

AFRICAN JOURNAL OF LITERATURE AND HUMANITIES

vol.2/Issue 3

December 2021



www.afjoli.com

ISSN 2706-7408

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Investigating Sustainable Peace Expressions in Bamanankan to Counter Hate Speech in South of Mali: A Case Study of the Commune of Koumantou

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Abstract

The study explores peace expressions in Bamanankan to counter-hate speeches in the commune of Koumantou in south of Mali. Research in the Malian context has paid little attention to the phenomenon. So this investigation is conducted to expose the peace expressions to counter-violence expressions among the Bamanan people of Koumantou. The study was based on the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis of linguistic relativity. It adopted the mixed method approach, in which a questionnaire was designed to collect quantitative data and focus groups to gather the qualitative ones. Data helped the researcher to achieve three objectives which are: (1) the attitude of villagers towards other people from other villages in the commune of Koumantou; (2) to identify the causes of intercommunity conflict in the commune of Koumantou; and (3) to identify the main peace expressions supposed to fight hate speech or conflict. The findings have revealed twenty peace expressions according to gender, age and the social status of the people involved. They have equally indicated that the use of peace expressions in Bamanankan in intercommunity dialogue can only counter hate speech and prevent conflict in the commune of Koumantou.

Key-words: conflict, expressions, hate, peace, prevention.

Résumé

L'étude explore les expressions de paix en Bamanankan pour contrer les discours de haine dans la commune de Koumantou au sud du Mali. Les recherches au Mali ont accordé peu d'attention à ce phénomène. Cette recherche est donc menée pour identifier et exposer les expressions de paix afin de contrer les discours de haine en Bamanankan. L'étude a été basée sur l'hypothèse de la relativité linguistique de Sapir-Whorf. L'approche mixte a été adoptée comme méthode de collecte de données. Un questionnaire a été conçu pour collecter des données quantitatives et des focus groupes pour recueillir les qualitatives. Les données ont permis d'atteindre les trois objectifs fixés : (1) la perception des villageois envers les autres villages de la commune de Koumantou; (2) identifier les causes des conflits intercommunautaires dans la commune de Koumantou ; et (3) identifier les principales expressions de paix supposées combattre les discours de haine ou les conflits. Les résultats ont révélé vingt expressions de paix selon le genre, l'âge et le statut social des personnes impliquées. Ils ont également indiqué que l'utilisation d'expressions de paix en Bamanankan dans le dialogue intercommunautaire ne peut que contrer les discours de haine et prévenir les conflits au Mali en générale et dans la commune de Koumantou en particulier.

Mots clés : conflit, expressions, haine, paix, prévention.

Introduction

All the Multicultural societies are defined by a diversity of cultures, religions and ways of life. Sometimes it seems necessary to reconcile the freedom of expression with other rights. This conciliation may be a source of tension of community's members to the point of hate speech used. So, what is "hate speech?" Several authors have tried to define "hate speech" but it does not have a clear definition. Weber (2009) thinks that the identification of acts that can be qualified as "hate speech" appears more difficult as this kind of speech does not necessarily show the expression of "hatred" or emotions. This confusion of definition has motivated the united nations decision makers to try to clarify its shapes with the Relative International Pact through the "Rabat Action Plan (UNESCO. 2015). The term 'hate speech' is defined as any form of expression which promotes racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or any form of intolerance based on hatred (Council of Europe, 2020). It is also any form of speech, text or images that can stimulate a group of people to do act of violence against other groups of people (Benesch 2003; Brown 2017). Moreover, it could be a direct physical harm inflicted on people (Dangerous Speech Project, 2021.p3). In contrast, "hate speech" relates to a more normalized use of insult on the one hand, and to aggressive, violent and potentially illegal dangerous speech on the other hand (Gatewood et al. 2020. p12).

