



*Revue internationale de
langues, littératures et cultures*

**N°24
2026**

**Université Gaston Berger de Saint-Louis
B.P. 234, Saint-Louis, Sénégal
ISSN 0851-4119**

SAFARA N° 24-2026 – ISSN 0851-4119

**Revue internationale de langues, littératures et cultures
Laboratoire de Recherche en Art et Culture**

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A Contrastive Study of Pulaar and Noon Phonology: The Case of the Consonants

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Résumé

Cet article parle de l'étude contrastive des consonnes du Pulaar et du Noon. Il prend en compte la distribution de chaque consonne. En Pulaar comme en Noon, le mouvement des consonnes est régi par des règles spécifiques. Toutes les consonnes peuvent apparaître en position attaque par contre en médiane et coda il y a des restrictions. Cela veut dire qu'en position médiane et en terminaison, certaines consonnes ne sont pas permises. Bien que certains linguistes considèrent les pré-nasales comme des agglomérats. Aucune des deux langues n'admet un agglomérat consonantique en position initiale et finale. Cependant, ces langues présentent plus de ressemblances que de dissemblances.

Mots clés : Phonologie, Agglomérat, Agglomérat de consonnes

Abstract

This article is about the contrastive structure of the consonants of Pulaar and Noon. It deals with the distribution of each consonant sound. In Pulaar as well as in Noon the scattering of consonants is governed by specific rules. At their onsets no consonant is forbidden but at their medial and final ones, there are some restrictions. That is to say some consonants cannot appear at the middle and others at the termination of a word. Neither Pulaar nor Noon allows a cluster at its initial and final position although some specialists consider the pre-nasals as clusters. However, these languages share more similarities than differences.

Keywords: Phonology, Cluster, Consonant clusters

INTRODUCTION

The Senegalese landscape is composed of several local languages. Among them, 24 are codified and labelled national languages among which is pulaar. All of the Senegalese languages apart from Hassania, belong to the same family: West-Atlantic.

In this article, we intend to deal with the phonological study of Pulaar and Noon. The latter is a branch of the *cangin* group spoken in the area of Thiès, Senegal. This serere branch is composed of five varieties (Noon, Lear, Palor, Safen, and Ndout).

Over the course of the article, we have talked about their phonemic inventories, the phonological rules, and the contrastive study.

I. Phonemic inventories of Pulaar and Noon

I.1 Pulaar Sound System

The Pulaar segments are divided into two groups: the consonants and the vowels. The consonants are subdivided into simple consonants, pre-nasal consonants and the implosives. As for the vowels, they are composed of two types: short and long vowels. The blank spaces refer to a lack of counterparts. Pulaar contains 37 sounds.

I.1.2 The Consonants

Here are the Pulaar consonant sounds. We count 27 consonants in Pulaar. Most of the examples are from the booklet: *Livret d'Auto-Formation: Pulaar, Cours de Poulaar/ Jannde Pulaar* and *Petit Vocabulaire de la Langue Peul Parlée au Fouta Toro*.

The simple consonants

Voiceless consonants

p as in *paagal* /pa:gʌl/
t as in *tamed* /tʌmdɛ/
c as in *ceedu* /cɛ:du/
k as in *keeci* /kɛ:ci/
f as in *fedɛendu* /fɛdɛ:ndu/
s as in *saare* /sa:rɛ/
h as in *hoore* /ho:rɛ/
q as in *qimaade* /qɪma:dɛ/
m as in *maaro* /ma:ro/
n as in *nanno* /nʌno/
ŋ as in *ŋari* /ŋari/
l as in *lewru* /lewru/
r as in *rewbe* /rewbɛ/
w as in *wuro* /wuro/
j as in *yeeso* /jɛ:so/

Voiced consonants

b as in *becce* /becɛ/
d as in *dudal* /dudʌl/
j as in *jayngol* /jajngɔl/
g as in *galle* /gale/

I.1.3 The Implosives

ɓ as in *boyre* /bɔyrɛ/
ɗ as in *ɗanaade* /ɗʌna:dɛ/
ɟ as in *yiiyam* /ʃi:ʃʌm/

I.1.4 The Pre-Nasal Consonants

mb as in *mbaalu* /mba:lu/
nd as in *nduŋgu* /nduŋgu/
ng as in *ngilgu* /ngɪlgu/
nj as in *njimri* /njɪmri/

I.1.5 The Vowels

They are ten regardless of their allophones: five short and five long vowels. Every short vowel has their allophones that we will list at their front.

