

LANGUAGES OF ISLAM: HYBRID GENRES OF TAALIBE BAAY ORATORY IN SENEGAL

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ABSTRACT

This paper shows how religious speeches by leaders of the Taalibe Baay, disciples of the Senegalese Sufi Shaykh Ibrahim Nās, uphold Islamic knowledge and authority while accommodating competing yet intertwined knowledge regimes. French and Arabic enter into Wolof religious discourse in multiple ways through contrasting educational methods, uses, and language ideologies. These three languages are combined and separated in numerous linguistic registers juxtaposed in religious speeches: classical Arabic prologues and textual quotations, “deep Wolof” narratives largely excluding loanwords, more conversational registers using some French terms, and so on. Although orators typically use French terms sparingly, they sometimes break this pattern and use them liberally, especially when critiquing Western hegemony and secular values. They sometimes incorporate French discourses of “liberty” and “progress” in passages designed to demonstrate Islam’s superiority in achieving these ideals. Orators tend to replace common French terms for morally positive concepts with Arabic terms, yet they usually reinsert the French as a gloss to facilitate comprehension. I discuss these utterances as cases of linguistic “hybridity” in which contrasting voices combine to serve an authorial purpose. These rhetorical patterns fit into a larger pattern of accommodating, contesting, and appropriating hegemonic languages, institutions, and ideas while upholding Islam’s unique authoritativeness.

Introduction

The fascination that Islamic and particularly Sufi authority in Senegal has long held for scholars hinges largely on the “exceptional” situation (Villalón 1995; Cruise O’Brien 1996) in which secular state authority simultaneously competes with and depends on informal Islamic governance. Despite a number of transformations eroding the sense of Sufi orders acting as monolithic blocs,¹ the vast majority of Senegalese² continue to look to Sufi leaders as the highest moral authorities and as metonyms of community. Sufi authority in Senegal has remained relevant through successfully accommodating multiple transformations and competing regimes—including multiple Islamic tendencies, secular state authority, and neoliberal development institutions—while remaining grounded in long traditions of religious scholarship, spiritual practice, and moral authority.

Islamic moral authority is constituted in relation to competing forms of authority in many settings. One of the most central yet overlooked of these is religious oratory in large meetings that many Sufi adherents attend regularly. This article suggests a homology between, on the one hand, word choice and register shifts in Taalibe Baay religious specialists’ public speeches and, on the other, these specialists’ more general orientation towards non-religious forms of knowledge and authority. The overall pattern that I suggest is that of acknowledging, engaging with, appropriating, criticizing, and ultimately subordinating alternative forms of knowledge and authority to uphold a particular imagination of Islamic knowledge and authority. Taalibe Baay orators’ use of multiple languages and registers thus is part of a larger play of engagement and disengagement, “accommodation” and “resistance” (Robinson 2000), condescension and transcendence.

This analysis of language use is just one part of a larger project to understand the process of accommodation (Robinson 2000; Babou 2007) between religious and other forms of authority in Senegal. Over

¹ These include the decline of the Sufi orders’ agrarian economic base (Diop 1993), the rise of transnationally connected Islamic reform movements (Loimeier 1994, 2000; Augis 2005, 2009; Leichtman 2009), and competing tendencies within Sufi movements (Kane and Villalón 1995; Villalón 2003; Samson 2005).

² According to the 2002 Senegal census (République du Sénégal 2002), approximately 90 percent of all Senegalese, or 94 percent of all Muslims in Senegal, identified with one of the primary Sufi orders.

the past decade, my ethnographic research on the “Taalibe Baay,” or followers of the Senegalese Shaykh ʾIbrāhīm Ṣās of the Tijānī Sufi order, has examined how Sufi discourses and practices negotiate mutually irreducible interests, imperatives, and truth claims. My research among Taalibe Baay began in their holy city, Medina Baay, which sits on the outskirts of the regional capital of Kaolack and is closely connected to the peanut-farming villages of Senegal’s Saalum area. I soon extended my research to a number of other sites: several Saalum villages; Dakar, where the Taalibe Baay movement is booming among young people of all classes; an Arab village in Mauritania affiliated with the movement; Senegalese transmigrant communities in New York City; and Cairo, where many sons of Taalibe Baay leaders study at Al-Azhar University. This multi-sited approach has allowed me to observe how Taalibe Baay speak of various topics in numerous varieties of Wolof and other languages.

Although my research has followed Taalibe Baay around the world, it would be impossible to describe language patterns among Taalibe Baay globally, since the Taalibe Baay movement, known globally as the *Tijāniyyah ʾIbrāhīmiyyah* or the *Fayḍa*,³ includes adherents who speak dozens of languages and live in nearly every country and setting, from remote Bedouin camps to large Western cities. Throughout this paper, the term “Taalibe Baay” refers to Wolof-speaking disciples of Baay Ṣās in Senegal who actively participate in the religious community, often through membership in a religious association (*daayira*). This paper makes no attempt to define Taalibe Baay oratory as a distinct style or genre, as speakers’ styles and linguistic repertoires vary and likely share common characteristics with speakers from other Sufi groups. However, the speeches examined here share a number of formal characteristics that justify approaching them as part of a set of “speech genres” (Bakhtin 1986) that combine registers according to more or less established patterns and expectations. All the orators whose speech I examine here are from prominent clerical families and are regular speakers on the Taalibe Baay meeting circuit. They have similar educational backgrounds, beginning

³ Members of this movement generally refer to the movement growing out of Shaykh ʾIbrāhīm Ṣās’s teachings as the *Fayḍa* (Flood), although in Wolof individuals generally refer to themselves as “Taalibe Baay,” or “Disciples of Baay.” Outsiders call them “Ṣaseen” (the Ṣās family) although this label is almost never used among members of the community. See Hill (2007) and Seesemann (2011).

in Senegalese Islamic schools (*daara* and *majlis*),⁴ some passing through Mauritanian Bedouin schools, and culminating in a diploma from Al-Azhar University in Cairo. All regularly travel throughout Senegal and often abroad and are more or less conversant in urban and rural Wolof speaking styles. All have some knowledge of French and can draw on a range of French expressions regardless of whether they studied French or live primarily in an urban environment.

