second, within one settlement, languages can be differently distributed across the districts. In Dogomet, the administrative center which is home town of Ansoumane, there are districts that are identified as predominantly Pular, Kakabe, Maninka or Susu.

Finally, genres vary with respect to how much language switching there is found within one communicative situation. For example, in Kakabe fairy tales some of characters tend to switch to a different language, and while doing this, they always sing. Ritual speech often includes a lot of Maninka, and often some phrases in Arabic. Songs are often entirely performed in Maninka.

### **Information structure: focus, prosody, syntax**

Information structure, broadly speaking, involves signalling the various modalities with which chunks utterances contribute to the progress of speech interaction. The content associated with different parts of utterances can be 'packaged' as the asserted or as the presupposed, as the content shared between all the participants of the interaction or known only to the speaker, as the main point of the discussion or as some secondary information that only helps to situate the main message. Focus, one of central notions in the domain of information structure, is a term commonly used to refer to that part of the utterance which is put forward as what is asserted and what justifies the utterance as a whole.

In European language focus is mostly expressed through intonation (for example, in English the main stress of the sentence of what is focused) or the word order. In English focus is signaled by shifting the main stress on the focused phrase, in French, focused part is usually placed at the very

beginning of the sentence. In Kakabe, neither prosody nor word order are involved in signalling the focus of the utterance: the word order is fixed, whereas intonation is used for distinguishing between illocutionary types of utterances but not for information structure. Focus is, instead, signalled by a morpheme that is usually placed adjacently to what is in focus.

A question which is particularly problematic for the description of the expression of focus is how it is signalled when focus scope covers a relatively large portion of the utterance. When focus is, for example, on the direct object only the marker is hosted by this direct object. But when the whole verbal phrase is in focus, the marker must 'choose' its host: will it appear on the direct object or on the verb? According to the current standard account of the focus marking in English, the position of the main stress within the focus phrase is defined by prosodic structure. It appears on the direct object in verb phrase focus because this is the constituent which is in the strongest position prosodically.

There is an important body of literature dedicated to the question of signalling broad focus (e.g. on the whole verb phrase, the whole clause) for languages where information structure oppositions are signalled prosodically and syntactically. As for the expression of broad focus through morphological markers, the studies of this phenomenon are very rare in the literature.

Kakabe shows important similarities in the pattern of the distribution of the focus marker as compared to languages with syntactic and prosodic focus. First, the same way as in the case of English main stress, the Kakabe focus particle appears on the direct object to signal verb phrase focus, and when focus scopes over an intransitive clause, it appears on the subject. Second, both the focus particle and the main stress are avoided with the referent is given, even if it is included in the focus phrase. These similarities suggest that the same principle may underlie the realization of prosodically marked focus and morphologically marked focus. Yet a more detailed investigation of how focus is marked in Kakabe points out that morphological focus marking differs from the prosodic marking in some important aspects. To give one example, in Kakabe transitive focused sentences the focus marker is hosted by the subject, whereas in English it is hosted by the object. In general, the investigation of the expression of focus in Kakabe opens up the way to investigation of the differences between the syntactic and prosodic expression of focus, on the one hand, and its morphological expression, on the other hand.