Dependent Clauses and Focus Particle in Kakabe

Alexandra Vydrina
Laboratoire de Phonétique et Phonologie, UMR-7018 CNRS

Abstract: The paper deals with the syntax of focalization in Kakabe (Mokole < Western Mande). By default, the argument focus is marked by a specialized particle lè following the focused constituent which remains in situ. To mark the sentence focus, lè usually follows the subject. lè cannot appear inside adverbial and relative subordinate clauses, in infinitive constructions; it cannot follow most of adverbial expressions. At the same time, it can be hosted by adverbs and postpositional phrases of time, manner and place.

Key words: focalization, focus particle, external focalization, Kakabe language, Mande languages

Editor’s preface

Information structure of Kakabe was in the center of Alexandra’s academic interest during the final period of her life. Already in her PhD thesis (Vydrina 2017), she paid lots of attention to focalization. Two big papers published after the defence of the thesis dealt with sentence focus (Vydrina 2020a) and with operator focus in Kakabe (Vydrina 2020b). Another big paper, “Morphological focus and its agreement features”, was prepared for publication (hopefully, it will appear before the end of 2023). In these theoretical articles, different aspects of Kakabe focalization (and information structure in general) are considered in detail, in the framework of several formal approaches, with ample references to the relevant linguistic literature. It would not be an exaggeration to say that these writings represent so far the most
profound and detailed analysis of the information structure in the Mande linguistics.

This paper is of a different kind. It presents, in an extremely frugal way, the Kakabe data on the syntax of focalization, with a special attention to the island constraints for the placement of the focalization particle lè. In fact, it remained unfinished, and it required some editing (a number of repetitions have been removed, some phrases have been completed, the numeration of examples has been corrected, etc.).

Certainly, this paper cannot be compared with Alexandra’s other focalization papers with respect to the analytical depth, however, it represents some language data which are absent elsewhere. Another advantage of this presentation is that it provides an inventory of syntactic contexts applicable for the study of focalization in other Mande languages (and beyond).

I don’t know if Alexandra would publish this paper in its present form. Most probably, she would rather use it as a starting point for another in-depth analytical study. Alas, this study cannot be continued by the author. But still, publication of this text, however sketchy it may be, seems to me not devoid of interest for the African linguistics.

Valentin Vydrin

1. General information about Kakabe

Kakabe < Western Mande < Mande; ~50 000 speakers.
Rigid S (aux)-O-V-X word order where X stands for any adjunct.

(1) Sbj Aux DO V IO pp
à si ningée sàn mànśáà yên
à si ningi-È sàn mànśa-È yên
3SG POT COW.ART buy chief-ART BNF
‘He will buy a cow for the chief.’

¹ Kakabe phrasal examples are presented systematically in three lines. In the first line, a superficial realization is provided; in the second line, the underlying form; in the third one, the glosses. Every example is followed by a free translation into English.
Kakabe is a **tonal language**, with H and L, floating L tones and downstep (non-automatic downdrift). The distance between the underlying (lexical) tones and their surface realization can be rather important. Examples are given with two lines of transcription: the first line represents the surface phonemic transcription and the second line gives the underlying lexical forms for each morpheme.

### 2. Focus in simple sentences

#### 2.1 Narrow vs. broad focus

Focus is signaled by dedicated particle *lè* (*dè* after nasals). The focused constituent always remains *in situ*.

(2) a. \[mùsèè \ [lè]_f \ ka \ sòbèè \ tàbi \] Sbj focus
\[mùsu-È \ lè \ ka \ sòbo-È \ tàbi\]

woman.ART fp pfv.tr meat.ART prepare
‘The woman prepare the meat.’

b. \[mùsèè \ kà \ [sòbèè \ lè]_f \ tàbi \] Obj focus
\[mùsu-È \ kà \ sòbo-È \ lè \ tàbi\]

woman.ART pfv.tr meat.ART fp prepare
‘The woman prepared THE MEAT.’

Constructions with *lè* following DO can also have the broader VP focus reading (3).

(3) \[mùsèè \ kà \ sòbèè \  \lè \ tàbi\]
\[mùsu-È \ ka \ sòbo-È \ lè \ tàbi\]

woman-Art pfv.tr meat-Art fp prepare

a. ‘(What did the woman prepare?) The woman prepared THE MEAT.’
b. ‘(What did the woman do?) The woman PREPARED THE MEAT.’

