A SOCIOLINGUISTIC PROFILE OF
THE SENEGALESE SPEECH COMMUNITY

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The object of this study is to provide a linguistic profile of the Senegalese speech community and of the speakers' attitudes toward the various languages spoken in that country. After giving the geographical location of Senegal and a brief historical account of the impact of the French colonial linguistic policies in the country (which partly explains the present sociolinguistic situation in Senegal), the linguistic characteristics of the Senegalese speech community are described and the attitudes of speakers towards their own and other languages are discussed.

1. Geographical location: The country and the people

Senegal is located in West Africa between the 11th and the 17th parallels west and 12th and the 16th parallels north (see the map in Figure 1). The country spreads 400 kilometers from north to south, and 600 kilometers from east to west, covering a surface of about 200,000 square kilometers. It borders Mauritania in the north, Mali in the east, Guinea-Conakry in the southeast, and Guinea-Bissau in the south. The Republic of the Gambia is wedged into the south of Senegal, dividing the latter into two parts. In the west, Senegal borders the Atlantic Ocean with about 500 kilometers of coastline (Dialo 1983:4). The country is divided into 10 administrative counties: Rufisque, where Dakar (the national capital) is located, Thies, Kaolack, Diourbel, Saint-Louis, Ziguinchor, Tambacounda, Louga, Fatick, and Kolda. Each of these counties represents the domain of particular ethnic groups with their own languages. Thus, several ethnic groups are found in the different counties of the country, among which the major ones are: the Wolof, found everywhere; Seereer, mainly in Thies and Kaolack; Pulaar, spoken by the Tukulor in Saint-Louis (heavily influenced by Wolof) and by the Fulakunda in Kolda (influenced more by Mandinka); Mandinka and Joola (in Ziguinchor); and Soninke (in Tambacounda).

United Nations estimates in mid-1997 gave the total population of Senegal as 8.8 million. Over half of the population lived in towns, with the capital Dakar containing about two-thirds of the total urban population. The country is very unevenly populated, since poor farmers and jobless people move into big cities, especially Dakar, in search of jobs and a better standard of living.

Map 1. Senegal
Approximate distribution of the six major national languages
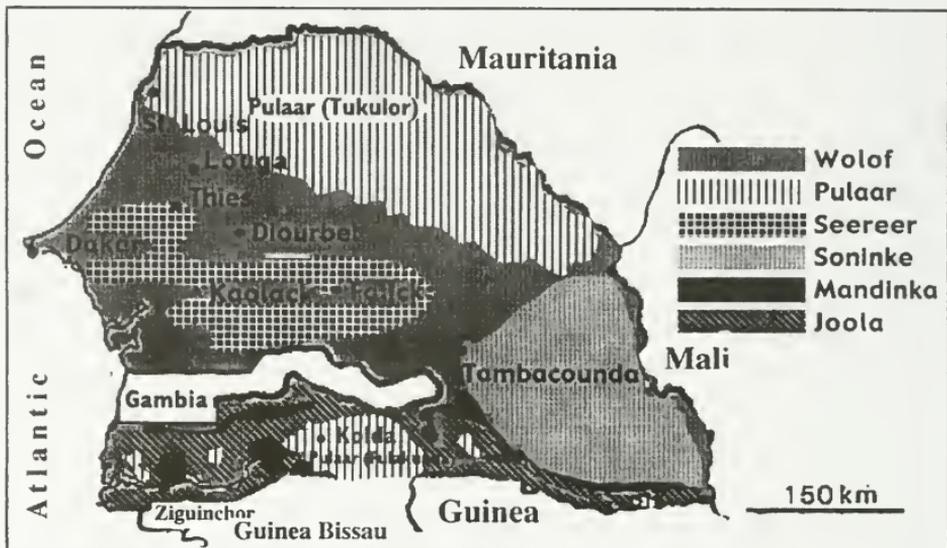
2. The linguistic impact of colonialism in Senegal

The country came into contact with France in the early 17th century, when French commercial companies started trading at the mouth of the river Senegal, first entered by Europeans in 1445 (Crowder 1962:7). By the end of the 18th century, Saint-Louis, with a population of 7,000, had a European colony numbering 600, the largest on the whole coast of West Africa (Crowder 1962:8). It also had an important assimilated mulatto community, whose descendants are known today as Saint-Louisians. Most French men there took African mistresses, known as *signares*, and ensured the education of any children they had by them (Crowder 1962:8).