Facing the raise of the phenomenon, the united nations has tried to define et give more clarification about the Hate Speech conveying that there is no definition in international law about "Hate speech", the United Nations consider it as any type of communication, whether oral expression or written, constituting an infringement or using pejorative or discriminatory language towards a person or group because of their identity, in other words, religious affiliation, ethnicity, nationality, race, skin color, gender or other factors that make up identity (2019, p.3)

The African continent was marked by dangerous speech and still is. One of the most remarkable negative impacts of hate speech was the Rwandan Genocide. Before understanding whether a message is dangerous in a particular context, one should look at both the content and the context. Hence, speaking out helped catalyze the Rwandan Genocide in which thousands of Hutu people massacred between 500,000 and 800,000 Tutsi people, using machetes (Des Forges, 1999, p 5, 15). Indeed, inflammatory speeches against Tutsi was spread in Rwanda for years before the genocide, and they were thought to have played such an important role that the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) made speech crimes a major focus of its business. One of the best known was Prosecutor v. Ferdinand Nahimana, Jean-Bosco Barayagwiza, Hassan Ngeze, the so-called media trial, in which an editor-in-chief and two executives of Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM) have bitterly dubbed <Radio machete> found guilty of inciting genocide, among other crimes (ICTR, 2007, p. 2). Unfortunately, many countries around the world are still facing the collective violence for many years, such as Nigeria, Myanmar, (Klemperer 2000; Herf, 2006, Benesch (2013).

Mali, like the above mentioned countries, has been experiencing political and social unrest and growing security concerns since 2015 in northern and central regions. The rebellion

of 2012 in the North, has raised the spread of jihadism and weapons in central Mali which resulted to the inter-communal tensions. More specifically, recurrent clashes between Fulani and Dogon ethnic groups have led to an increase of victims' number in the region of Mopti in central Mali (Cissé, 2016). The study conducted by Dr. Ibrahim A. H. Cissé in 2016 in Douentza in the Mopti region of central Mali was an exploratory study to describe and analyze the hate speech between Fulani and Dogon. The results achieved by (Cisse 2016. p10) reveal that the Fulani speech does not reflect that there has been a change of power. The Fulani still speak about Dogon people as ethnically inferior to them. Some Fulani people think that the Dogon are all farmers, inferior to the Fulani in terms of beauty and intelligence. On the other side, the Dogon think that the Fulani society is still based on slavery and herding, they are associated with jihadists and people who do not respect their words. The study shows that some gaps were already dug long before the outbreak of acts of violence in speeches and through the dissemination of negative prejudices. These prejudices and speeches can be input in the child from the beginning of his linguistic socialization in the family to other spaces of socialization (Cisse 2016).

Several theories have been put forward on the effect of hate speech. Dangerous speech increases the risk that the followers will do violence against those who are not supporting (Dangerous Speech Project, 2021). Hate speech often promotes fear, as much as it expresses and promotes hatred. One must reflect the framing operations that precede the act of the allegation of hatred (Felstiner, Abel, Sarat, 1980; Orecchioni, 2001). Mann, Sutton and Tuffin (2003) think that the online and the radio media can dramatically increase hate speech. They argue that discussion can facilitate the creation of new waves of crime or allow people to become involved in new waves of crime. In addition to this, Pollock (2009) confirms that there may also be links between the activities that take place in some focus groups and the occurrence of violence on the streets. However, the suitable theoretical framework for this study is the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis of linguistic relativity. Linguistic relativity as a filament of the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis plans that language controls how we think, the way we perceive and remember. Generally, this theory predisposes people to conceptualize the world in a certain way (Penn, 1972). There is a two-way influence between 'the kind of language we use' and 'the way we see the world'. The hypothesis places emphasis on the social context of language use rather than strictly linguistic considerations, such as the social pressure in particular contexts to use language in one way rather than another (Chandler, 1994; Adegaju, 2007).

In the light of the above literature, the current study is undertaken in the commune of Koumantou. This commune located in the region of Bougouni on national road number 7. The commune main activities are agriculture and breeding. The area is mainly populated by the Bamanan people. The reasons for the choice of the commune of Koumantou are that the area was a theater of violence between two villages which resulted in more injuries. The main cause of that violence was related to agricultural land which the protagonist villages claim all the ownership. This violence in the commune of Koumantou was surely boosted by using the hate speech by some influent individuals. To avoid such a situation, this study is a call to prevent conflict by identifying the peaceful expressions use by the community members.