According to Bakhtin, all utterances take place in a context of “dialogized heteroglossia” (1981, 272), or in dialogue not only with other utterances but with multiple languages or ways of speaking. The oratorical genres employed in religious meetings are fundamentally heteroglossic, juxtaposing many speech registers and other genres: ancient classical Arabic prose, formalized Arabic poetry, Qur’ānic verses, “deep Wolof” narratives and translations, and conversational Wolof explanations incorporating many French loanwords. The only other academic account of Senegalese Islamic oratory that I know of, Kane and Villalón’s (1995) translation and analysis of a controversial 1993 politico-religious speech by Moustapha Sy, suggests that such heteroglossia is by no means limited to Taalibe Baay. Although their translation does not preserve the details of loanwords and code-switching, it shows that this Tijānī leader consciously juxtaposes Arabic, French, and Wolof while discussing Islam’s relationship to secular politics and modernity. A closer examination of Taalibe Baay speeches shows that they are not only heteroglossic but include “hybrid” utterances, or single utterances containing two utterances and thereby juxtaposing two opposing “axiological belief systems” (Bakhtin 1981, 304) while refracting them through a single authorial intent. Several speakers, using French terms, invoked Westerners’ discourses advocating “women’s liberation” and “equality” yet in such a way that casts doubt on the ability of secular liberalism to attain these goals.

In hybrid speech, it is often difficult to discern the speaker’s intent among the many voices, many of which are invoked ironically to undercut the assumptions associated with those voices. Sufi leaders’ statements are often designed to puzzle (Hill 2007; compare Fernandez 1980), and when I asked for clarifications, I was often told to seek the speaker’s deeper (*bāṭin*)

⁴ In this article I differentiate terms from the principal languages discussed by using different typefaces: *Wolof*, *Arabic*, and French. In my translations into English, I leave the Wolof in default typeface while setting apart Arabic and French as above, highlighting Wolof terms where needed using boldface.

meaning, which was often at odds with the apparent (*zāhir*) meaning (Hill 2007). Among the most puzzling aspects of these speeches was their extensive use of French phrases at certain moments, often after twenty minutes or more of scrupulously pure Wolof. I had expected these erudite Islamic scholars to assert Arabic, the language of Islamic scholarship, and Wolof, their own mother tongue, against French, the language of colonialism and modern, secular life. I have often encountered the attitude in Senegal that extensive use of French indexes a speaker's social attributes, whether positive (modern, urbane, cosmopolitan, or educated) or negative (overly Westernized or pretentious). Yet religious orators sometimes used a plethora of French terms in diatribes against the encroachment of anti-religious, Western values. In heteroglossic and hybrid speech, certain voices index not the speaker's identity but stereotyped personae (Agha 1998) invoked to undermine the very assumptions associated with them. Although it is impossible to comment on the degree to which speakers consciously and strategically consider each word while speaking, these hybrid discourses have a consistent rhetorical effect of appropriating and undermining non-religious knowledge regimes in order to uphold Islamic authority. My use of the term "regimes" derives from Foucault's discussion of "truth regimes," or "general politics" of how certain discourses are accepted as true (1984, 73). Yet while Foucault assumes that "each society has its regime of truth" (1984, 73), postcolonial Senegal is shaped by multiple epistemic traditions and centers of authority vying for hegemony.

French and Arabic in a Hybrid Wolof Linguistic Space

The religious oratory discussed in this paper thus takes place in a context where no single model of knowledge and authority is hegemonic, and this plurality is reflected in a multiplicity of languages and registers associated with different specializations, classes, and knowledge traditions. Wolof has functioned as a lingua franca in much of northwestern Senegal since the fifteenth century (Klein 1968), and its spread has accelerated since the mid-twentieth century to the point that at least 90 percent of Senegalese now speak it as a first or second language (McLaughlin 2008). While Wolof speakers today typically have difficulty identifying regional dialects, they easily distinguish between "Urban Wolof" and the "rural Wolof" spoken primarily by ethnic Wolof in villages (Juillard et al. 1994). As a number of scholars have shown, the contemporary Urban Wolof of Dakar is a "mixed code" in which French often acts less as a

foreign language than as an integral part of a hybrid code even for those who have never studied French (Thiam 1990, 1994; Swigart 1992a, 1994; McLaughlin 2001, 2008). Indeed, Swigart (1992a, 1994) has demonstrated that many speakers, including politicians giving speeches, insist that they are speaking “pure” Wolof even as they observably engage in substantial “code-switching” (as defined from an outsider’s perspective) and borrowing from French. Furthermore, urban speakers who have not studied French are often unaware of the French origin of many everyday terms (Swigart 1992b, 1994). This suggests that Urban Wolof discourse is a “hybrid language” (Spitulnik 1998) in which French expressions are often “bivalent,” or belonging simultaneously to two languages (Woolard 1998; Swigart 2000; McLaughlin 2001). While we may think of registers as subsets of a language, code-switching between distinct languages or “grammatical systems” (Gumperz 1977) is a distinctive feature of Urban Wolof registers.

Although speakers may not be conscious of particular instances of “non-purposive” (Swigart 1994) code-switching, whether and how one uses French phrases is not always inconsequential. Depending on the social milieu, an abundance of French terms can mark a speaker as erudite, a parvenu, or not truly Senegalese (a *tubaab* [Westerner], as some returned expatriates are called). Conversely, a Wolof utterance that lacks French terms or insists on grammatical distinctions such as noun classes (Irvine 1978; McLaughlin 1997) may mark a “deep Wolof” (*Wolofbu xóot*) register suggesting the voice either of an uneducated peasant or a public speaker—an Islamic specialist, a griot (*géal*),⁵ or a radio or television announcer (Papa Alioune Ndao and Kébé 2010). Islamic scholars whose deep Wolof seems perfectly eloquent over the loudspeakers of a nocturnal religious meeting report being treated as ignorant peasants when they travel to Dakar.

Despite this mutually defining relationship between Senegal’s official language and its lingua franca, a “diglossic” (Ferguson 1959) approach assuming a unified “linguistic market” and a state-sponsored “legitimate language” (Bourdieu 1991) would fail to capture the complexity of Senegal’s linguistic landscape (Irvine 1989; Swigart 2000). A heteroglossic approach sees Wolof as an intersection between many languages, both

⁵ “Griot” is the French term designating members of endogamous occupational groups specializing in praise singing, music, oral history, and relaying speeches to an audience. The most common Wolof word to designate members of such groups is *géal*, although Wolof speakers who perform similar functions use a range of terms to designate themselves.

conventionally defined (French, Arabic, Wolof, English, and so on) and “social languages” (Bakhtin 1981). Research on contemporary Wolof speech has so far described only a limited number of these registers encountered in everyday speech and, to a lesser extent, in the specialized speech of griot wordsmiths (for example Irvine 1989; Heath 1990).