The French, like most Europeans who came to Africa in colonial times, denied the humanity and culture of the dominated people and used both religious and political means to achieve the economic-based *mission savatrice* ('salvation mission' to civilize the uncivilized). The so-called 'salvation mission' was primarily motivated by the socio-economic problems that resulted from the religious wars affecting the European nations. These problems ultimately led to the colonization of Africa and the settlement of the American continent. The French used colonization to implement a direct assimilation rule in their colonies. This policy was based on the belief that in order to change 'the uncivilized people', they had to 'enter into their minds'. Consequently, they started building schools and churches to achieve their assimilation objectives , i.e., to annihilate the culture, beliefs, and languages of the local people, to make them accept willingly an inferiority complex vis-à-vis French colonialists. The assimilation process was mainly implemented through the introduction of French as the sole language of education.

Ultimately, the process was designed to make local people use only French as their major means of communication and at the same time feel grateful to have the 'favor' of speaking the 'super-language' of the 'civilized masters.'

Thus, French started to be used as the official language of the colonial French government based in Saint-Louis. The French general Faidherbe created some schools for assimilation purposes. The program was called *l'école des fils de chef* 'the school of the children of chiefs'. The French colonial government launched the program as a means of assimilating the local chiefs and their entourages.

Such a policy was mainly motivated by the belief that once these chiefs and families were assimilated, the assimilation process would be easier, since the assimilated people would be already shaped by the French world-vision and culture, and would be able to perpetuate the acculturation and assimilation process among their own people. The Senegalese who attended this program were given either political or other governmental functions in order to participate actively in the assimilation process set by the French colonial power.

However, as noted by Bokamba (1984:6), French education for the colonials was not an end in itself, but rather a means through which acculturation and servitude were achieved. The post-World-War II era was pivotal in the demystification of the invincible "master", since many Senegalese were drafted to participate in the war. Those Senegalese who participated in the war, known as 'Tirailleurs', saw the real 'face' of the French 'masters'. The myth of the invincible, wealthy, almighty, and honorable master was destroyed by the German invasion of France. The perennial problems of sundry nature created by the German invasion of France (which required the help of the colonials in order to free France from German control) displayed the weakness and dissipated the colonial myth of the 'almighty French masters'. Thus, the post-war period was characterized by Senegalese self-assertion and protests against the injustices of colonial rule (Diop 1989:23), which ultimately led to the independence of the country in 1960.

However, the long presence of the French colonial power in the country resulted (as in many African countries) in the adoption of Standard French as the official language. Thus, Standard French became the language of the government from its independence onward and pervades the whole educational system. Standard French was adopted after independence as the official language of the country mainly for the following reasons:

(1) The first post-independence government inherited Standard French with the belief that it was the appropriate language to run the government and to allow for the maintenance of national unity. This belief resulted from the fact that French was already used in all the sectors of the 'inherited' independent government.

(2) French was considered to be the way to technology and science, and the means to communicate with the outside world.

(3) Their was no substantial work on codification and standardization of any local language (including Wolof, the major lingua franca) that could be used as the official language of the government.

The adoption of French as the official language of the country produced new relationships among local languages and diminished the scope of Wolof (Diop 1989:26). However, French did not replace the functional roles played by local languages. French only occupied the official domain, while local languages continued to be used in the daily lives of the people.

Today, the long co-existence of French and Senegalese languages has produced interesting sociolinguistic phenomena in the country. In the cities, not only Standard French is found in formal governmental settings, but Urban Wolof and non-standard French are used in informal settings. Other local languages are found in both formal traditional and informal situations. Each of the languages and varieties fulfills specific functional roles in certain geographic locations in the country.

3.   The Senegalese speech community

Given the difficulties encountered in the definition of 'speech community' in the field of sociolinguistics, we adopt Romaine's 1994 definition, which provides good tools for the description of the Senegalese speech community.

A 'speech community' is defined as a group of people who do not necessarily share the same language, but rather a set of norms and rules for the use of language (Romaine 1994:23). In this respect, the social, cultural, and conceptual knowledge is more crucial than the linguistic one in determining whether or not a person belongs to a given speech community.

Thus, on the basis of the cultural, conceptual, and social norms that all ethnic groups in Senegal have shared for generations, despite their different languages, the Senegalese speech community can be said to be very complex. The Senegalese speech community is a multilingual one in which each language and variety plays a given role in certain areas. The Senegalese speech community consists of Standard French, non-standard French, Urban Wolof, Kajoor Wolof (Pure Wolof), and the 5 national languages. Kajor Wolof and local languages have special national status in the country, as will be seen in the following section.