Nevertheless, there is no ban on placing *lè* on the verb, and narrow V-focus is signaled by *lè* following the verb (4).
Dependent clauses and focus particle in Kakabe

(4) mùséé kà sòbéé bàràbárà lè
mùsu-È ka sòbo-È bàrabora lè
woman-ART PFV.TR meat.ART boil FP
‘(Did the woman fry or boil the meat?)
The woman BOILED the meat.’

2.2 Complex DPs

Complex DP is transparent for the focus particle which can be placed after the head as well as after the possessor; cf. the focus on the whole complex DP (5a), on the head (5b), and on the possessor (5c):

(5) a. ǹ ká [ń nèènè lá nìngée lè]ₙₕ màyìtà
ǹ ka ń nèene la nìngi-È lè mayìta
1SG PFV.TR 1SG mother POSS cow-ART FP sell
‘(Did you sell your father’s goat or your mother’s cow?)
I sold MY MOTHER’S COW.’
b. ǹ ká ń nèènè lá [nungée lè]ₙₕ màyìtà
ǹ ka ń nèene la nìngi-È lè mayìta
1SG PFV.TR 1SG mother POSS cow-ART FP sell
‘(Did you sell your mother’s goat or your mother’s cow?)
I sold my mother’s COW.’
c. ǹ ká ń [nèènè lè]ₙₕ lá nìngée màyìtà
ǹ ka ń nèene lè la nìngi-È mayìta
1SG PFV.TR 1SG mother FP POSS cow-ART sell
‘(Did you sell your father’s cow or your mother’s cow?)
I sold my mother’s COW.’

The focus encoded by lè can be opposed to one alternative only, as in (6) or be construed against an open set of alternatives (7).

(6) ò máá ń⁺lé *lé gbàsi
ò màa ñdè lè gbàsi
2PL NEG.PFV 1SG.LG FP beat
‘You have not beaten me, you have beaten your child.’
(sakeke_Mamadu_2010_059)

‘[What has this one brought to you?] He brought the hoes here.’
(numu_SNKeita_2009_042)

2.3. Sentence Focus

In the context Sentence Focus, lè is mostly placed after the subject (8).

‘[What happened?] The car crashed.’
(KKEC AV NARR_150124_AK1_124)

When both core arguments in SF are full DPs and non-given, lè appears after the subject NP, according to the principle of subject priority. This is illustrated by the two introductory SF constructions below (9).

‘(Beginning of a story:) The mice chose the cats to make a party.’
(tula_SNKeita_2009_003)

But other position for lè are possible in SF as well, depending on the discourse properties of the referents. In (10), as is clear from the
preceding context, the QUD is of the type ‘What happened?’ and therefore the clause has the SF articulation. Again, the subject is pronominal and \( lè \) is placed after the nominal DO ‘my hoes’.

\[(10) \quad \text{ǹ bi ǹ na kérè-nu lè jígalen} \]
\[\quad \text{ǹ bi ǹ la kéri-È-nu lè jíga-len} \]
\[1\text{sg be 1\text{sg poss hoe-ART-PL FP take-PC.ST}} \]
\[káà dòni nùméè báta \]
\[kà-à dònì nùmu-È báta \]
\[\text{INF-3\text{sg send smith-ART at}} \]

‘[Birds, listen to me what happened]: I took my hoes and went with them to the smith’s.’ (numu_SNKeita_2009_063)

### 3. Internal vs. external focalization of subordinate clauses

#### 3.1. Adverbial clause

When the focus is on a subconstituent of a subordinate clause, e.g. an adverbial clause as in (11), \( lè \) cannot appear after the semantically focused constituent. Instead, the focus marker is found at the end of the matrix clause.

\[(11) \quad \begin{align*}
\text{à tááta lúúmɛ̀ tɔ (lè)} & \quad [\text{à ni [bántárà}_f \text{ sân]}] \\
\text{à táa-ta lúumɔ-È tɔ } & \quad \text{à ni bàntara-È } \text{sàn} \\
\text{3sg go-PFV.i market-ART in FP 3sg SBjv manioc-ART buy} \\
\text{‘He went to the market to buy MANIOC (not rice).’} \\
\text{b. } & \quad *[\text{à tááta lúumɛ̀ tɔ} [\text{à ni [bántárà lè}_f \text{ sân}]]
\end{align*} \]