The Short vowels

a [a and ʌ] as in *amde* /amde/

o [o and ɔ] as in *otude* /otude/

i [I and i] as in *itude* /Itude/

u [U and u] as in *udude* /Udude/

e [E, e and ε] as in *esirawo* /EsIrʌwo/

The Long vowels

a: as in *amttude* /a:mtude/

o: as in *oortinde* /o:rtinde/

i: as in *iirtude* /i:rtude/

u: as in *uurde* /u:rde/

ε: as in *lapeede* /ʌpε:de^{1,2,3}

NB: It is worth explaining the distribution of each allophone. The allophones of /a/ are used in this way: [ʌ] is used at medial position /ɲʌri/ and [a] at initial and final one /no:da/. The phoneme /o/ has two allophones: [ɔ] which is used at the medial position /nɔta:dε/ and [o] at the initial and final one /ma:ro/. The phoneme /i/ has also two varieties: [I] which appears at the initial position and at the medial between two consonants /ngʌngu/ and the sound [i] appears elsewhere /nʌtti/. The phoneme /e/ has three representations: [E] at the onset /Enndu/, [e] at the nucleus /hInere/ and [ε] at the coda /hʌkke/. And at the end, the phoneme /u/ has also two varieties: the segment [U] that we find at initial /Unde/ and [u] at medial and the final one /rε:du/.⁴

¹« Cours de Pulaar/ JanndePulaar ». (no extra details)

² Ministère de l'Enseignement Technique de la Formation Professionnelle de l'Alphabétisation et des Langues Nationales (METFPALAN), 2002, *Livret d'auto-formation : Pulaar*. Dakar : Kalama. p.1

³ Oumar Ba, 1975, *Petit Vocabulaire de la Langue Peul parlé au Fouta Toro*. Dakar: CLAD (Les Langues Africaines du Sénégal). pp.1-2

⁴ Mamadou Ndiaye, 1982b, *Éléments de Phonologie du Pulaar*. Dakar : CLAD (Les Langues Nationales au Sénégal). pp.18-20.

I.2. Noon Sound System

It is a set of consonants and vowels as well. The Noon consonants are split into simple consonants, pre-nasal consonants and the implosives. As for the vowels, they are composed of two types: the short vowels and the long ones. As aforementioned in the pulaar section, the blank spaces refer to a lack of counterparts. Noon includes 38 sounds.

I.2.1 The consonants

They are of (26).

The simple consonants

Voiceless consonants

p as in *pol* /pol/
t as in *tak* /tak/
c as in *cooh* /co:h/
k as in *kop* /kop/
f as in *fen* /fen/
s as in *sís* /sis/
h as in *haan* /ha:n/
m as in *mah* /mah/
n as in *nan* /nan/
ɲ as in *niin* /ni:n/
ŋ as in *ɲaam* /ɲa:m/
l as in *look* /lo:k/
r as in *raasa* /ra:sa/
w as in *wak* /wak/
j as in *yaak* /ja:k/

Voiced consonants

b as in *baal* /ba:l/
d as in *dagal* /dagal/
j as in *jakall* /jakal/
g as in *gon* /gon/

The Implosives

ɓ as in *beti* /beti/

d as in *doon* /dõ:n/

f as in *yâal* /ʃa:l/

The pre-nasals

mb as in *mbaam* /mba:m/

nd as in *ndimu* /ndimu/

ng as in *nguu* /ngu:/

nj as in *njùli* /njuli/

The vowels

Noon comprises twelve (12) vowels: six (6) long and six (6) short.