3.1   Standard French and non-standard French:

There are two varieties of French spoken in Senegal: Standard French and non-standard called *Faranse Njalaxaar*. Standard French is used in formal governmental settings, such as in the Senegalese National Assembly, throughout the educational system (from the elementary level to the university), in the radio, newspapers, and television.

The major characteristic of Standard French in Senegal is its respect for the rules prescribed by the French Academy, which is intended to maintain the 'purity' of the language from borrowings and other foreign linguistic influences.

Although this institution is located in France, its 'fingers' (effects) are felt in many other former colonies, such as the republics of Ivory Coast, Gabon, Mali, and the present Republic of Burkina Faso, to name only these. Thus, Standard French in Senegal is grammatically identical to the standardized middle-class Parisian variety of French (Standard French).

Although, the African accent is obviously heard when Senegalese intellectuals speak Standard French, it still remains that the variety they use is lexically, syntactically, and morphologically based upon Standard French. As a matter of fact, Léopold Sédar Senghor, the first Senegalese philosopher-statesman-poet-president, who ruled the country from 1960 to 1980 (Swigart 1994:183), was the first African intellectual to be admitted to membership in the French Academy. Although his admission to the French Academy implies the degree of the success of the French assimilation policy in Senegal, it also illustrates linguistically that the Standard French variety is well implemented in Senegalese society through the government, the educational system, and the elite.

Nowadays, Standard French is used in very few Senegalese families as a mother tongue. It is mainly used by those Senegalese families of French origin, early-Christianized families, and by a few Senegalese families who took part in Faidherbe's program (*l'école des fils de chef*). These groups represent not more than 5% of the overall Senegalese population. Most of the intellectuals who led the early government after independence, such as Galandou Diouf, Lamine Guéye, Léopold Sédar Senghor, to name only a few, were from these groups.

Given the role played by Standard French in Senegalese society, it is obvious that it enjoys high prestige. Standard French is generally associated with education and high social class. It is required for formal business jobs and in all governmental services. Thus, although it is not used as the mother tongue of the overwhelming majority of the people in the country, due to its pivotal role in the economic and political field of the country it is associated with high prestige. However, despite the prestige of Standard French, its scope is basically limited to educational and governmental domains in the country. In other domains, Urban Wolof, Pure Wolof, non-standard French, and other local languages are used.

Although many of the intellectuals who work in the government speak Standard French perfectly, they do not use it in their daily life. Instead they use Urban Wolof, or one of the local languages (their mother tongue) outside their work places.

People who have not attended the French school and those who have only been to primary school are the users of non-standard French. This variety is used when these people talk to French speakers, such as tourists, the few Senegalese native speakers of French, other African francophone speakers, or members of other ethnic groups who do not speak Senegalese local languages. This variety is mostly heard in market places and in other informal settings.

Assuming that 'creole' is the 'nativized form' of pidgin (mother tongues of some people), while 'pidgin' is nobody's mother tongue (Romaine 1994:163), it

can be said that non-standard French in Senegal is a pidgin, since no Senegalese person refers to it as his/her mother tongue.

In fact, there is a Portuguese-based creole (simply called Creole) spoken on the border between Senegal and the Republic of Guinea-Bissau. However, given the small number of speakers of this Creole in the country (less than 2% of the Senegalese population), the language is not commonly used, except by the few Guinean immigrants who live on the border between Senegal and Guinea-Bissau. I will not discuss it in this study, as it is not recognized as one of the Senegalese languages. This Creole is the major lingua franca used in the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, where it plays the same role as Wolof in Senegal.

I use some data taken from letters written by a woman who is 25 years old, and a boy who is 18 years old to show the linguistic characteristics of non-standard French in Senegal. Both of them are Wolof native speakers, and have only attended French primary school. Examples (a) and (b) are correct Standard French constructions of examples (c) and (d). The boy wrote example (c), and the woman example (d).

Standard French

(a) Cher frère aîné, j'ai préparé les bagages moi-même....

(b) ...mon frère, prend pas ça à la légère, car c'est un problème sérieux pour nous.

Non-standard French

(c) Sér garand férér, sé péréparé lé bagaas awek matét...

(d) ...mon férér, pa prend sa kom sé lésér, kaar sé poroblèm diir pur nous.

In comparing (a) and (c) we notice that all the words used in the non-standard variety come from French. However, it is obvious that these words have been adapted to the linguistic system of Wolof, the language of the user.