The same happens for when the focus is, pragmatically, on the whole adverbial clause (external focalization of the dependent clause). Here, again, \( lè \) appears not at the end of the focused constituent but at the end of the matrix clause (12).
(12) Adverbial clause focus: focus particle in the main clause
a. *káá wò bì táá-lá lè [wò nì wó dòn]$_F$
   or.Q 2PL be go-GER FP 2PL SBJV 2PL dance
   ‘[Do you go there TO STUDY] or do you go there IN ORDER TO
   DANCE?’ (Lit. ‘SO THAT YOU DANCE’)
b. *káá wò bì táá-lá wò nì wó dòn dé

(13) i yili yàà ma lè [wò nì nɔgon gbëllon]$_F$
   i yili bi-à ma lè wò nì nɔgon gbëllon
   2SG wish be-3SG on FP 2PL SBJV each other chase
   ‘[Are you looking forward to that you would play football] or
   are you looking forward to GO CHASING AFTER EACH OTHER?’ (TALK03_228)

3.2. Relative clause

When a subconstituent of a relativized clause is focused, the focus
particle appears on the resumptive pronoun wò which is also used as
the distal demonstrative ‘that’ in the language (14).

(14) Correlative relativization
káŋkáɲè mìn kà sààgáá kà nká ànù kà wò lè bìtà
kánkan-È mìn ka sàaga-È kànka ànu ka wò lè bìta
thief-ART REL PFV.TR sheep-ART steal 3PL PFV.TR that FP catch
   ‘They caught the thief who stole the sheep (not the thief who
   stole the goat).’

(15) m̀n sógò bì i là, i wò lè tún yén là
   m̀n sógò bì i là, i wò lè tún yén là
   REL wish be 2SG OBL 2SG that FOC only see GER
   i kà mìn là kòo fò, i wò lè tún yén là
   i ka mìn la kòo fò, i wò lè tún yén là
   2SG PFV.TR REL POSS matter say 2SG that FOC only see GER
   ‘[When you go hunting], you will find whatever you wish. Whatever
   you say, you will see it.’ (banba_SNKeita_2009_082)
Correlative with relativized DO: focus particle *lè* in matrix clause on the resumptive pronoun *wò* (16).

(16) \[
\begin{array}{ll}
[\text{jàtàà kà kàyéè mín mágba}] \\
\text{jàta-È ka kàyi-È mín mágba} \\
\text{lion-ART PFV.TR man-ART REL wound} \\
[\text{ànù kà wó lè dòni lábutánè tò}] \\
\text{ànù ka wo lè dòni lábutane-È tò} \\
3\text{PL PFV.TR that FP send hospital-ART in} \\
'\text{They sent the man that the lion wounded to the hospital (not the man that fell down himself).}' (Lit. 'The lion wounded that man, they sent him to the hospital')
\end{array}
\]

Embedded relativization is also attested in Kakabe, even though it is much less frequent than the correlative strategy. The focus particle, again, cannot appear in-situ, i.e. within the subordinate clause and appears instead in the matrix clause. It appears linearly, at the end of the relativized NP which, in this case, coincides with the end of the relativized clause (17).

(17) \[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{ànù ka [dp kánkajè [rel mín ka såagáá fànka] lè] bita} \\
\text{ànù ka kánkan-È mín ka såaga-È kànka lè bita} \\
3\text{PL PFV.TR thief-ART REL PFV.TR sheep-ART steal FP catch} \\
'\text{They caught the thief who stole the sheep (not the thief who stole the goat).}'
\end{array}
\]

See also (18)–(19) with embedded relativization in which the relativized NP occupies the DO position and the focus is on a DP within the embedded relativized clause.