The Short vowels

a as in *as* /as/

o as in *on* /on/

i as in *inin* /Ipin/

u as in *kanu* /kanu/

e as in *enoh* /enoh/

ə as in *ëgíraa* /əgira/

The Long vowels

a: as in *kaan* /ka:n/

o: as in *oomaa* /o:ma:/

i: as in *iifil* /i:fil/

u: as in *uuris* /u:ris/

ɛ: as in *teek* /tɛ:k/

ɜ: as in *ëènin* /ɜ:pin/⁵

I. Phonological Rules of Pulaar

This part shows the possible distributions of the 27 Pulaar consonants at its initial, medial and final positions either individually or in group. That implies to show the rules that govern the language in order to build syllables or words.

⁵ François Bagne Ndione, Heikki Soukka and Maria Soukka 1998 *Manuel Pour Lire et Ecrire le Noon*. Dakar: SIL (Société International de Linguistique) p 44, 45, 46 & 47.

II.1. The Distribution of the consonants

II.1.1. Single Initial Consonants

Basing on the book of Mamadou Ndiaye: *Eléments de Phonologie du Pulaar* and the booklet: *Livret d'auto-formation: Pulaar*, each of the 27 Pulaar consonants can occur at the onset of a syllable or a word. Example: petel (*spark*), /ʔəkɔra/ (*namesake*), /kajitɔl/ (*paper*), /bɔla/ (*flame*), /deftɛr/ (*lesson book*), /gɛ:fɪ/ (*peanuts*), /berdɛ/ (*chest*), /dɪdɪ/ (*two*), /ɸɪjɔl/ (*bone*), /fetɛl/ (*gun*), /su:na/ (*millet*), /jɔm/ (*peace*), /cɔle/ (*bird*), /mɔjdɛ/ (*death*), /neddɔ/ (*person*), /ɸi:rɛ/ (*tooth*), /ɸɔri/ (*beauty*), /qɪma:dɛ/ (*esteem*), /hɛɸɪɪɸki/ (*yesterday*), /mbɔrtu/ (*lamb*), /ndɪjɔm/ (*water*) /ngɔska/ (*hole*) /ɸju:mri/ (*honey*), /ɔ:ndɛ/ (*canary*), /ɸɔtɔ/ (*rake*), /wuro/ (*herd*), /jummɔ/ (*mother*).

II.1.2. Single medial consonants

After some researches through the available documents, found results have shown that apart from /q/ all the consonants can be at middle position.

/lapɔl/ (*road*), /mbɔba/ (*donkey*), heto /listen/, rɛ:du (*stomach*), leki (*tree*), le:ɸɔl (*public square*), pucu (*horse*), fajere (*dryness*), nɔfa (*wallet*), ja:si (*machete*), kɛ:rɔl (*limit*), fele (*hunt*), la:wɔl (*way*), ma:jo (*sea*), pɔho (*a deaf*), na:mo (*right*), nɔno (*left*), ɪɸo (*worm*) leɸɔl/ (*ethnic group*), gulumbɔl (*canal*), ndo:ndi (*ash*), li:ngu (*fish*), dɔnnjɛ/ (*stones*), /lamɔm/ (*salt*), /gɛ:fɪ/ (*peanuts*), /berdɛ/ (*chest*),

II.1.3. Single Final Consonants

According to the handbook *Terminologie de la Classe Bilingue*, and *Eléments de Phonologie du Pulaar* by Mamadou Ndiaye, there are no /b/, /ɸ/, /d/, /f/, /c/, /j/, /k/, /g/, /h/, /q/ at the coda of Pulaar words. Example: /bɔɔl/ (*road*), /alet/ (*Sunday*), /ka:w/ (*uncle*), /ka:ɪs/ (*money*), /pula:r/ (*the Pulaar language*), /nɔj/ (*four*), /kedɔm/ (*milk*), /ɸɪkkuy/ (*infant*), /dɪwli:n/ (*oil*), etc (Ndiaye, 1982b: 18-20).

II.1.4. The Case of the Pre-nasals

Pulaar does not accept any other combination of consonants than the pre-nasals. Then, we have to check if these combinations might be considered as clusters. There are four pre-nasals; /mb, nd, ng, and nj/. All our sources consider them as clusters. They are sets of two consonants letters: The first letter is one of the nasals /m or n/ followed by the letters (b, d, j or g). It is with these four consonants /mb, nd, ng, and nj/ that some pulaar specialists form the Pulaar initial clusters (Ndiaye, 1982b: 26).

