



# A Semantic Implication of Gender Asymmetry of Dyads in Fulfulde Language

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<p><b>Abstract:</b> This paper analysis the gender asymmetry of Fulfulde language dyads. The principal aim is to examine gender discrimination in the usage of dyads. The research adopts an ethnographic method collection and critical discourse analysis as a theoretical framework. The findings reveal that there’s gender asymmetry of dyads in the Fulfulde language. Dyads that involve masculine and feminine gender pairs, such as superiority, containment, importance, mismatch and sequence. Asymmetry is manifested syntagmatically as the order of the component from an irreversible perspective. It also shows that contrary to the claim made by Moser (1997), there are different factors, which leads to different construction of Fulfulde language.</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Dyads, Asymmetry, Gender inequality, Fulfulde, masculine and feminine.</p>	<p><b>Research Paper</b></p> <p><b>*Corresponding Author:</b> <i>Sadiya Yusuf</i> Hausa Department, Kogi State College of Education Ankpa, Nigeria</p> <p><b>Article History:</b>   <b>Submit:</b> 03.08.2023     <b>Accepted:</b> 21.08.2023     <b>Published:</b> 25.08.2023  </p>
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## INTRODUCTION

Dyad is a pair of things standing in a particular relation or set of two elements treated as one. Macionis and Gerber, (2011) “Dyads are two things of similar kind or nature or group. Dyadic communication refers to the inter-relationship between the two. In practice, this relationship refers to dialogic relations face to face verbal communication between two people involving their mutual thought, behavior, ideas, likes and queries concerning life and living in nature”. According to Zelealem (2011:72), Gender asymmetry refers to “gender inequality reflected in the structural system of a language”. Similarly, asymmetry exists when the two halves of something do not match or are unequal. According to Yariv-Laor and Sovran (1998:199), a “relation is said to be asymmetric if it holds between ‘A’ and ‘B’ but not between ‘B’ and ‘A’. Besides, asymmetry in the language is only possible when dealing with two linguistics elements, about the same form or class, placed on an identical level of linguistics analysis and connected by some link. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), gender asymmetry of dyads is the oppositional and collocational dyad pattern in which the first component of the pair can be characterized

semantically as “Plus” and the second component “minus”. Therefore, the gender asymmetry of dyads investigated in the Fulfulde language are dyads construction led by sequence, containment, mismatch, importance, and superiority. This paper analyses gender asymmetry in Fulfulde language dyads. The aim is to examine whether there is gender discrimination in the usage of dyads in the Fulfulde language. An ethnography research method and critical discourse analysis are used in collecting and analyzing the data. Gender asymmetry is the influence of gender-based differences in establishing and maintaining the imbalance of power between masculine and feminine in language structure.

## METHODOLOGY

The research employs the ethnographic method, which is a data-gathering method that focuses on obtaining information concerning societies and cultures. It is a method of data collection which uses all qualitative research methods, including participant observation, in-depth interviews and focus group discussion. It is a method introduced in the 1950s by Gumperz (1972). It is primarily concerned with the analysis of language use in its cultural setting. As a branch of sociolinguistics, the

ethnographic method of communication aims at describing the forms and functions of verbal and non-verbal communication behavior in a particular cultural or social setting, Torabi (2012).

**Theory Used**

The paper adopted the critical discourse analysis theory for the successful analyses of relevant data. Its philosophical and linguistic bases are grounded on certain branches of social theory and earlier discourse analysis, text linguistics, and interactional sociolinguistics. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), typically studies how context features (such as the properties of language users of powerful groups), influence the ways members of dominated groups define

the communicative situation. It also focuses on how discourse structures influence mental representations. The aim of CDA is to examine the relationships in more detail of how discourse is involved in dominance (Power abuse) and the production and reproduction of social inequality (Durante and Godwin, 1992)

**Fulfulde Dyads Construction Leads by Sequence**

This refers to type of dyads, which their construction is based on the sequential happening of time or any other thing. Therefore, the sequence is the factor responsible for placing components of the dyad in this category.