This conflict in the commune of Koumantou had nothing to do with terrorism or Djihadism. It was just a clash within members of two villages from the same ethnic group. However, the recent terrorist attacks in two localities (blendio and Djoila) not so far from the commune of Koumantou, there are possibilities that terrorists recruit local people using the hate speech against the local authorities and turning one village against the other. Still remember that there is no international force in the area devoted to peace keeping, because the mandate of the MINUSMA is limited only to the North and the center of the country.

The study seeks to achieve three objectives which are: (1) the attitude of villagers towards other people from other villages in the commune of Koumantou; (2) to identify the causes of intercommunity conflict in the area of Koumantou; (3) to identify the main peace expressions supposed to fight hate speech. This study would be helpful for the community because a recent study of Kone et al (2021) published in *Revue Le Caïlcédrot* reveal that the Bamanankan speakers have positive attitudes towards the use of taboos. But, in reality, they prefer using euphemistic words and expressions to replace the taboo words and expressions in Bamanankan.

1-Methodology

The aim of this study is to explore the use of peaceful expressions in Bamanankan in the commune of Koumantou. These purposes are achieved by answering to the following research questions:

- 1- What is the attitude of the villagers to other villagers in the commune of Koumantou
- 2- What are the main causes of peace deterioration in some villages of Koumantou?
- 3- What are the peace expressions in Bamanankan that Bamanan ethnic group use to maintain sustainable peace?

The study has employed a mixed method approach (qualitative and quantitative). It has used a questionnaire for quantitative data collection and focus groups to collect qualitative data.

The site chosen for this research is the commune of Koumantou. The area has been a theatre of conflicts between two villages since 2018 due to agricultural land issues. (see the introduction).

1.1. Participants

The researcher has purposively selected 7 participants from each of the two villages (Niamala and Tienkounkoba) in the commune of Koumantou, which give a total number of 14 informants. The participants are men and women from 18 to 86 years old who were sampled according to the age, gender and their status in the two villages.

Table1: Sample selection

VILLAGES	PARTICIPANTS			
	Code	Age	Status	Gender
NIAMALA	N1	76	Chief of the village	Male
	N2	55	Imam	Male
	N3	42	Country official	male
	N4	58	Villagers Association leader	Male
	N5	62	Women Association leader	Female
	N6	24	young Leader	Male
	N7	19	young Leader	Female
TIENKOUNKOBA	Code	Ages	Status	Gender
	T1	86	Chief of the village	Male
	T2	63	Imam	Male
	T3	32	Country official	Female
	T4	54	Villagers Association leader	Male
	T5	49	Women Association leader	Female
	T6	22	young Leader	Male
	T7	18	young Leader	Female

1.2. Procedure

This study used a purposive sampling technique for both the questionnaire and the focus groups. The researcher introduced himself to the participants and explained the aims of the study. The consent of the informants was sought prior to their participation and their privacy was guaranteed to the extent that information would never be traced to these respondents. so, the 7 samples selected from each of the two villages were first questioned about the attitude towards peoples from other villages of the commune of Koumantou. They were also questioned about the causes of the intercommunity crisis in the area. Two focus group discussions were conducted with the 7 samples informants in each of the two villages. Each focus group session started with a brief introduction of the researcher and the topic of discussion. Later, the researcher summarized the main points for respondents to make comments on or ask questions about. The researchers ensured respondents that their responses were kept confidentially and used purely for academic research.

1.3. Data Analysis

The audio recordings of the focus groups were transcribed. We employed constant comparison analysis for coding and grouping the responses by paying attention to terms, contexts, meanings, and examples used by respondents (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). Responses in Bamanankan are retained in their original forms for authenticity although they were translated to English during data analysis for communicative purposes. The questionnaire was treated with the software SPHINX.

2-Results and Discussion

This section presents, discusses and interprets the results of the study based on the research questions. Since the study has investigated sustainable peace expressions in Bamanankan to counter hate speech and violence in the commune of Koumantou (Mali), this section explores three themes: (1) the attitude of villagers towards other people from other villages in the commune of Koumantou; (2) to identify the causes of intercommunity conflict in the area of Koumantou; (3) to identify the main peace expressions suppose to fight hate speech.