Studies attempting to situate Arabic within the Wolof linguistic landscape have shown that Arabic, like French, has provided numerous loanwords (Deme 1995) and sometimes serves as an alternative to French to align speakers with Islam and against Western hegemony (Ngom 2002, 2003). Yet the handful of Arabic terms used in everyday conversation are largely limited to stock greetings, the days of the week, and terms of religious significance, and many speakers are unaware of the Arabic origin of Arabic loanwords (Swigart 2000).⁶ Moreover, as discussed below, the vast majority of terms associated with Islam—including the words for Muslim (*jullit*), prayer (*julli*), four of the five prayers themselves, and the feasts (*tabaski* and *korite*)—are unrelated to their Arabic equivalents. Some intellectuals and media personalities replace French terms with Arabic equivalents as an act of resistance, yet few have found this approach useful since few understand the resulting language (Swigart 1994, 181).

This situation raises important questions: Why has Arabic, the only widespread written language in Senegal throughout much of the past millennium, had little influence on the Wolof lexicon while French, little known in most of Senegal before the past century, is so at-home in everyday Wolof conversation? Why have Senegalese voluntarily adopted the language of the alien colonizer while apparently spurning that of Islam, the basis of Senegal’s most powerful social associations? Why do Wolof speakers so often associate Islam with Wolof rather than with Arabic, as scholars such as Swigart (2000) argue, even though most of them have spent years memorizing Islam’s holy book in its original language and pray in Arabic each day?

Answering these riddles requires considering how languages accompany contrasting pedagogical techniques, pragmatic uses, and language ideologies. Extending our analysis beyond everyday conversational registers, we see that Arabic is indeed a far more integral

⁶ This is especially true of non-religious words derived from Arabic, including *saa* (moment, from *sā‘ah*, “hour”); *waxtu* (hour, from *waqt*, “time”); *batañc* (eggplant, from *bādhinjān*); etc. The origin of some French-derived words is also generally forgotten, such as *mbalit* (trash, residual form of “*bale*” [*balayer*], meaning “residue from sweeping”).

and ubiquitous part of everyday life in Senegal than studies of language in Senegal suggest. Perceiving this fact requires taking into account religious meetings, chants, cassettes of religious speeches, cell phone ring tones, Qurʾānic studies, prayers, and so on. Even to those who know little of Arabic grammar, Arabic discourses are more than mere background noise: they are mnemonic tools and techniques for cultivating and performing morality, community, authority, and religious subjectivity. However, Arabic terms appear less frequently in conversational Wolof, not only because Arabic is a specialized tool for religious instruction and worship, but because long-standing Arabo-Islamic instruction methods raise a lexical barrier between Arabic and Wolof that conceals the significant impact of Arabo-Islamic learning.

Among Taalibe Baay communities I have frequented in Kaolack, nearby Saalum villages, and Dakar, education in Qurʾānic schools (*daara*)⁷ is nearly universal among boys and girls. The exercise of writing a text every day using Arabic characters has taught most people in these communities to read and write in Arabized Wolof (*ʿajamī* or *Wolofal*), yet a smaller number can write in romanized Wolof,⁸ French, or Arabic.⁹ This near-universal Wolof literacy is invisible to the postcolonial state.¹⁰ In post-Qurʾānic schools (*majlis*),¹¹ one memorizes Arabic texts in the teacher's home, yet one typically studies and discusses these Arabic texts in Wolof.¹² Language immersion, a key ingredient of France's technology

From Arabic "*dār al-Qurʾān*" or "house of the Qurʾān."

⁷ "Romanized Wolof" includes both writing following French conventions and writing following the phonemic conventions of the CLAD (Centre de Linguistique Appliqué de Dakar).

⁸ Irvine (1989) also noted that more people in the village she studied could write in Arabized Wolof and Arabic than French, although this was changing as state schools became more prominent.

⁹ The 1988 Senegalese census (Sénégal 1988) reported that 28.6 percent of Senegalese men were literate in French, 6.5 percent in Arabic, and only 0.3 percent in national languages such as Wolof and Pulaar. It reported that 15.6 percent of women were literate in French, 1.2 percent in Arabic, and 0.2 percent in national languages. These outlandishly low figures for both Arabic and national languages reflect a number of assumptions, including that everyone is either illiterate or literate in exactly one language (as the total is 100 percent) and likely that literacy in national languages only includes romanized systems.

¹⁰ Literally "a place of sitting" or "assembly."

¹¹ A growing number of Arabic schools, many of them funded partially by the state, use language immersion and "modern" methods patterned after Francophone schools, yet the religious orators discussed in this paper all began their studies in the "traditional" schools described here.

of assimilation first used to integrate France's multilingual citizenry and then in the colonies (Weber 1976; Johnson 2004), is absent from *majlis*.

An anecdote will illustrate how *majlis* affect one's linguistic repertoire. A fifteen-year-old *majlis* student, Sheex, has spent the day helping his teacher oversee nearly a hundred younger students as they memorize the Qurʾān at Sērīñ Daara Ibra's *daara* in the Taalibe Baay holy city of Medina Baay. The youngest students begin by learning the letters of the Arabic alphabet by their Wolof names¹³ and then repeat very simple Qurʾānic phrases in unison as the rest of the students rock back and forth and recite the Qurʾānic verses they have written on wooden tablets. After the late afternoon prayer, the Qurʾān students are dismissed and Sheex stays behind at the *daara*, which consists of a low zinc roof surrounded by three cement-block walls within the teacher's compound. For the next hour he reviews the lesson that Sērīñ Daara Ibra gave him to memorize the previous night, which he has copied into his notebook, and then he joins the teacher in his bedroom.