Examples:

S/N	Dyads	Types	Factor	Gender		Gloss	Source
				Masculine	Feminine		
1.	Jemma bê Nàange	Time	Sequence	Jemma	Nàange	Night & day	Fulfulde
2.	Fajiri bê kiikide	Time	Sequence	kiikide	Fajiri	Morning and evening	Fulfulde

**Example 1**

Contains the dyads jemmaa be naange (night and day), which in fulfulde language signifies the sequence of time that refers to all the time. But linguistically, this structure comes to be considered as merely “correct or standard” with the first component occupying the primary or positive slot and the second component occupying the secondary or negative slot. According to a respondent, Jemmaa (night) always come first before nàange (day), and if the second component occupies the primary slots as nàange be jemmaa (day and night), the structure is considered ungrammatical or incorrect by the Fulani natives, because it violets the rules of language use. It is a stereotype of Fulani natives to slot jemmaa (night) in the primary or positive position, and nàange (day) in the secondary or negative position. The factor leading to the construction of dyads is sequence.

**Example 2**

Contains the dyads fajjiri be kiikide (morning and evening), in these dyads, the placement of fajjiri (morning) in a first or positive slot is only because of the sequence, not because the fajjiri (morning) is more important than kiikide (evening).

**Fulfulde Dyads Construction Lead by Containment**

Dyads construction depends on different factors, such as containment and any dyads with its components that is one word named the container and another word named the contained. The container occupies a primary slot and the contained remains in a secondary slot.

Example:

SN	Dyads	Type	Factor	Gender		Gloss	Source
				Masculine	Feminine		
1.	Unordu bê Gafurgal	Item	Containment	Unordu	Gafurgal	Gafurgal Mortar and Pestle	Fulfulde
2.	Haako bê kusel	Food	Containment	Haako	Kusel	Soup and Meat	Fulfulde

**Example 1**

Contains the dyads Unordu bê Gafurgal (Mortar and Pestle), in this dyad the factor which leads to the placement of Urdu (mortar) is masculine in the positive slot of containment since the mortar contains the pestle before any act of crushing spices takes place, it is considered more important than the pestle.

because it contains the meat and not because it is better than the meat. This is revealed in the Fulfulde wise saying “Haako wolaa kusel nyaama taake” (soup without meat is tasteless). In this case, even though, Haako (Soup), is the container of kusel (Meat), it is not significant or valuable without kusel (meat), which is masculine. So in Fulfulde's language, this shows that language is one of the powerful tools, which allows men to express their status of supremacy. And this assumption extends to the use of Fulfulde language dyads.

**Example 2**

Contains the dyad Haako bê kusel (Soup and Meat), Haako (Soup), which is the feminine gender occupies the first or primary semantic slot and the masculine kusel (Meat), slot in the secondary or negative semantic position. The factor leading to this is containment. Haako (Soup), is just placed in the first slot,

**Fulfulde Dyads Construction Lead by Mismatch**

When components are not likely to be placed composed in a particular dyad, mismatch is the factor leading to the construction of such a dyad.

Example:

SN	Dyads	Type	Factor	Gender		Gloss	Source
				Masculine	Feminine		
1.	Ndiyam bê Hiite	Chemical	Mismatch	Ndiyam	Hiite	Water and Fire	Fulfulde

Example 1

Contains the dyads Ndiyam bê Hiite (water and fire), Ndiyam (water) is masculine and Hiite (fire), is feminine, water and fire are two different entities so combining the two indicates disparity. Here, the factor that leads to the construction of Fulfulde dyad Ndiyam bê Hiite is a mismatch. Like many other Fulfulde dyads which contain masculine and feminine gender, this dyad shows gender asymmetry. Because Ndiyam (water) which is masculine is placed in the primary or positive semantic slot and Hiite (fire), which is feminine is

positioned in the negative semantic slot. And changing the order of this dyad to Hiite and Ndiyam (fire and water) sound odd to native speakers of the Fulfulde language.