II.1.4.1. Initial Clusters

As we have aforementioned it, some linguists regard them as consonant clusters.

/mb/: /mba:lu/ (*sheep*), /mbɔddi/ (*snake*), /mbu:bu/ (*fly Noun*), /mbɛ:wa/ (*goat*).

n { d = /ndɔmndi/ (*ram*), /ndɛ:r/ (*in or inside*), /nduŋgu/ (*rainy season*).
g = /nga:ri/ (*bull*), /ngaska/ (*hole*), /nge:lɔba/ (*giraffe*).
j = /njɔmndi/ (*iron*), /njɔmri/ (*song*), /njɔ:rndi/ (*dry couscous*).

Based on the characteristics of a cluster, we defend that there is no initial cluster in Pulaar, for the pre-nasals are rather digraphs.

NB: A digraph is a set of two consonants that gives one sound such as “ph” in English that is read /f/ or “ch” that we pronounce /ʃ, tʃ or k/... So, the pre-nasals are rather digraphs because their consonants are not read separately.

II.1.4.2. Final Clusters

The reading of some linguistic works has shown that there is no final consonant cluster in Pulaar. That is to say, all the Pulaar words end either with a consonant or consonant plus vowel instead of a sequence of consonants. Example: /fi:ʃɔm/ (*blood*), /pucu/ (*horse*), /mɔwɔ/ (*man, adult*)

III. Phonological rules of Noon

III.1 The Distribution of the consonants

It is about finding the movements of the consonants in the formation of words.

III.1.1 Single Initial Consonants

After having read some documents, we have found that in Noon, every consonant can be at the initial position.

/poka/ (tie), /ti:da/ (walk), /kanak/ (two), /ba:l/ (sheep), /dagal/ (scorpion), /gon/ (thumb), /mun/ (powder), /nan/ (spider), /ŋa:m/ (cheek), /faya/ (payment), /si:k/ (rooster), /co:h/ (elephant), /jakal/ (toad), /ha:n/ (drum), /wak/ (egg), /ja:k/ (old), /ra:sa/ (search), /lo:k/ (belly), /pi:n/ (month), /mba:m/ (pig), /ndimu/ (loincloth), /njuli/ (circumcised), /ngu:/ (government), /beti/ (woman) /do:n/ (calf), /fa:l/ (man)

III.1.2 Single Middle Consonants

Apart from the pre-nasal /nj/, and the sounds /ʃ and ŋ/, every consonant can be at the middle position of a word; */kipun/ (to fly), /abin/ (he has taken), /këdewa/ (in the past), /kedik/ (tree), /bɛ:ba/ (all of them), /kaci/ (shame), /hafa/ (sers), /nigis/ (four), /ka:hay/ (three), /pajin/ (he gets married), /ja:ki:/ (our grand-father), /kalaɓ/ (machete), /kima/ (this morning), /enoh/ (cow), /kani/ (rat), /hari:n/ (peanut), /wati/ (today), /tawah/ (building), /kayoh/ (truth), /su:su:s/ (black), /ngangal/ (burial), /kini:ndisuk/ (se rappeler), /omba:/ (weaning)*

III.1.3 Single final consonants

Noon does not allow the apparition of eight (8) consonants at the coda: /d, dʃ, g, j, mb, nd, ng, and nj:/. Then, all of the others can be at the termination: */kop/ (wine), /toɓ/ (rain), /ga:c/ (next year), /haf/ (head), /jah/ (hand), /lu:k/*

(belly), /kul/ (country), /ku:m/ (honey), /nan/ (spider), /kɛ:p/ (liver), /ɔr/ (crushing), /kot/ (foot), /saw/ (elder), /haj/ (come), /tu:f/ (room), /sis/ (tooth), /diŋ/ (fence/wall).