Sērīñ Daara and I both sit atop the teacher's bed as Sheex kneels on an imported red prayer rug facing his teacher while bowing his head toward the ground. The teacher tells Sheex to begin reciting his lesson, a passage from Al-Akhḍarī, a book of *fiqh* or Islamic jurisprudence written in rhymed verse to facilitate memorization. Today's lesson concerns the proper execution of ritual prayer, or *ṣalāh*. Sheex recites the Arabic text from memory, careful to speak clearly yet softly out of deference for his teacher, and the teacher listens intently and stops Sheex occasionally to correct him. Sērīñ Daara congratulates Sheex on a good recitation and then tells him to recite it again, this time with the Wolof gloss. Sheex begins again, this time following each Arabic word with a deep Wolof equivalent. This form of recitation breaks up the verse's rhythm, drawing attention to each bilingual pair of equivalent words. The teacher then has Sheex repeat the Arabic-Wolof text once more, this time stopping Sheex periodically to interject his own commentary (*sharḥ*) in conversational Wolof, offering

¹³ Many of the Wolof names describe the letter's appearance instead of or in addition to its sound. This is because Wolof speakers often collapse several Arabic phonemes into a single Wolof phoneme, in which case letters need further differentiation (see Ndiaye 1985, 44–45). For example, the Arabic letter *mīm* is called "miimara" in Wolof (from "*mīm rā*" for "*mīm* in the shape of *rā*"), while the Arabic letter *ḥā* is called "*haa lonk*" or "*ḥā* with a tail" to distinguish it from non-emphatic *hā*, which most Wolof speakers do not differentiate from *ḥā*.

examples of things that might go wrong during a prayer. At one point Sēriñ Daara stands up and acts out an imam forgetting the words of the Qur'ānic passage he is reciting during the prayer, then asks Sheex what the text prescribes to be done in this situation.

Nearly all the male Islamic specialists I interviewed or heard speak had studied at such *daara* and *majlis* in this fashion. Sons of better-known leaders typically went on to study at Al-Azhar in Egypt, while members of less prominent families like Sēriñ Daara combined study at various *majlis* with several years at formal Islamic institutes, whose methods resemble those of Francophone schools. Many boys from Taalibe Baay clerical families now study in Mauritanian villages affiliated with Baay Ņas. Most of the Arabic texts memorized in *majlis* are centuries-old verse texts that, like Al-Akhḍarī, are part of a canon studied throughout West Africa (Ndiaye 1985; Sule and Starratt 1991). These elliptical Arabic verses would be of little use without the Wolof gloss and the teacher's commentary. Because no immersion is involved, *majlis* students need many years to become conversant in Arabic, although they quickly learn many Arabic religious and grammatical terms. These schools' effect on students' Wolof lexicon is directly opposite to that of Francophone schools. While Francophone schools banish Wolof and thus encourage students to replace it with French, *majlis* teach students an ever-expanding body of deep Wolof glosses for specialized Arabic terms, allowing them to discuss the fine points of Islamic law and monotheistic theology with minimal borrowing from Arabic. This education teaches students of Islam to speak a deep Wolof with an unusually broad Wolof lexicon and conservative grammar resembling the speech of praise singers. Partly because prominent Islamic specialists have typically memorized dozens of long texts in both Arabic and Wolof, a Wolof specialist in Kaolack I hired to help me transcribe interviews visited Islamic leaders regularly, describing them as the best source of little-known Wolof vocabulary.

By contrast, not only are contemporary and high-prestige domains such as commerce, technology, politics, and international relations taught in French, but the methods used to teach French terms do not bundle them with Wolof equivalents. Centuries after the translation of terms used in Arabic texts into Wolof, efforts to Wolofize vocabulary introduced through Francophone channels (for example Diop 1979, chap. 2) have gained little traction. I encountered *majlis* students who could discuss religious topics in fluent Arabic yet had to resort to French for basic terms such

as “politics” and “technology” (terms absent from canonical pedagogical texts) while speaking Arabic. In short, in everyday situations, even people who identify with Islamic knowledge often take for granted that the French way of saying something is the “unmarked” (Myers-Scotton 1995) or even the only way of saying it.

However, the taken for granted comes to the fore when a state of affairs changes. Religious specialists and students who migrated from Medina Baay to Dakar often felt a pressing need to learn to incorporate French into their Wolof. Sëriñ Daara Ibra spends several months each year in Dakar, where he exchanges mystical cures and religious knowledge with religious specialists there. A respected teacher and religious scholar in Medina Baay, he explained to me that when he first arrived in Dakar people treated him like an uneducated peasant. He traded religious lessons for French lessons with friends in Dakar and studied public school textbooks until he could pass the exam for the elementary and then the intermediary diploma. When speaking with me and other urbanites in Dakar he made a point of using French extensively, although he tended to switch between full sentences of pure Wolof and pure but halting French rather than code-mix spontaneously and intrasententially as do fluent Urban Wolof speakers. My young friends in Medina Baay who finished high school and went on to pursue a higher education in Dakar similarly went through an uncomfortable period during which they avidly learned which Wolof words to replace with French words. Like Sëriñ Daara Ibra, some began by speaking in full sentences of school-book French and only gradually learned to borrow French in more subtle ways that did not mark them as “lames” (Labov 1973).

More prominent religious leaders’ Islamic studies and experiences abroad both extend their linguistic repertoires and make them far more aware of borrowing and code-switching than many who have only experienced living in Dakar. Well-known religious leaders, including those whose speeches are examined below, have more experience in Dakar and are more comfortable speaking in Urban Wolof than Sëriñ Daara Ibra, although in private conversation they tend to speak the Wolof of contemporary Kaolack, which uses French vocabulary to discuss many fields but almost none of the extended code-switching so common in Urban Wolof. In addition to their education in Senegalese *majlis*, which has taught them the same “deep Wolof” register that Sëriñ Daara Ibra speaks, many prominent clerics continued their studies in Mauritanian

desert schools¹⁴ and at Al-Azhar University in Cairo. Exposed to Arabic newspapers and satellite television channels, they fluently speak Classical and Modern Standard Arabic in addition to Mauritanian and Egyptian dialects. Although Al-Azhar graduates borrow limited Arabic while speaking with non-specialist Senegalese, Al-Azhar students I have observed in Cairo replace many French loanwords with Arabic equivalents, just as Senegalese transmigrants in New York do with English. While many French loans are “integrated” (Thiam 1994) enough to persist across urban, rural, and emigrant Wolof varieties, other terms occupy a “foreign” slot that speakers fill with terms from the official language of their milieu. Yet when they return to Senegal, these Wolof speakers must switch back to the mostly Wolof-French code that most of their interlocutors understand.

In this heteroglossic linguistic context, Taalibe Baay orators draw on multiple linguistic resources to relate Islamic knowledge to contemporary situations shaped by competing regimes of knowledge and legitimacy. Enabled by multilingual education and experience, yet constrained by their audience’s limited shared linguistic repertoire, these religious specialists engage in subtle code-switching, borrowing, and glossing, refracting multiple social languages through a single, hybrid linguistic performance. In these performances, French and Arabic do not always act as monolithic wholes. Sometimes they are unmarked parts of everyday conversational registers; sometimes they stand in for civilizational binaries of Western hegemony and Islamic moral authority; and sometimes their conspicuous absence marks a shift to a weighty, deep Wolof register.