**Fulfulde Dyads Construction Lead by Important**

In this category of dyads, it contains gender fear. Plausibly, The important factor determines which component of the dyads be placed in the positive semantic slot and negative semantic slot respectively. Example:

SN	Dyads	Types	Factor	Gender		Gloss	Source
				Masculine	Feminine		
1.	Riiga bê Sarlaa	Cloth	Important	Sarlaa	Riigaa	Shirt and Trouser	Fulfulde
2.	Gudel bê Riiga	Cloth	Important	Gudel	Riiga	Wrapper and Gown	Fulfulde
3.	Nyiiri bê Haako	Food	Important	Nyiiri	Haako	Tuwo and Soup	Fulfulde
4.	Hoore bê Kosdê	Body Part	Important	Hoore	Kosdê	Head and Leg	Fulfulde

Example 1

Contains the dyad Riiga bê Sarlaa (Shirt and Trousers). The factor which leads to the placement of Riiga (shirt) is feminine in the positive semantic slot. As “important” because of Fulani culture, a fully grown-up man can wear only Riigaa (Shirt), without the trouser and move around. But to wear only Sarlaa (trousers), and move around, especially in a large family House is a taboo. Here, the obvious gender discrimination is the value attached to riiga (shirt), just because it is used by men. And there are many positive attachments to Sarlaa (trouser), in fulfulde language sayings.

Example 3

Contains the dyad Nyiiri bê Hàako (Tuwó and Soup), this dyad refers to a particular food in Fulani’s culture and the factor that lead to the construction of the dyads as Nyiiri bê Hàako (Tuwó and Soup), is the importance given to Nyiiri (Tuwó) in fulani’s culture. In this dyad, Nyiiri (Tuwó) which is the masculine gender is placed in the primary slot, and Hàako (Soup), which is the feminine gender is placed in the negative semantic slot. And this shows there is gender discrimination in the dyad. Because it became a stereotype for Fulani native speakers to use this dyad in this order. And whoever uses the dyad in reverse order as Hàako bê Nyiiri (Soup and Tuwó), is considered a none native speaker of the Fulani language. This is in line with what Wareing’ (2004, p76), argued “Sexist language represents women and men unequally, as if members of the other sex”

Example 2

Contains the dyad Gudel bê Riiga (Wrapper and Gown). Which refers to a type of cloth in the Fulani community. The placement of the two components is based on the importance each plays in terms of the person who used to wear it. According to an informant, a typical Fulani native woman can wear only a guide (wrapper) and move around, especially in a large family House. But it is taboo to use only riiga (gown) and move around in the Fulani community. The importance of Gudel (wrapper) in Fulani’s culture is stressed in so many ways. The gender bias in the use of this dyad is that feminine gender riiga (gown), is subjugated by being placed in a negative semantic slot. And this shows that there is a tight fit between cultural assumptions and linguistic structures, which in most cases, in adulthood the gender assumptions embedded in the language become a natural and unconscious part of fluent language use (Moser, 1997).

Example 4

Contains the dyad Hoore bê Kosdê (Head and Leg). This dyad signifies the parts of the body and the factor, which leads to its formation as Hoore bê Kosdê is ‘importance’. As part of the body, one can live as a cripple without legs. But there’s no way for someone to live without a head. Because once someone’s head is cut, that person must die. So Hoore, (head) which is the masculine gender is favoured over Kosdê (Leg) which is the feminine gender in many fulfulde languages saying such as “Jaumo Sàare” (Head of the House). On the Other hand, Kosdê (leg), is a negatively represented example, ‘Kosdê Jigaawaal’ (leg of vulture) meaning (Sabotage). ‘Kosdê jamdii’ (iron leg), meaning ‘Calamity’ these examples reveals the sensitivity of the whole process of conceptualization in the use of fulfulde language dyads. These culturally dependent facts comply

perfectly with the examples showing the priority of the first element.