2.1. Attitude towards Other Villagers

Research question#1: What is the attitude of the villagers to other villages in the commune of Koumantou

Table2: Attitude of Niamala participants towards other villages in the commune of Koumantou.

- What is the relationship between your village (Niamala) and other villages in the commune of Koumantou?

Villages	ATTITUDE				RESPONDENTS
	very good	good	bad	very bad	
N'tjila	7	0	0	0	7
Kodji	1	6	0	0	7
Tienkounkoba	0	0	0	7	7
Berela	7	0	0	0	7
Tiefala	0	5	2	0	7
Tounfouga	0	7	0	0	7
Chobougou	0	3	4	0	7
Koumantou	0	7	0	0	7

It can be noticed from the table above that the participants from Niamala have negative attitude towards those from Tienkounkoba. All the seven participants have stated that they have a very bad perception of the villagers from that village. Besides, 2 and 4 participants from Niamala have bad attitude to people respectively from Tièfala and Chobougou. Apart from that, the participants from Niamala have good feeling with all the rest of the villages in the commune in addition to Koumantou itself. The next table represents the attitude of the participants from Tienkounkoba.

Table 3: Attitude of the participants of Tienkounkoba towards some villages of the commune of Koumantou

- What is the relationship between your village (Tienkounkoba) and other villages of the commune of Koumantou?

Villages	ATTITUDE				RESPONDENTS
	very good	good	bad	very bad	
N'tjila maro	0	0	3	4	7
Kodji	0	7	0	0	7
Niamala	0	0	0	7	7
Berela	0	7	0	0	7
Tiefala	2	5	0	0	7
Tounfouga	0	7	0	0	7
Chobougou	4	3	0	0	7
Koumantou	0	4	3	0	7

In the above table, the participants from Tienkounkoba have very bad attitude towards people from Niamala. There are 3 participants who have a bad attitude to people from Koumantou and from N'tjilla Maro. Apart from these, the participants from Tienkounkoba do have a positive perception of the other villages in the commune of Koumantou.

2-2-Causes of Conflict in the Commune of Koumantou

Research question#2: What are the main causes of peace deterioration in some villages of Koumantou?

The main causes of conflict collected from the participants of the two villages (Niamala and Tienkounkoba) are presented in the table below:

Table 4: Causes of conflict between villages (Niamala and Tienkounkoba) in the commune of Koumantou

Villages	Participants	Causes
NIAMALA	Code	
	N1	land problem
	N2	land problem
	N3	land problem
	N4	land problem
	N5	land problem
	N6	land problem
	N7	land problem
- TIENKOUNKOBA	Code	Causes
	T1	land problem
	T2	abuse of power
	T3	abuse of power
	T4	land problem
	T5	abuse of power
	T6	land problem
	T7	land problem

The main causes stated by the participants from Niamala regarding intercommunity conflicts are all related to land issues. The reason for this is that the area main activity is agriculture and free lands are becoming very rare. That's why villages in the commune are claiming their lands ownership which leads to conflict (verbal or physical).

The participants from Tienkounkoba are divided, 4 stated that it is land problem and 3 stated that the main cause is related to the abuse of power from certain personalities from Niamala and some authorities from Koumantou. According to the participants from Tienkounkoba, the land problems are due to some personalities and authorities from Niamala and Koumanatou. These people have used their influences on the villagers of Tienkounkoba and others in order to have power over their lands.

2-3-Result related to Peace Expressions in Bamanankan

Research question#3: What are the peace expressions in Bamanankan that Bamanan ethnic group use to maintain sustainable peace?

The expressions that both participants from Niamala and Tienkounkoba use in Bamanankan during the focus groups discussions in order to maintain a sustainable peace are presented in the table below.