To Gloss or Not to Gloss: Moral and Political Implications

One of the most striking and widespread attributes of religious oratory I have observed is speakers’ tendency in certain registers to deliver the same content in more than one language, usually in Arabic followed by French or, less commonly, Wolof. I have never observed this practice in informal conversations, where the French term would be used if non-Islamic specialists are present and an Arabic term might be used among only Islamic specialists. Because this glossing practice does not change the utterance’s locutionary effect or literal meaning, this phenomenon only

¹⁴ In Mauritania, the equivalent to Senegalese *majlis* is called the *mahzara*, which uses similar methods except that due to the similarity between classical Arabic and the Mauritanian dialect (*Hassāniyya*), the words are not repeated in the local language.

makes sense in terms of its perlocutionary or rhetorical effect. It would be impossible to determine an oratorical utterance's range of intentions and effects. Rather, the purpose here is to describe recurring patterns demarcating the principal registers used in religious oratory and to identify some rhetorical implications of particular language practices within these registers.

All the speeches I have transcribed and analyzed here are keynote speeches from large gatherings by major male leaders in their late fifties and sixties. As mentioned above, all had spent several years studying at Al-Azhar, and all either live permanently or spend several months a year in Dakar. All have acquired a working knowledge of French, although none have studied extensively in Francophone schools. An analysis of speeches by younger, rural, or female Islamic specialists would likely reveal different language patterns, although I have observed similar linguistic practices among different categories of speakers.¹⁵ These speakers typically do not phonologically Wolofize French loanwords and are capable of almost completely removing them from certain registers, showing that they are more or less aware of the origins of the words they use, whether or not they consciously think of each particular word's origin as they use it. Most of the gloss patterns described in this section occur during segments that employ a more conversational register and address contemporary issues as opposed to the deep Wolof segments addressing issues of Islamic learning and history. When speaking about these religious issues, they draw on an extensive deep Wolof vocabulary acquired largely through their *majlis* education. Deep Wolof is used in everything from short, narrative illustrations in a more conversational conference speech to a full, single-register speech such as a *gàmmu* [*mawlid*] narrative relating the life of the Prophet Muḥammad. When discussing contemporary issues, speakers make little attempt to stick to the "pure" Wolof neologisms widespread in broadcast journalism (Ndao and Kébé 2010).

Unglossed French Terms vs. "Deep" Wolof

Well-known Taalibe Baay orators are mostly likely to use French terms where there is no widely used Wolof equivalent, although occasionally

¹⁵ Thiam (1994), for example, establishes significant variations in code-switching and borrowing by class, gender, and education among Dakar Wolof speakers. Hill (2010) discusses female Taalibe Baay leaders' rhetorical strategies.

a French term where they might have used a Wolof term merely marks a conversational register. While they do not hesitate to “borrow” from French, unlike most Urban Wolof speakers, they rarely “codeswitch” (Myers-Scotton 1992) for longer phrases or clauses. However, during certain parts of speeches, especially those relating to contemporary problems, they use French loanwords liberally. When speaking in such a conversational register, speakers are likely to use a French term without preceding it with its Arabic equivalent under one or more of the following conditions:

1. The term is widely used and therefore unmarked as a foreign term.
2. It lacks a positive moral or religious connotation.
3. It is associated with a “modern” field (mechanics, politics, bureaucracy, mass media) introduced during or since French colonialism.

When speaking in a more conversational register, orators are very likely to use French for several categories of terms. The following examples represent a smattering of un glossed French terms I recorded in religious speeches:

- Technology, science, and medicine: freiner (brake), pneus (tires), ordinateur (computer), ulcère, hypertension, ordonnance (prescription), hôpital, clinique, salle d'accouchement (maternity room)
- Temporal terms (before/after, temporal units, months), especially when involving numbers.
- Geography: most countries and cities, even Arabic-speaking ones. Possible exceptions: neighboring Mauritania (*Gànnaar*). The world (monde) in a spatial/global sense, yet the Wolofized Arabic term *àddina* (from *Ad-dunyā*) in a cosmic/moral sense.
- Numbers above ten, including years (whether Gregorian or *Hijra*), prices, distances. One to ten are often in Wolof. The number and accompanying noun agree in language: *ñàari fan* (two days) but trente-cinq jours (thirty-five days).
- Urban objects and places: building, apartment, neighborhood, floor, elevator, and accompanying ordinal numbers (deuxième étage [second floor]).
- Modern institutions and society (développement, loi, évolution, milieu, société, sondage [survey], parlement, Président de la République, domaine, marchandise, dépenser [spend], absenté, divorcer, preuve)

- Organizations (réunion, conférence, congrès, organisation, organiser, séminaires, président, secrétaire, trésorier, fédération, agenda, calendrier)
- Academics (sociologie, science politique, anthropologie, culture, intellectuels, thèse, lire); disciplines long established in the Islamic world can go either way (histoire/tārīkh; géographie/jughrafiyyah; philosophie/falsafah).
- French terms well integrated into Wolof (reposer [to rest], efforts, souhaiter [wish], garanti, lettre, répétition, rôle, reconnaître [recognize], respecter).
- Connecting words (parce que; sinon; cependant; mais; en plus; tu vois).
- Phrases of foreign origin (société Islamique, libération de la femme).

In any of these cases in conversational Wolof, the French term would be at least as unobtrusive as a Wolof equivalent. As Islamic orators by default use far fewer French words than most urban Senegalese, using a French word where a Wolof word would serve just as well may have ideological overtones. Although most uses of French words are non-purposive, the use of French after a very long stretch of deep Wolof often occurs during moments when speakers are appropriating or criticizing certain moral values from an Islamic position. There are several possible causes, including linguistic ideologies ascribing French negative moral connotations and the fact that modern social ills and secular ideologies are better known by their French names while religious values are taken from Arabic texts. For example, a speaker at a 2010 conference in Kaolack on “Women in Islamic Society,” after an extended passage without any substantive French terms, suddenly spoke of the project of women’s liberation:

Waaye nag ba Lislāam ñēwee, Yàlla ci boppam wàcce Alquraan libéerer jigéen ñi jox drapeau moomu Yóñent u Yàlla Muḥammad ṣallā Allāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam. Damay wax ne mashrū‘ bu mag ci liberté-i jigéen kii nga xam ne moo indiwoon drapeau mooy Yóñent u Yàlla Muḥammad ṣallā Allāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam.