### Fulfulde Dyads Construction Lead by Superiority

In this category, superiority is considered as a factor which leads to the placement of one component in primary or positive semantic and other component in secondary or negative semantic position. Example:

SN	Dyads	Types	Factor	Gender			Source
				Masculine	Feminine	Gloss	
1.	Gorko bē Debbo	Couple	Superiority	Gorko	Debbo	Husband and Wife	Fulfulde
2.	Hijju bē Ummra	Religion	Superiority	Hijju	Ummra	Pilgrimage & Lesser Hajj	Fulfulde
3.	Worbe bē Rewbe	Human Being	Superiority	Worbe	Rewbe	Men and Women	Fulfulde

#### Example 1

Contains the dyads Gorko bē Debbo (Husband and wife), in the culture and religion of the fulani, only those who are legally married are called, Gorko bē Debbo (Husband and wife), therefore, the dyads remain the name of couples. In Fulani cultural context, people are named to differentiate, recognize, and know Chamo (2012), and superiority remains the factor, which leads to the placement of the masculine component in the first, or primary slot while the feminine in the second or secondary slot. According to an informant, in the culture of native speakers of the fulfulde language, if the structure changes to Debbo bē Gorko (wife and husband), there is an extension of meaning into a negative connotation. A home which is led by the female, (wife) and contradicts a normal way of leadership of the family. So there is a semantic extension as a linguistic feature in the usage of the fulfulde dyad. Moreover, a husband is expected to dictate the affairs of his wife in all aspects.

#### Example 2

Contains the Fulfulde dyad Hijju bē Ummrah (Pilgrimage & Lesser hajj). The word ‘Haji’ (Pilgrimage) is masculine and favoured over Ummrah (Lesser Hajj). Which is feminine by being placed in the positive semantic slot. The dyad refers to specific religious activities performed by Muslims. According to one informant, Fulanis consider Ummra bē hijju (Lesser hajj and Pilgrimage) as incorrect. And any person who says it will be considered a non-native speaker of a fulfulde language. Because it does not follow the linguistic norms. And the linguistic feature here is stereotyped. Moreover, the factor that leads to the construction of this dyad as Hijju bē Ummrah (Pilgrimage & Lesser hajj) is superiority. And even in Islam, which is the religion followed by most of the Fulfulde native speakers, Hajj is compulsory for those who can afford it. But it is not for Ummrah. Therefore, Hijju is considered superior to Ummra and this idea triggers the construction of this dyad as Hijju bē Ummrah (Pilgrimage & Lesser hajj).

#### Example 3

Contains the Fulfulde dyad Worbe bē Rewbe (Male and Female), the word Worbe (males), which is a masculine gender occupies a positive semantic slot. And this shows that it is favoured over the word Rewbe (female), which is a feminine gender. The factor that

leads to this is ‘superiority’. Because in fulanis culture, there is a general belief that males are superior to females. Chamo (2015, p. 274), Opens that in Hausa, Fulani and Yoruba cultures, a woman is expected to greet a man before he greets her. Because there are cultural assumptions of inequality. Another informant mentioned that, in the culture of native speakers of fulfulde language, masculine gender is considered to have a great role in establishing the social norms, which causes inequality in the treatment of masculine and feminine gender through language use.

## CONCLUSION

The paper shows that there’s gender discrimination in the usage of fulfulde language dyads. This is expressed in positive and negative semantic slots. There is also a high level of cultural influence on linguistic structures in the expression of dyads fulfulde languages. Another important finding is that repositioning of words in fulfulde language dyads that contained gender pairs result in semantic extension, odd expression and stereotyping. It finally finds that fulfulde dyads that contained gender pairs are common nouns. As such dyads asymmetry is manifested syntagmatically as the order of the components is irreversible.

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