(18) \[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{ànù kà [dp kánkajè [rel dénnènù fànka mí mín yèn] dè] bita} \\
\text{ànù ka kánkan-È dénden-È-nu ka mín yèn lè bita} \\
3\text{PL PFV.TR thief-ART child-ART-PL PFV.TR REL see FP catch} \\
'\text{They caught the thief who the children saw (not the one who the women saw).}'
\end{array}
\]
‘They sent the man that the lion wounded, to the hospital (not the man that fell down himself).’ (Lit. ‘The lion wounded that man, they sent him to the hospital.’)

3.3. Infinitive

Examples (20)–(21) illustrate the unavailability of the infinitival clause for in situ focus particle: the semantically focused DO of the infinitive triggers lè in the matrix clause instead.

(20) i kà kàn dè kà yége F dàmu
i ka kàn lè kà yége-È dâmu
2sg pfv.tr ought.to fp inf fish-art eat
‘You have to eat fish.’

(21) à nàtà lúúmè tò lè kà bàntárà sàn
à na-ta lúumɔ-È tɔ lè kà bátara-È sàn
3sg come-pfv.i market-art in fp inf manioc-art buy
‘He came to the market and bought manioc.’

3.4. Gerund, nominalization: no restrictions on in situ FP

No restrictions on in-situ focalizations are found for subconstituents of gerunds and nominalizations.

(22) à fòlòtá yége lè dàmùlà
à fòlò-ta yége-È lè dâmu-la
3sg start-pfv.i fish-art fp eat-ger
‘He started eating fish (and not meat).’
Nominalization

(23) yége lè dámuè kàà lágbàndì
yége-È lè dámu-È ka-à la-ghàndì
fish-ART FP eat-ART PFV.TR-3SG CAUS-fall.ill
‘It is because of eating fish that he fell ill.’ (Lit. ‘The eating of fish made him ill’)

3.5. Utterance complement: no restriction on in situ FP

Differently from the subjunctive, relative and infinitive clauses, complement clauses impose no restriction on the expression of their internal focalization in situ.

(24) n bàà fɔ́ lá nɔn mɔ̀ ɔ́ nì sɔ́ ngè wò
n bi-à fɔ́ -la nɔn mɔ̀ ɔni sɔ́ ngɔ-È wò
1SG be-3SG say-GER DISC porridge price-ART that
kàyèè lè yáà dílá mùséè bólo
kayi-È lè bi-à dí-la mùsu-È bólo
man-ART FP be-3SG give-GER woman-ART hand
‘I was saying, the money for the porridge THE MAN gives it to the woman.’ (KKEC_AV_CONV_131207_TALK03_053)

3.6. Utterance complement: external focalization

As shown in §3.5, subconstituents of utterance complements can be focused in situ. In contrast to that, when focus is on the utterance complement as a whole, lè appears in the matrix clause and not at the end of the utterance complement, as would be expected if it were in situ.

(25) mà yáà fɔ́lá ànì yén dè
mà bi-à fɔ̀ -la ànu yen lè
1PL be-3SG say-GER 3PL BNF FP
[àn ní sáli kútàà sàn mà yèn],
ànu ní sáli kùta-È sàn mà yèn
3PL SBJV holiday clothes-ART buy 1PL BNF
‘(What do you ask them to do?) We tell them [that they should buy clothes for us].’ (TALK03_122)
(26) ì kánàà fɔ́ [à si úlufitɛ]_{F}
ì káni-à fɔ́ à si úlufite
2SG IMP.NEG-3SG say 3SG POT fall.in
ì báà fɔ́là lè [ì si bìri]_{F}
ì bi-à fɔ́-là lè ì si bìri
2SG be-3SG say-GER FP 2SG POT fall.in
‘You shouldn’t say: “it will ulufite” you should say “you will fall in”’. (prel_2010_080)

In (27) the focus is on the greeting tànà máá téle ‘Hello’. It is under the scope of focus and also under the scope of the exclusive focus particle tún ‘only’ with both the non-specialized focus particle lè and the exclusive tún appearing after the utterance predicate:

(27) sì ì kétá ì báà fɔ́la lè tún
sì ì kété ì bi-à fɔ́-là lè tún
if 2SG arrive-PFV.1 2SG be-3SG say-GER FP only
[tànà máá téle] ì bi wó lè tún fɔ́là
tànà máa téle ì bi wó lè tún fɔ́-là
evil PFV.NEG day 2SG be that FP only say-GER
‘When you come you say only: “Hello”. You don’t say anything else.’