But when Islam came, God himself sent down the Qur’ān and liberated women and gave that banner to the Prophet Muḥammad, may God pray over him and bless him. I say that the great project of women’s liberty, the one who brought the banner was the Prophet Muḥammad, may God pray over him and bless him.¹⁶

¹⁶ Talk by Abdul Baaqi Dem, Lewna Ñaseen Kaolack, June 12, 2010.

The speaker refracts the language of liberal feminism through a speech that describes “feminist movements” as part of a well-financed Western plot against Islam. Such hybridity is absent from deep Wolof passages commenting on classical texts or dealing with solemn questions set apart from contemporary politics. For example, during a sober apostrophe to Baay Ñas that culminated a speech at a *gàmmu* (*mawlid*) dedicated to Ñas, Baay’s son Baaba Lamin stated:¹⁷

Ñoo daje fii, di la fàtteliku, ngir mën a jëfandikoo lim daan dénk

We gather here to remember you, *in order to* be able to use what he [God] entrusted.

By contrast, even conservative speakers in a conversational register would certainly use more French words, for example:

Ñoo daje fii, di la fàtteliku (or souvenir), pour ñu mën a utiliser lim daan dénk.

Such a weighty moment called for language set apart from everyday banter and thus in a deep Wolof register that excludes French loanwords.

Unglossed Arabic

Orators’ use of Arabic contrasts in several ways from their use of French. Whereas they generally use French only in short words and phrases, they most often use Arabic in full sentences, opening each speech with a long, highly formalized, and untranslated Arabic prologue and then liberally punctuating their speeches with quotes from scripture and poetry that they then translate into deep Wolof. This prologue is obligatory and takes the same form as the prologue of any Islamic text.¹⁸ It sometimes ends with an excuse for switching into Wolof, “the local dialect,” for the

¹⁷ Annual *Gàmmu* of Tayba Ñaseen, Baay Ñas’s birthplace, July 2009.

¹⁸ Prologues to speeches and texts are in highly classical Arabic and begin with “In the Name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful” and continue with prayers on the Prophet and his followers, etc. Whereas textual prologues end with “*‘ammā ba‘d*” (“as for what follows”), a speech’s prologue ends with a switch into Wolof and a (partly Arabic) greeting to the audience (for example, “*Mbokk yi, as-salāmu ‘alaykum*” (“Fellow [Muslims], *peace be upon you*”).

sake of their audience. The transition to Wolof is usually marked by the phrase “*mbokk yi*” (fellow [Muslims/disciples]) and a formalized Wolof greeting to the audience and dignitaries. Also contrary to their use of French, which is rarely glossed into Wolof or Arabic, speakers gloss all but a few well-known Arabic terms and quotations. The short list of Arabic terms not requiring a gloss comprises almost exclusively Islamic terms generally known to the audience and having no well-known French or Wolof equivalent. Griots tend to be even more conservative than Islamic specialists about prohibiting Arabic terms from formal deep Wolof oratory. When relaying a patron’s speech, they typically translate even well-known Arabic words into a Wolof equivalent (for example, rendering *zāhir* (apparent) as “*luy feeñ*” and *bāṭin* (inner) as “*luy nēbbu*”).

As I have discussed, few Arabic words are needed to discuss Islamic subjects because many commonly used Islamic terms have etymologically unrelated or significantly modified Wolof equivalents. These include Muslim (*Jullit*), prayer (*jullit*); fast (n: *koor*, v: *woor*); the names of four of the five daily prayers; a shaykh (*sēriñ*),¹⁹ the names of the Islamic feasts (*korite*, *tabaski*); mosque (*jàkka*); Qur’ānic interpretation [*tafsīr*] (*piri*), to interpret (*firi*); and Prophet (*Yónent*). Additionally, many other Islamic terms significantly alter the pronunciation or meaning of many words of Arabic origin: Qur’ānic school (*daara*, from *dār al-Qur’ān* [house of the Qur’ān]); tablet (*àlluwa*, from *al-lūh*); religious association (*daayira*, from *dā’ira* [circle]); imam (*ilimaan*, from *āl-’Imam*); friday mosque (*jumaa*, from *masjid al-jumu’ah* [Friday mosque]);²⁰ Sufi (*suufiyànke*); pilgrimage (*àjji*, from *hajj*); pilgrim (*Allaaji*, from *Al-Hājj* [m]; *Ajaa*, from *Al-Hājjah* [f]); religion (*diine*, from *dīn*); blessing (*barke*, from *barakah*); reward (*tuyaaba*, from *thawāb*); *sikkar* ([to repeat] the name of God; also a meeting where the *sikkar* is chanted, from *dhikr Allāh*, “mentioning God”; *tudde Yàlla* [to name God] in “pure Wolof”). The handful of Arabic terms that more or less maintain their Arabic form are mostly specialized Islamic/Sufi terms (*wazīfah* [*wasifa*], *wird*, *ziyārah* [*siyaare*], *darajah*, *maqāmah*, *tarbiyah*).²¹

¹⁹ This term has many meanings, only partially overlapping with the Arabic word *shaykh*, referring to an Islamic leader. In religious oratory, however, it has roughly the same meaning as *shaykh*.

²⁰ The term more often used in Arabic for Friday mosque is *masjid jāmi’*.

²¹ “Islam” (*Lislaam*) itself is “bivalent” (Woolard 1998), potentially deriving from French “l’Islam” or Arabic “al-’Islām.” Some speakers maintain the glottal stop, differentiating it from the French.

Some classical Arabic disciplines have conventional French glosses that orators often provide, for example, *naḥw* (grammaire) and *ṣarf* (conjugaison). However, orators may leave classical Arabic disciplines and terms of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) unglossed despite their obscurity (for example, *iddah*, *mīrāth*) if their exact meaning is not essential to the author's point. For example, one speaker, narrating that people from around the world came to Baay seeking mystical knowledge that only he could dispense, said:

*Jàngsiwuñ Al-Qurʿān; wutsiwuñ xam-xamu fiqh; jàngsiwuñ naḥw; jàngsiwuñ balāghah; jàngsiwuñ bayānī; jàngsiwuñ tafsīru l-Qurʿān.*²²

They didn't come to study *Al-Qurʿān*; they didn't come seeking knowledge of *fiqh* [jurisprudence]; they didn't come to study *naḥw* [grammar]; they didn't come to study *balāghah* [rhetoric]; they didn't come to study *bayānī* [diction]; they didn't come to study *tafsīru l-Qurʿān* [interpretation of the Qurʿān].