Table5: Bamanankan peace expressions

n°	Bamanankan expression to maintain peace	contextual meaning
1	foshi tɛ bɛn bɔ	Nothing is worth peace
2	anw ka ɲogɔnsɛn bila ka ɲogɔn tɪkɛ minɛ	We have to stay together
3	ni ka kɛ ji bɔn le ye	Lit meaning: It is poured water/ le't forget about previous quarrels
4	anwka sigi ka fɔ do ba la	let's put more value on talking
5	anw ka sigi ka kuma kɛ	Let's sit around a table to talk
6	anw ka ɲogɔn la mɛ	Let's listen to each other
7	anw ka yafa ɲogɔn ma	We have to apologize
8	anw ka ɲogɔn minnɛ	Let's be together
9	anw ye cɛ kele dɛw ye	we are genetically related
10	anw ye singi da kele ye	We share the same living place
11	anw bɛ bɛ buloda kelena	We are from the same ancestors
12	anw ka ben sabati	Let's promote peace
13	kele tɛ sigida jɔ	Conflict does not built
14	anw ka anw hakili bila anw dusu gnɛ	Let's think before we act
15	kele bɛ jamana ci	Conflict destroys a country
16	kele bɛ na awn ka balemaya tignɛ	Conflict destroys the brotherhood
17	kele bɛ sɔ kɛ tumu ye	Conflict turns a home into a desert
18	anw ka fara ɲogɔn ka	Let's unit together
19	kɔnɔkulu jɛn le de bɛ bin fɔ	Together, we are strong
20	bɔbɔ kiné ni kele tise ka bɛle ta	We cannot hold a rock with one finger

The table 6 above contains the expressions related to sustainable peace maintaining extracted from the focus group of both Niamala and Tienkounkoba participants. The researcher has identified 20 expressions from the informants which all call for peace maintaining between communities in the commune of Koumantou. These expressions are uttered to warn authorities and the community members in the commune to avoid the rise of hate speech. They are explained and interpreted as follow:

- 1- *foshi tɛ bɛn bɔ*: this expression conveys a great desire for peace. This expression invites the community members to be in favour of peace. It means that nothing is better than peace and cultivating peace should be given a paramount importance over anything else.

The expression is stated by the participant 4 who is the leader of Niamala Villagers' Association the (58 years old), he says: "Nothing is better than peace if all the community members of Koumantou hope a better life for the new generation."

- 2- ***anw ka ηogɔnsen bila ka ηogɔn tike minɛ***: this Bamanankan expression is a metaphor which literally means to leave one's feet and take hands. It is an invitation of all the community members to cooperate, advocate mutual understanding and help each other as a good sign for peace. In short, this expression entails solidarity and unity among all of the members of the community instead of division and conflicts.
- 3- ***ni ka kɛ ji bɔn le ye*** : it explicitly means that poured water is impossible to be collected. But implicitly, the expression means in Bamanankan that it is possible to forget and forgive past conflicts in the commune and refresh the inter-villages relationships on new pacific grounds. This expression is like the first one because it also cultivates peace over anything else that may cause tension or conflict.
- 4- ***anwka sigi ka fɔ do ba la***: let's dialogue. It expresses importance of giving more values to dialoguing between the community members. There are less contradictions between villagers when there are always debates on social issues in the commune.
- 5- ***anw ka sigi ka kuma kɛ***: similar to number 4, the expression invites the community members to talk about peace around the table. According to the Chief of the village (86 years old) from Tienkounkoba, people in the commune are from the ancestors, so a permanent dialogue between the villages of the commune of koumantou is necessary preserve peace. The expression *anw ka sigi ka kuma kɛ* in Bamanankan means (to sit around a table to talk about one issue).
- 6- ***anw ka ηogɔn la me***: the expression is a subtle and peaceful manner to recommend the protagonists in conflict to listen to each other during conflicts-solving to avoid their sad consequences. When people give more time to dialogue, negotiation and to grasp the explanations of each other, the conflict would eventually end in good terms. This expression is a wise manner to promote peace.
- 7- ***anw ka yafa ηogɔn ma***: This expression indicates asking for forgiveness to maintain peace. the apology is one of the best keys for peace as it also helps people to overcome conflict. The expression (*anw ka yafa ηogɔn ma*) means *to apologize* to each other. It is from the participant 7 (A young female Leader of 18 years old) from Tienkounkoba. She believes in peace expressions working if people want to prevent hate speech in the commune of Koumantou.
- 8- ***anw ka ηogɔn minnɛ***: this expression asks for unity in the community. Let's be together is the meaning of that expression in Bamanankan. This is a way for the Bamanan people to aspire for unity in the commune of Koumantou.
- 9- ***anw ye cɛ kele dɛw ye***: it means that people genetical link. People from the same fathers and mothers are supposed to be in peace due to their genetical relation. This expression in Bamanankan may calm people in conflict. This expression is from the participant 2 (imam of the village, 63 years old) from Tienkounkoba. Many people think that the historical and natural link between people in the commune of Koumantou can help to avoid the conflict.