Phonologically, the non-standard variety is different from Standard French. Various phonological processes characterize the non-standard variety. In (c), an epenthesis rule is used to insert the low open vowel [a] to the consonant cluster in the Standard French word [grã] *grand* 'big or elder'. Similarly, in both (c) and (d), the vowel [e] is inserted to break the consonant cluster found in the Standard French word [frɛːr] *frère* 'brother', creating [ferer]. In the non-standard variety (d), the back mid vowel [o] is introduced to break the initial consonantal cluster in the Standard French word *problème* [problɛm]. The epenthesis rule copies the vowel of the Standard French word to the new first syllable.

These rules are conditioned by the phonotactic constraints of Wolof, which (like most West Atlantic languages) favors a CV syllable in word-initial position. Consequently, this epenthesis is one of the phonological features that separate non-standard French from Standard French. The epenthesis rule can be regarded as a variable that indicates the low social status, or rather the lack of education, of Senegalese who use non-standard French.

In addition, the palatal fricative [š] in the French word 'cher' [šer] is ren- dered as the alveolar fricative [s] in [ser] in (c). The Standard French voiced bila- bial [v] in 'avec' [avek] is replaced by the glide [w] in [awek] in example (c). The Standard French voiced palatal fricative [ž] in 'j'ai' [že] and in 'bagages' [bagaž], is also replaced in (c) by the voiceless alveolar fricative [s] in [sé] and [bagaas].

These phonological phenomena are referred to as segmental substitutions (Ndiaye 1996:109). They represent elements of identification of non-standard French in Senegal and constitute variables showing that a given individual be- longs to the uneducated class.

Morphologically, the non-standard variety does not display the plural morphological inflections found in Standard French. In (c), the plural inflexions found in the transcription of Standard French *bagages* in (d), is missing in *bagaas* in the non-standard variety. The Standard French reflexive pronoun *moi-même* 'myself' is replaced by *matét*, which comes from *ma tête* 'my head' in Standard French. The fusion of the two Standard French words *ma + tête* to form *matét* in the non-standard variety is due to the influence of the Wolof system, in which *sama-bopp* literary means 'my head', and 'myself' in such contexts.

In (b) the Standard French phrase *prend pas ça à la légère* is rendered as *pa prend sa kom se lésér* in (d), *un problème sérieux* is rendered as *un porobolem diir*. Note that the Standard French negative *pas* [pa] precedes the verb *prend* in the non-standard variety, whereas it follows it in the standard.

The replacement of *sérieux* by *diir* is due to the fact that in Wolof the ready-made phrase to be used in such contexts is 'a hard problem' [jafe-jafe ju meti], and not 'a serious problem', as in Standard French. Consequently, the choice of the word *diir* by non-standard French speakers is the result of a lexical transfer from the Wolof linguistic system to that of Standard French.

The indefinite article *un* 'one' in the Standard French noun phrase *un problème sérieux* is deleted, and the adjective *sérieux* is replaced by the French word *dur* 'hard', which is adapted to the Wolof sound system, and becomes [diir], since Wolof does not have the high front rounded vowel [y]. Thus, Wolof speak- ers commonly replace the French vowel [y] with the closest existing Wolof high front long vowel: [i:]. These linguistic patterns characterize the non-standard va- riety of French spoken in the country.

The base or the lexifier language of this variety is obviously French, and the substrate is Wolof. It important to underscore that non-standard French varies slightly from region to region in Senegal, due to the major influence of languages spoken in each area. However, Wolof, as the major lingua franca of the country, represents the major substrate of Senegalese non-standard French. Thus, the grammar of non-standard French is mostly a simplified grammar based upon Wolof, while the lexicon comes from Standard French.

3.2   Urban Wolof and 'Pure' Wolof

The long contact between French and Wolof has created two Wolof varieties in Senegal: Urban Wolof, used especially in cities such as Dakar (the capital city of the country), and Kajoor Wolof (Pure Wolof).

According to Swigart (1994:176), Urban Wolof refers to a wide range of linguistic forms that are commonly used in Dakar. She notes that these forms differ from one another in phonology, structure, and lexicon. They have in common the following features: they are all made up of elements deriving from both Wolof and French (occasionally other languages). The switch between languages is of the unmarked variety (if one assumes that the unmarked variety is the expected one in a given speech context).

In Urban Wolof, Wolof and French operate together 'naturally' and most often subconsciously on the part of the speaker, and Urban Wolof is used in informal situations (Swigart 1994:176). In most formal speech situations, where the topic, participants, aim, and/or physical setting create a serious atmosphere (e.g.; religious events, courtroom proceedings, or classroom activities), a bilingual speaker would choose and attempt to maintain the use of either French or Wolof as pure as possible (Swigart 1994:176-7).