4. Focus on non-clausal XPs and ex-situ focus particle

4.1. Contexts requiring the ex-situ focus particle

Apart from subordinate clauses, ex-situ position of focus maker (when it is not on the XP semantically in focus) is found in context when the semantic focus is on one of the following categories of XPs:
• quotes, names (28)–(30), complements of comparative constructions (31),
• clause-level adverbials and adverbial constituents, e.g. dôndên-dôndên ‘little by little’ (32), báake ‘a lot’, and polarity items, e.g. kán↑wóokánkan ‘anyhow’, lùn↑wólùn ‘any day’ (33),
• some manner adverbs have an “expressive form” associated with raised high tone and, optionally, reduplication (34),
• clauses-level focus sensitive particles of epistemic stance/commitment judgement: *féw* ‘emph’, *tún* ‘only’ etc. (35)–(36),
• adverbial intensifiers, lexically specific adverbs (37),
• onomatopoea (38)–(39).
Importantly, they are often accompanied by register raising, signaled by ↑, that can be interpreted as **downdrift break**.

(28) Naming construction with *fɔ̀*

\[
sōmááɗùn à i fɔlā læ kánfínè
\]
\[
sōmááɗùn à bi fɔ̥-la læ kán-fin-È
\]
otherwise 3SG be say-GER FP neck-black-È

‘[The language is called “Kakabe”], otherwise, it is called “BLACK NECK”.’ (mosque3_078)

(29) Naming construction with *kó*

\[
sōséènù kó àn má læ jṑla mikifṑre
\]
\[
sōsō-È-nu kó ànu ma læ jṑla mikifṑre
\]
 Sousou-ART-PL say 3PL to FP there mikifore

‘Susu call them there Mikifore.’ (KKEC_A_V_CONV_131220_mosque3_082)

The use of læ in the non-verbal naming construction with *tógô* (30).

(30) \[
ké lógô dénè tógô læ káppê
\]
\[
ké lógô dén-È tógô læ káppê
\]
that tree child-ART name FP yam

‘This fruit is called yam.’ (KKEC_AV_CONV_131207_TALK02_083)

(31) Comparative construction

\[
à káá bitá læ kó à nímógè
\]
\[
à ka-à bita læ kó à nímògɔ-È
\]
3SG PFV.TR-3SG take FP say 3SG sibling.in.law-ART

‘She considered her as her SISTER-IN-LAW.’ (KKEC_AV_NARR_131227_AK3_119)
(32) Clause-level adverbials

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{mà} & \ i \ \text{tólónná} \ \text{lè} \ \uparrow \text{dóndendóndèn} \\
\text{mà} & \ \text{bi} \ \text{tólón-la} \ \text{lè} \ \text{dóndendonden} \\
\text{1PL} & \ \text{be} \ \text{play-GER} \ \text{FP} \ \text{slowly}
\end{align*}
\]

‘(Do you quarrel when you play?) No, we play QUIETLY.’ (KKEC_AV_CONV_131207_TALK03_240)

(33) Polarity items

a. \[
\begin{align*}
\text{à} & \ \bi \ \text{wálilá} \ \text{lè} \ \text{lùn↑wólùn} \\
\text{à} & \ \text{bi} \ \text{wáli-la} \ \text{lè} \ \text{lùn↑wólùn}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{3SG} & \ \text{be} \ \text{work-GER} \ \text{FP} \ \text{any.day}
\end{align*}
\]

‘He works ANY DAY/ANY TIME.’

b. \[
\begin{align*}
*\text{à} & \ \bi \ \text{wálilá} \ \text{lùn↑wólùn} \ \text{dè}
\end{align*}
\]

(34) Expressive manner adverbs

a. \[
\begin{align*}
\text{à} & \ \bi \ \text{bòrilá} \ \text{lè} \ \uparrow \text{dóyi-dóyi} \\
\text{à} & \ \text{bi} \ \text{bóri-la} \ \text{lè} \ \uparrow \text{dóyi-dóyi}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{3SG} & \ \text{be} \ \text{run-GER} \ \text{FP} \ \text{slowly.EMPH}
\end{align*}
\]

‘He is running VERY SLOWLY (INDEED).’

b. \[
\begin{align*}
*\text{à} & \ \bi \ \text{bórilá} \ \uparrow \text{dóyi-dóyi} \ \text{lè}
\end{align*}
\]

Clause-level particles of epistemic stance (35)–(36).