- 10- *anw ye singi da kele ye*: a synonym of the expression number 9 above. This expression means that the community members are fed with the same breast. It means in the context that; all the community members are brothers and sisters.
- 11- *anw be be buloda kelena*: this expression is a synonym of the number 9. It indicates here that the community members are from the same ancestors which means they are genetically related. In the traditional Bamanan societies till now, sons from the same fathers are supposed to back up each.
- 12- *anw ka ben sabati* : the expression signifies the promotion and development of peace. This expression shows that people in the commune of Koumantou are not reluctant to peace maintaining. It means to cultivate peace between members of the community.
- 13- *kele te sigida jo*: this expression is an early warning about the consequences of conflict in a given area. The expression means that a country in conflict cannot be built.
- 14- *anw ka anw hakili bila anw dusu gne*: the expression means that we have to think before acting. The objectives of influencers of hate speech are to convince a group of people to commit the act of violence. Hence, those people have a very weak sensitivity will not think about the content of the message before doing the violence. This expression is from the Imam of Niamala (a 55 years old man) he says that people should think before acting in order to minimize the consequences of the act.
- 15- *kele be jamana ci*: meaning that conflict destroys a country. It is another expression is very similar to expression 13 (*kele te sigida jo*). This a way to sensitize people in the commune of Koumantou on the negative impact of a conflict.
- 16- *kele be na awn ka balemaya tigne*: the expression indicates that a conflict can destroy the brotherhood of people. All the villages in the commune of Koumantou are allowed to get married with each other. But after the conflict between Niamala and tienkounkoba, the two villages have refused to give each other their daughters for marriage. The Conflict may also destroy the brotherhood (*kele be na awn ka balemaya tigne*), because since the beginning of the current conflict in the commune I did not accept to give the hand of one my village girls to the villagers of Tienkounkoba said the participant 1 (76 years old man, Chief of the village) from Niamala.
- 17- *kele be so ke tumu ye*: similar to number 13 and 15 in meaning, this expression conveys that a conflict can turn the whole town into a desert. The Bamanan people from the commune of Koumantou have witnessed such a situation in Mali with the conflict in the center of Mali between Fulani and Dogon, see (cisse, 2016).
- 18- *anw ka fara hogon ka*: it means: let's stay together, the meaning is nearly like in number 2, 8. The purpose of this expression is to promote unity in the commune of Koumantou.
- 19- *kɔɔkulu jen le de be bin fo*: it means “together, we are strong”. It entails the same meaning as in number 2, 8, 18. The purpose of this expression if to invite all the community members to come together as one. In this case the commune of Koumantou will face up all the problems coming to it. (*kɔɔkulu jen le de be bin fo*) said T3(32 years old female country officials) from Tienkounkoba.
- 20- *bolɔ kine ni kele tise ka bele ta* : another proverb promoting unity is this expression in Bamanankan which means :We cannot hold a stone with one finger. It has the same impact of sensitization on people as the number 19. According to N7, (19 years old

women young Leaders) from Niamala: We need to stay together because no one is not able to hold one stone with one finger.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has described the Bamanankan peace expressions to counter hate speech in the commune of Koumankou. The results showed that the two villages (Niamala and Tienkounkoba) in the commune of Koumantou do have a negative attitude to each other. The main causes for that hatred are due to land problems, and the abuse of power by some personalities and officials in the commune. These causes have increased the use of hate speech from both sides. However, the study has identified twenty “Peace Expressions” from the collected data. The peace expressions are shared between apology, warning, conflict’s impact and unity. All the involved people from both villages in the commune have agreed that the use of peace expressions could fight against hate speech and conflicts in Mali. That study may serve as an early solution to counter hate speech and violence in the commune of Koumantou. It may also be used as a reference paper for conflict resolution in other areas of Mali and elsewhere.

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