The following is an example of the Urban Wolof conversation borrowed from Swigart's (1994:177) work, in which urban forms are used. A male university student in his 20s discusses the difficulties he encountered while participating in a team of Senegalese researchers working in rural areas. The bold letters represent the Wolof words. In this variety, sometimes French words will be inflected by Wolof tenses or aspect morphemes (Swigart 1994:176) as shown in the following examples.

    (e) **Dafa** *décéder*-**woon** 'he had died'
       (Wolof morphemes in bold, French words in italics)

In this variety, French words or phrase may be followed by several words, phrases, or sentences in Wolof, creating a back-and-forth pattern that proceeds without pauses or hesitation phenomena (Swigart 1994:176). This variety also displays word-for-word translations of Wolof words into French or a French expression is rendered literally into Wolof, which would sound weird to monolingual speakers of either language. The following expressions illustrate this fact:

    (f) **Damay jel** *décision* 'I am going to take a decision',
       (from French *je vais prendre une décision*.)

This variety is the code of preference of the educated elite and of urban people, especially in Dakar. It is associated with the loss of the traditional language and culture, the (linguistic) incompetence of its user, and his/her vulgarity or disrespect (Swigart 1994:175). The following examples illustrate interesting code-switching instances found in Urban Wolof.

    (g) Parce que tu te rends compte que en fait **fii,** ...
       Because you realize that in fact **here,** ...

> **Yaa ngiy lakk Wolof** mais en fait **am na** ...
> **you speak Wolof,** but in fact **there are**...

(h) **Te yow,** tu dis que **Wolof nga,** mais ...
     And you say that **you are Wolof,** but ...

This variety takes the form of a Wolof matrix embedded with a number of French lexical items, which creates a subtle stylistic or connotational effect (Swigart 1994:176). This variety is often heard in middle-class homes and offices, on street corners, and in public transportation. It shows that speakers of Urban Wolof are bilinguals who have both French and Wolof at their disposal and combine them to create a unique and expressive style not available to the less proficient French-speakers(Swigart 1994:177).

Swigart notes that this variety is not what a linguist would call creole, since a creole starts with a piginized form of language used as a means of communication for people who do not share the same language. She states that this urban variety emerges for opposite reasons. It is a code used by people who share more than one language and who use both in order to communicate more fully. Thus, this variety differs structurally from a creole in that a creole has developed its own structural system, and thus can be regarded as a full-fledged language, whereas the urban variety remains true to its 'roots', since its own grammatical structure is not compromised (Swigart, 1994:178). So far, no linguistic or sociolinguistic argument has been found to support the contention that Urban Wolof is a creole.

Nowadays, some French words that do not exist in Standard French are coined in the country, contrary to the prescriptive rules of the French Academy. The following French-based words are regularly used in Urban Wolof: **essenserie** (standard French: *station d'essence* 'gas station'), **dibiterie** (a type of restaurant where only meat is served). The word **essenserie** is built on French morphemes: *essence* and the suffix *-erie*. The word **dibiterie** is built on a non-French word **dibi** and the French suffix *–erie*(with the insertion of epenthetic /t/ to avoid a vowel cluster).

Although these words are not considered to be either Wolof or Standard French, they are regularly used in Urban Wolof. This shows that the French language is undergoing important changes in the country. In other words French is being 'Senegalized', i.e., used to fit the new bi-cultural reality of Senegalese society

The urban variety of Wolof is linguistically different from the 'pure' Wolof spoken in the rural areas. The urban variety of Wolof is characterized by various code switching and borrowings from French, while Pure Wolof is not. Pure Wolof is generally referred to as Kajoor Wolof, since Kajoor is the origin of the Wolof people. This variety of Wolof is free from French influence and expresses both the Senegalese speakers' pride toward their own language and their reticence toward the French language and culture.

Today, this variety is found in the religious city of Touba (the religious city of the Murid Brotherhood), and in rural areas. In Touba, Pure Wolof is granted a

high prestige, and is used in all domains of life. It shows, contrary to Urban Wolof, that one knows the culture and is proud of his or her own language. It is not however, uncommon for Urban Wolof speakers to not understand some Pure Wolof speakers, since many words and concepts of Pure Wolof are rendered with French words by Urban Wolof speakers. The following sentences contrast Pure Wolof (i) and Urban Wolof (j):

(i) **Tey, war nanu tambale sunu kureel gi.**
    'Today we should start our organization'

(j) **Tey, war nanu** commencer **sunu** organisation **bi.**
    'Today we should start our organization'

Not all Urban Wolof speakers would understand the two Pure Wolof words *tambale* 'to start' and *kureel* 'organization, group', since these worlds are nonexistent in the Urban Wolof lexicon. Instead, as shown earlier, Standard French synonyms such as *commencer* 'to start' and *organization* 'organization' are used. Thus, speakers of Urban Wolof display a lack of Pure Wolof words and concepts, hence their loss of moral and traditional Wolof values conveyed through Pure Wolof.