(35) a. \[
\begin{align*}
\text{à} & \ \text{gbàndiyàtàn} \ \text{lè} \ \uparrow \text{féw} \\
\text{à} & \ \text{gbàndiya-ta lè} \ \uparrow \text{féw}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{3SG} & \ \text{fall.ill-PFV.I} \ \text{FP} \ \text{indeed}
\end{align*}
\]

‘Indeed, he fell ill!’

b. \[
\begin{align*}
*\text{à} & \ \text{gbàndiyàtàn} \ \uparrow \text{féw} \ \text{lè}
\end{align*}
\]

(36) a. \[
\begin{align*}
\text{nògòsà} & \ \text{à} \ \text{bi} \ \text{nàlá} \ \text{lè} \\
\text{nògòsà} & \ \text{à} \ \text{bi} \ \text{nà-la} \ \text{lè}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{maybe} & \ \text{3SG} \ \text{be} \ \text{come-GER} \ \text{FP}
\end{align*}
\]

‘Maybe, he will come.’

b. \[
\begin{align*}
*\text{nògòsà} & \ \text{lè} \ \text{à} \ \text{bi} \ \text{nàlà}
\end{align*}
\]
(37) Intensifiers, lexically specific adverbs

a. à gbétá lè ṭɔs
   à gbé-ta lè ṭɔs
   3SG be.clean-PFV.I FP INTSF
   ‘It is totally clean (it is not just a little bit clean)!’

b. *à gbétá ṭɔs lè

Onomatopoea (38)–(39).

(38) níngè báá fòlà lè múù (njáw màa ṭè)
   níngi-È bi-à fò-la lè múù njáw màa ṭè
   cow-ART be-3SG say-GER FP “moo” “meow” ID.NEG EMPH
   ‘Cow makes “moo” and not “meow”.’
   *níngè báá fòlá múù lè (njáw màa ṭè)

(39) jéè báá mála lè còrr còrr còrr
   jíi-è bi-à má-la lè còrrcòrrcòrr
   water-ART be-3SG do-GER FP IDEO
   ‘The water was falling: plop-plop-plop!’ (bayimanu_SNKeita_2010_019)

4.2 Adverbials hosting focus particle in situ

Adverbs and postpositional phrases of time, manner and place can host lè.

(40) à nàtà kùnnùn dè / kùnnùn dè à nàtà
   à nà-ta kùnnùn lè
   3SG come-PFV.I yesterday FP
   ‘He arrived YESTERDAY.’

(41) à bi bɔrlá dòyi lè
   à bi bɔrì-la dòyi lè
   3SG be run-GER slowly FP
   ‘He runs SLOWLY.’
5. Summary and a tentative explanation

Truncated CP is an island for in situ focalization of subconstituents. Infinitives, adverbial and relativized clauses have truncated CP structure in Kakabe. Expressive adverbs, ideophones, names in naming constructions, appear in the CP position. Gerunds and nominalizations display the same behavior as complex DPs that are transparent for sub-constituent focalizations and can also be focused as whole in situ.
Abbreviations

ART – referential article  PASS – passive
BNF – benefactive  PC.ST – stative participle
COP – copula  PFV.OF – perfective with operator focus
CP – constituent phrase  PFV.I – intransitive perfective
                      (without operator focus)
DIM – diminutive  PFV.TR – transitive perfective
                      (without operator focus)
DP – determiner phrase  PL – plural
F – focus  POSS – possessive
FD – focus domain  POT – potential
FP – focus particle  PST – past
G – given  Q – interrogative
GER – gerund  QUD – question under discussion
IDENT – identificational copula  REL – relativizer
INCL – inclusive  SF – sentence focus
LG – long form of pronouns  SBJV – subjunctive
NEG – negation  SG – singular
OBL – oblique  SBJV – subjunctive
OF – operator focus

References


Received 27.02.2023. Received in revised form 23.03.2023. Accepted 23.03.2023