Here it is less important that the audience recognize all these disciplines than that they understand that none of them is Sufism. However, when emphasizing Baay Ņas's knowledge in various classical disciplines, the same speaker lists Ņas's books, in each case listing the Arabic discipline alongside a French gloss or Wolof explanation. In short, aside from a small number of widely known Islamic terms, speakers must gloss any Arabic terms they want their audience to understand. Arabic terms are therefore rarely used for convenience. The opposite is the case for French terms, which speakers use primarily where they provide the most convenient way to communicate with the audience.

Gloss Patterns and Linguistic Hierarchy

I have encountered the following distinct gloss patterns in Taalibe Baay religious oratory, in order of prevalence:

1. Arabic–French
2. Arabic–Wolof
3. Wolof–French
4. Wolof–Arabic or French–Arabic (uncommon)

²² Mustafaa Géy, Gammu Baay in Jëppël, Dakar, 2004.

Each of these patterns accompanies distinct connotations and uses. By far the most common single-phrase gloss pattern is that of Arabic to French, followed by Arabic to Wolof and, less commonly, Wolof to French. In the vast majority of cases, then, the gloss proceeds from the language more associated with Islamic knowledge and authority to the language less associated with it: Arabic, Wolof, then French. In the few cases where Arabic comes second, this may be an inadvertent effect of the habit of using the French term. French is almost never glossed to Wolof, and indeed, far more common than all glosses together is the use of unglossed French terms. However, in deep Wolof passages sharply differentiated from contemporary informal discourse, terms widely understood to be of French origin almost completely disappear. For example, highly stylized *gàmmu* (*mawlid*) narratives stay from start to finish in a deep Wolof register, only using words of French origin that have completely lost any foreign implication (such as “*làmp*” [light]).

Speakers employ two ways to separate religious speech from conversational speech that ordinarily privileges French as a neutral lexical repository. The first, encountered above, is to replace French terms with Wolof equivalents, which may mark a deep Wolof register if used consistently. The second, especially prevalent when discussing more contemporary problems in a more conversational register, is to precede the French term with an Arabic equivalent, thus demoting the ordinarily unquestioned French term to the status of a gloss. Gloss patterns clearly privilege Arabic over Wolof and Wolof over French as a legitimate source of morally authoritative knowledge. Speakers are more likely to go to the effort of inserting an Arabic word followed by a gloss if the term has some moral, religious, or social implication, thus suggesting an association between such matters and Islamic knowledge/authority.

Distantly following Arabic–French, the second most common gloss pattern is Arabic–Wolof. Some of these glosses resemble Arabic–French glosses in replacing an expected French word with an Arabic word, except that they avoid the French altogether (in this case, the French word “*famille*”):

Ci turu *‘ā’ilah* *bi*, *njabot gi*. . . .

On behalf of the *family*, *the family*. . . .²³

²³ Sērīñ Maamun Ibrayima Ñas, *Gàmmu Baay in Tayba Ñaseen*, 2004.

However, more often than to replace commonly used French terms, Arabic–Wolof glosses involve specialized Islamic terms that are not ordinarily named in French and are often closer to an explanation or definition than a mere gloss.

kooku s̄ira la, muy jaar-jaari yonent bi.

that [book] is *s̄ira*, that is, the *doings of the Prophet*.²⁴

In short, speakers in Taalibe Baay meetings tend to favor two main categories of Arabic terms: replacements for commonly used French terms, often those with positive moral or religious connotations; and specialized vocabulary from Islamic disciplines. In either case the Arabic term is usually glossed—in the first case into French and in the second into either Wolof or French. The habit of using Arabic terms first and then glossing them into more commonly understood French or Wolof extends occasionally to less morally charged adverbs and conjunctions.

Glosses follow several syntactic patterns. The most common is to append it to the Arabic word or the clause without a conjunction:

Mu hijra, immigrer ba ñew Libie ak Tunisie.

He *immigrated*, immigrated to *Libya* and *Tunisia*. [*hijra*: religious connotation, recalls the Prophet Muḥammad’s *hijra*.]²⁵

mu mel ni benn sharif video—film cinema walla film vidéo

like a *video cassette*—a *cinema film* or a *video film*²⁶

Qānūn al-Faransi—Constitution bu France

*French law—constitution of France*²⁷

Occasionally the Arabic and French or Wolof gloss is joined by a “that is” or an “and” in Wolof instead of being simply appended:

qismu l-‘ālī, mooy enseignement supérieure

advanced division, that is, *higher education*²⁸

²⁴ Mustafaa Géy, Gammu Baay in Jëppël, Dakar, 2004.

²⁵ Mustafaa Géy, Gammu Baay in Jëppël, Dakar, 2004.

²⁶ Muḥammad al-ʿAmīn (Baaba Lamin) Ñas, Gammu Baay, Tayba Ñaseen, 2005.

²⁷ Bashiir Ñas, conference in Dakar, 2005.

²⁸ Mustafaa Géy, Gammu Baay in Jëppël, Dakar, 2004.

Ay riḥla-am nag aki tukkéem

His travels and his travels²⁹

nit u Qānūn la, mooy nit u loi

he's a person of law, that is, a person of law³⁰

Occasionally, if the glossed term occupies a different syntactical place in Arabic than in French or Wolof, it may be placed in different parts of the sentence. For example, the word “even” in Arabic (*ḥattā*) and French (*même*) precedes the noun or clause but in Wolof (*sax*) follows it:

ḥattā ba lenn ci ñoom sax . . .

such that even one of them even . . .³¹

ḥattā bu de ab tubaab sax . . .

even if it's a European even . . .³²

Même *туру баауам вим àмме sax, даф сий гэ́нн дем си туру жё́к-кё́рам. . . . Ḥattā sant baayam wi nga xam ne sax mooy cosaanam. . . .*

Even the name of her father that she possesses even, she leaves behind and goes to the name of her husband. . . . Even her father's surname even that is her heritage. . . .³³

Note that in the last example, the first clause begins with the ubiquitous French word “*même*” (“even”) and ends with the Wolof gloss (*sax*), while the second sentence repeats the same pattern but with the Arabic equivalent (*ḥattā*) instead of the French. This order, placing the habitual French word first and deliberate Arabic word second, is much less common. In each of these cases, the Wolof word (*sax*) is preceded by a semantically superfluous Arabic word (*ḥattā*), which occupies the same syntactic position as the French term, suggesting that the Arabic term was specifically inserted to displace the expected French term. This construction demonstrates that

²⁹ Mustafaa Géy, *Gàmmu Baay in Jëppël*, Dakar, 2004.