3.3 Local languages in Senegal

Senegal comprises six major ethnic groups: Wolof, Pulaar, Seereer, Joola, Soninke, and Mandinka. Each of these ethnic groups speaks its own language within its own community, located in different parts of the country. Each of these languages represents an element of identification of a given people, since each language refers to a particular ethnic group. Each ethnic group is identifiable by the language of the group, and by the linguistic forms of their names. Thus, while local languages convey historical and cultural references of its speakers, Standard French, non-standard French, and Urban Wolof do not necessarily convey the same information.

Although all of the ethnic groups are proud of their language as a cultural reference, the overwhelming majority of speakers of other languages use Wolof as their second language. This is due to the fact that the rural exodus of seasonal workers to cities led to the adoption of Wolof, since it is the primary spoken language in the country. Thus, the different ethnic groups use Wolof as the lingua franca to communicate with other groups. The spreading of Wolof in the country, and even into the neighboring countries, is historically due to the fact that Wolof people were the main mobile traders in Senegal, followed by the Pulaars.

While most Senegalese speak Wolof as a second language, irrespective of their ethnic groups, the other local languages are used in rural areas and in certain conservative families in the cities. These languages entertain mutual borrowings with Wolof, Classical Arabic, and French, due to their long co-existence.

However, within each ethnic group, the predominant language is that of the group. Thus, local languages are used in traditional and nontraditional settings in the geographical locations of their speakers. For example, in Casamance (the region of the Joola people), Joola is used in most Joola families in the rural area, in

traditional activities, such as naming ceremonies, village meetings, circumcisions, etc.

The same phenomenon is also observed in Pakawu (in the county of Kolda), where the Mandinka and some Pulaar people (the Fulakunda) are located. It is also found in the north, where the majority of the Pulaar people (the Tukulor) are located, in the center, where the Seereer people live, and in the East among the Soninke people. Each of the ethnic groups uses its language as the major means of communication in its community.

In each of these areas, Wolof, Standard French, or non-standard French is generally used when people have to communicate with government officials or others who do not speak their language. However in each of these communities, the language of the people is used in both formal and informal situations. Each of the local languages has a particular speech style used in formal and informal communicative contexts. Thus, these languages are granted equal national prestige, since they fulfill similar social functions in different regions of the country.

4.   The attitudes of speakers

4.1   Attitudes toward Standard French and non-standard French

Negative reactions against Standard French have been displayed in Senegalese society for a long time for several reasons. In colonial times, many local people were against sending their children to the French school for fear they would become assimilated to French culture and change their religion. Religious identity plays an important role in the Senegalese speech community, since Islam is the major religion of the country. The linguistic resistance against French assimilation is essentially found in the Murid Brotherhood discussed above. In addition, a number of intellectuals have also reacted negatively to the French assimilation.

Before the advent of modern linguistics, African languages were considered by Europeans as being incapable of expressing certain deep philosophical thoughts, and were referred to as 'dialects', i.e., 'sublanguages'. Such a view, designed to show the superiority of European languages and people over the local languages and colonial people, was scientifically disproved in Senegal when Professor Sakhir Thiam, former Minister of Higher Education translated university mathematical programs into Wolof, and the Egyptologist Professor Cheikh Anta Diop translated the *Theory of Relativity* into Wolof (Bokamba 1987:2).

Many intellectuals have chosen to cleanse their Wolof from all French influence, using a Wolof lexicon that is often difficult for Urban Wolof speakers to grasp. This movement is called 'revernacularization'. The movement represents an antidote to the 'devernacularization' that Wolof has undergone in the last years (Thiam 1990:10-12). The 'revernacularization' led to an attitudinal shift toward speakers of Pure Wolof. Instead of showing that one is uneducated, speaking Pure Wolof in Dakar may mark one as an active intellectual expressing his/her rejection of French assimilation.

One of the better-known intellectuals in the 'revernacularization' field is the Senegalese journalist Ahmed Bachir Kunta. He is known for coining new Wolof words or for borrowing Arabic words, which he would adapt to the Wolof linguistic system, when confronted with the problem of finding the right word to use.