III.1.4 Initial clusters

As in Pulaar, in noon too there is no initial consonant cluster. Only the pre-nasals are most of the time considered clusters but since they do not fill the criteria of a cluster, they are regarded as single sounds or digraphs. They are like the combination of « sh, ch, th, ph » of English which are respectively pronounced /ʃ, tʃ or k, θ or ð and f/

III.1.5 Final clusters

As in Pulaar, in Noon too after some researches we find that there is not any cluster at the coda. It means that all the Noon words end either with a consonant or consonant plus vowel instead of a sequence of consonants. Example: /fa:l/ (man, adult), /kanu/(calabash), /beti/ (woman)

IV. Contrastive Study

This part deals with the comparative study in order to show the possible similarities and differences between the phonological structures of Pulaar and Noon. If they do, at which level they share resemblances and dissimilarities?

IV.1 Resemblances

Both languages belong to the same family: West-Atlantic.

On the phonetic level, both are sets of consonants and vowels. Each of the two is composed of short and long vowels. All of their vowels are oral, voiced

and egressive. That means no language has nasal, ingressive and voiceless vowels. And they both have the same and exact number of implosive consonants (ɓ, ɗ and ɟ) and pre-nasals /mb, nd, ng and nj/. The two languages have fewer vowel phonemes than consonant sounds. Pulaar includes ten vowel segments /a, o, i, e, u, a:, o:, i:, ε: and u:/ versus 27 consonant segments /p, t, k, b, d, g, f, m, n, ŋ, ɲ, s, c, ʃ, q, ɓ, ɗ, ɟ, mb, nd, ng, nj, w, r, j, h and l/. And Noon contains twelve vowels /a, o, i, u, e, ə, a:, i:, o:, u:, ε:, ɜ:/ versus 26 consonants /p, t, k, b, d, g, f, m, n, ŋ, ɲ, s, c, ʃ, ɓ, ɗ, ɟ, mb, nd, ng, nj, w, r, j, h and l/.

At the phonological level, the two languages have syllables with an initial consonant /jagu/ (*take*) and /poka/ (*tie*), middle consonant /ɲa:mo/ (*right*) and /kalaɓ/ (*machete*) and final consonant /jam/ (*peace*) and /lu:k/ (*belly*) but, they do not permit initial and final consonant clusters. No one allows the sounds /ɗ, g, and j/ at the coda. Both languages have syllables ending with a vowel (open syllables e.g. /kaci/ (*shame*) and *niire* /ɲi:rɛ/ (*tooth*)) and syllables ending with a consonant (closed syllables e.g. /sagac/ (*guest*) and *leñol* /leɲol/ (*ethnic group*)).

Both languages have a written form and use the Latin script. That implies in Pulaar as well as in Noon in order to have correct string of sounds, we are compelled to begin from the left side. Their written direction is from left to right.

IV.2 Differences

Indeed, they have a lot of similarities, the differences are also noticeable. Noon has more sounds than Pulaar; 38 vs 37. But if we consider the consonants, Pulaar gets one sound that is missing in Noon. It is the sound /h/ that's why the former has 27 consonants and the latter 26. Although they have restrictions consonants at the coda, the number of sounds is not the same, for noon refuses eight consonants /d, ɗ, g, j, mb, nd, ng, and nj:/ and pulaar restricts ten /b/, /ɓ/, /ɗ/, /ɟ/, /c/, /ʃ/, /k/, /g/, /h/, /q/. In Noon the sound /h/ is read /q or x/. However, if we look at the vowels, Noon is composed of twelve whereas Pulaar gets ten because the sounds / ə, and ɜ:/ are missing in Pulaar.

The landscape of Pulaar is larger than the one of Noon, for Pulaar is a transnational language. It is spoken in many countries in Africa, whereas Noon, for the time being, is spoken in the regions of Thiès and Dakar (Senegal).

Conclusion

After some months of studies, here is the result of our research related to the description of Pulaar and Noon sound structure. We have dealt with three main points: the phonemic inventories of each language which means listing the consonants and vowels of our target languages, then the phonological rules that is the study of the distribution of each consonant within these languages. And at the end the contrastive study that copes with finding the similarities and differences in the arrangement of the phonemes. So identical the languages are, they have a lot of similarities in matter of sounds and structures for, both allow this layout (consonant vowel (cv), consonant vowel consonant (cvc), vowel consonant (vc)). There is no mutual intelligibility between the speakers of Pulaar and Noon.

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