Thus, the use of French without at least some recourse to Wolof expressions or lexical items in a friendly conversation, or even in an informal discussion in the workplace, marks one as a too-willing victim of the French civilization mission (Swigart 1994:179). In fact, most Senegalese do not wish to display that kind of admiration or closeness with the cultural 'center' of colonial times (Swigart 1994:179).

For this reason, Swigart 1994 notes that to speak French is desirable, but to speak French too much is inappropriate. Thus, no one wants to speak French exclusively. Consequently, the young people who have been brought up in France or in a very francocentric Dakar family, and who consequently have no knowledge or only a poor command of Wolof, find social interaction very difficult (Swigart 1994:179).

Although many efforts have been made to reduce the status of Standard French in Senegal, the fact still remains that colonial policies have helped the French language to become well established in Senegalese society. Standard French is still associated with a high social class, since it is the language of the decision-makers and the decision-making centers of the country.

As for non-standard French, given that it is no-one's mother tongue in the country, it is the least prestigious variety. This variety is equated with lack of education in the French school system. Although this variety implies that one is not educated in French, it does not always mean that one belongs to a lower class. In Senegal, it is not always correct to equate the lack of French education with low social class.

In fact, many people who use this variety have been successful businessmen in the informal sector of Senegalese society. Note that one cannot be a speaker of both Standard French and non-standard French in Senegal, since Standard French is exclusively used by the educated elite while non-standard French is mainly used by French-illiterates or near-illiterates. Senegalese people who use the non-standard French variety, such as the Wolof natives called the *Baol-Baol* and the Pulaar people, are very successful businessmen of the informal sector in the country and many of them would belong to the Senegalese upper middle class. Ndiouga Kébé and Djily Mbaye are two of the many wealthy people in the country who have never attended a French school. Despite their illiteracy in French, such people belong to the upper middle class. Thus, although non-standard French implies that one is not working in the government and that one is illiterate in French, it does not necessarily mean that one belongs to a low social class in the Senegalese speech community.

It is worth mentioning that most of the French-illiterates in the country have studied Classical Arabic for religious purposes. Although they do not use it for

oral communication purposes, they do use the Arabic writing system to keep their records, run their businesses, and write letters. This practice started before colonization. The majority of Senegalese people were Muslim before colonization. People were educated in Muslim schools and wrote Arabic and their own languages using Arabic characters (Diop 1989:28). However, interestingly, the Arabic language is never used as a medium of communication in the daily life of Senegalese people. Its use is mainly for religious purposes. Classical Arabic is a very respected language and is granted a HOLY STATUS in the Senegalese speech community, as it is the language of the Holy Kuran, which is the book of Islam, the religion of about 90% of the Senegalese population.

4.2   Attitudes toward Urban Wolof and 'Pure' Wolof

Due to the fact that Urban Wolof is used in the cities where the educated elite (government officials, students, businessmen, etc.) is located, this variety is associated with high social class. The use of a vernacular language mixed with a European language marks a speaker as educated, or of a relatively high socioeconomic status, and as someone who values both their indigenous and their more international status (Swigart 1994:178). This variety has undergone a process of 'devernacularization', whereby it has become dissociated from the values traditionally linked to its use in rural village settings (Thiam, 1990:10). Moreover, many French-illiterates show ingenuity in their imitation of Urban Wolof, while retaining an essentially Wolof phonology, as shown in the following example (Thiam 1990:15):

(k) Begg naa **woyase**, waaye amuna **moyee**.
    'l want to **travel**, but I do not have **means**.'

This sentence is commonly heard in the cities. Some uneducated people usually use it. The 'Wolofization' of the French words *voyage* = **woyaas** 'travel', and *moyen* = **moyee** 'means' is due to the fact that the illiterates in French are trying to use the Urban Wolof variety to show their elite status, since it is equated with the urban educated Senegalese elite. In other words, such speakers are trying to borrow the prestige (Labov 1966:65) associated with Urban Wolof to mark their elite status.

However, it is common to find the reverse in Touba (the religious city of the Murid Brotherhood in Senegal). In fact, once in Touba, many Urban Wolof speakers pay attention to their speech, and make efforts to speak without any French words when talking to spiritual leaders or their entourage, for fear of being labeled *tubaabe*, the equivalent of the French word *assimilé* 'assimilated'. In Touba and in many other rural areas in the country, to speak Pure Wolof is highly desirable, while speaking Urban Wolof is less desirable, and speaking French is undesirable.

Today, any excessive use of either French or Pure Wolof is discouraged in the cities, especially in Dakar. Commonly, Urban Wolof speakers who can speak without any French words may be referred to as *kaw-kaw* 'hick' (Thiam 1990:14). It is important to note that these speakers are differentiated from the

few intellectuals who would use Pure Wolof as a means of conveying anti-assimilation messages.

In addition, because of the position of the English countries in the world, various influences from English are also noticeable in Urban Wolof. English words like *boy, truck, cool, girl* pronounced [gel], to name only a few, are commonly used by youngsters in the cities, especially in Dakar. The introduction of English words into Urban Wolof is associated with the speech of the *jeunes bandits de Dakar* 'the young Dakar lowlifes' (Swigart 1994:181).

This variety is mostly associated with the loss of traditional values, such as respect for elders — good manners that are almost extinct in the cities. Thus, one can predict that code mixings and lexical borrowings from Wolof, French, and English will become characteristic of Urban Wolof in the future.

4.3   Attitudes toward local languages

The speakers of each of these languages regard their own language as the expression of their cultural identity and pride. As a matter of fact, in each of the provinces, a native is looked down upon if s/he cannot speak the language of his/her own people. S/he is considered to have been uprooted. Although most of the speakers of these languages are bilingual in that they can speak at least Wolof, and another national language, or either variety of French, the social function of each of the local languages within specific native communities is still very important.

For example, in the Mandinka community, the following phrase is commonly used to express the pride associated with the Mandinka language: *Moo Kaŋo* (literally) 'human language'. When Mandinka speakers refer to their language, it is common to hear them use *Moo Kaŋo*, which conveys the pride that Mandinka people associate with their language and culture, since it implies that only Mandinka people speak a 'human language' in Senegal.

This example shows that in the Mandinka community, it is assumed that, given their culture and their historical empires in West Africa (empire of Mali and of Gaabu), Mandinka has always been a great language. Thus, other ethnic groups and their languages are referred to by their regular names, while Mandinka is referred to as 'human language' to imply that all other languages are ordinary languages, but Mandinka is a 'superlanguage'.

The same attitude is found in other communities where other languages are used as the major medium of communication. Speakers of Kajoor Wolof (Pure Wolof) refer to their language as *Lakku Cocc Barma* 'the language of the philosopher Cocc Barma'. Cocc was known in the country for his wit in solving most difficult social problems without having to shed blood. Thus, for the native speakers of Kajoor, Wolof is above all other languages, since it is the language of wisdom and knowledge.

Similar attitudes are also found in all other national languages, although each language may express this attitude in a different way. These few examples are only used to show the kind of attitudes that native speakers of local lan-

guages share toward their own languages and others. This is the reason why the advent of French and the expansion of Wolof have not succeeded in eliminating the social function of these languages and the pride associated with them within the Senegalese speech community.

The negative reactions toward Standard French have raised the awareness of the Senegalese government to the necessity of promoting local languages. For this reason, a Ministry of Literacy was created in the late 1980s, and all local languages have been codified and used in the media. Ultimately, the government plans on introducing them into the educational system.

Nowadays, these languages are codified and are used in literacy programs to educate rural people who have not attended French school, so that they may be able to read and write their own languages. Newspapers are also produced in national languages, and the news on radio and the television is also given in all national languages.

5. Conclusion

Senegalese society is culturally hybrid in that it has one foot in African and the other in French culture, due to the long contact with France. Swigart (1994:180) refers to Senegal as a culturally creolized society, although she admits that none of its languages displays the structural linguistic characteristics of a creole.

The major particularity of the Senegalese speech community is the fact that, although the country may be 'culturally creolized', 'pure' distinct forms of the major language (Wolof) and French are simultaneously used in informal discourse to express the communicative needs and the intricacies of urban life, without displaying creole linguistic properties.

Moreover, despite the colonial attempt to undermine local languages and promote Standard French, the functional role of local languages, as well their status in their respective geographical domains, is still very important. The pride and the cultural patterns that speakers associate with their own languages have helped the status of local languages survive the expansion of Wolof and the imposition of French as the official language of the country.

Multilingualism in Senegal has positive effects on Senegalese society. Nowadays, all national languages are taught in rural areas to illiterate people. Several national organizations and scholars in C.L.A.D (*Centre de Linguistique Appliquée de Dakar*) are working on didactic materials for the promotion of the six national languages. Today, compared to ten years ago, many French-illiterates in Senegal can write and read their own languages. Thus, although French is the official language of the government and Wolof is the most widely-spoken language in the country, each of the local languages is prestigious in its own domain. These languages represent the cultural references of the people. Each of the ethnic groups can be said to be conservative in respect to its own language, and at the same time, is open to other languages which speakers do not hesitate to use to communicate with the world outside their community.

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