³⁰ Bashiiru Ñas, conference in Dakar, 2005.

³¹ Bashiiru Ñas, conference in Dakar, 2005. In the same speech: “**Even** those who went so far even as to say . . .” (“*Ḥattā ñi nga xam ne dem nañ sax ba ne . . .*”)

³² Baaba Lamin Ñas, *Gàmmu Baay, Tayba Ñaseen*.

³³ Bashiiru Ñas, conference in Dakar, 2005.

Arabic often specifically serves to replace an unwanted French term, even if the term in question has no moral implication.

When an Arabic term follows its Wolof equivalent, its role is usually to supplement the Wolof word with a more precise Arabic meaning for the benefit of those with some knowledge of Arabic:

Danaa leen defal synthèse ci diggante—‘alāqa Baay ak waa Naygīriyā.

I will give you a synopsis of the relationship—relationship between Baay and the people of Nigeria. [“Synopsis” (synthèse): commonly used word with no moral connotation; Nigeria: Arabic because their long-standing relationship is based on Islam, no need for gloss because it resembles the French equivalent; “Relationship” (*diggante*, ‘alāqa): common Wolof term, Arabic has moral/religious connotations.]³⁴

One of the most interesting and rare patterns is Wolof–French, which may seem counterintuitive as it appears to gloss a native term into a foreign one. During a formal *gammu* speech, one son of Baay Ñas used the rarely used Wolof word “*kuppe*,” immediately appending its French equivalent, “football.” This pattern allowed the speaker to remain in a deep Wolof register while making himself intelligible by glossing into conversational Wolof.

Far less common than Arabic–Wolof or Arabic–French is the French–Arabic pattern, which reverses the linguistic hierarchy. Cases I have observed may be double takes where the speaker uses a common French word by habit and then backtracks to give the Arabic equivalent:

famille—usra Ñaseen.

The Ñaseen family—family.

Kooku conjugaison la, muy şarf.

That one [book] is conjugation, that is, şarf.³⁵

Despite this handful of exceptions, the vast majority of glosses move clearly in the direction of Arabic–Wolof–French, or from the language of Islamic learning through the language whose “deep” speech is often associated with Islamic authorities to the language associated with colonialism, the state, and modern secular pursuits. This general tendency

³⁴ Mustafaa Géy, *Gammu Baay in Jëppël*, Dakar, 2004.

³⁵ Both quotes come from Mustafaa Géy’s speech at the *Gammu Baay in Jëppël*, Dakar, 2004.

of upholding Arabic and Islamic knowledge in relation to French and its associated fields of knowledge is the background against which one can make sense of patterns that go against this tendency.

An Example of Hybridity and Hegemony

The patterns enumerated above are consistent with religious leaders' general tendency to privilege Islam in moral and religious matters while accommodating an environment shaped by a plurality of forms of knowledge and authority. Yet what do we make of situations where speakers break out of these patterns, privileging French where Wolof terms would be better understood, or vice versa? I explain these departures in terms of what Bakhtin (1981) calls "hybrid" utterances, which refract multiple voices and points of view through a single utterance, achieving an effect beyond what could be achieved with a straightforward statement of fact. When favoring French terms over Wolof terms, speakers often appropriate a "modern," "Western," "scientific," or "secular" voice to support an Islamic position. For example, speakers sometimes invoke scientific findings or human rights discourses to support Islam's rationality and justice and perhaps to point out modernity's or the West's failure to live up to the values they teach. Speakers often borrow a French term for negative moral attributes while using Arabic terms for positive attributes, thus associating decadence with the West and/or modernity and morality with Islam.

This section focuses on a speech given by Ustaas Bashiir Ñas, a well-known Taalibe Baay Arabic teacher who studied, like many other Taalibe Baay scholars, at Al-Azhar University in Cairo. He delivered this speech at a daytime conference in Dakar during Ramadan of 2005 hosted by a son of Baay Ñas, Maamun Ñas, on the theme of "The Woman and Development in Islam." Daytime conferences during Ramadan often have such "current issues" ("*actualités*") as their topic. Bashiir Ñas's speech illustrates deviations from the standard language patterns particularly well because, like many such conference speeches, it switches between deep Wolof narratives, direct quotations from the Qur'ān and other Arabic sources, more conversational religious exhortations, and politically charged discussions of Islam and modernity.³⁶

The teacher's talk followed a shorter speech in French by a medical doctor, who justified his use of French saying, in Wolof:

³⁶ The speech consists of around two hours of content worthy of discussion in its own right, although such a discussion must wait for another occasion.

Dama bëggoon ñu may ma tuuti ñu wax ci baatu Français, parce que du ñàkk ñu jël ko Internet te item journalistes yi pour ñu mën koo topp.

I would like to be allowed to speak in the French language a little, because it [the conference] will certainly be taken to the Internet and also so that the journalists can follow it.

Giving the media something to report is among the primary purposes of any large meeting's opening segment, which functions as a point of engagement between the religious community, the state, the public sphere, and other entities. The main segment that follows is directed more specifically to the religious community. Bashir Ñas's talk followed this French speech. As is typical of talks given by Islamic specialists on Islamic topics, he began with an Arabic prologue, in this case lasting one minute (much shorter than the prologues at larger religious events such as a *gàmmu/mawlid*), including the standard prayer on the Prophet, before switching to Wolof to greet the audience and expound on his topic.

The speaker introduced the topic of the conference using two French words placed in a Wolof clause—"the matter of women and development in Islam" ("*mbiram femme ak développement ci biir Lislam*"). Over the past decade, "Women and Islam" has become one of the most common topics for Taalibe Baay and other Islamic conferences due to a number of local and global factors. Many of these conferences are organized or supported by womens' disciple associations, and a confluence of growing political attention to Muslim women and the focus of international institutions on "gender and development" have raised the profile of this question and led religious leaders both to respond to claims that Islam is oppressive to women and to appropriate "Western" discourses of liberty and equality to support Islam as a solution (Hill 2010).

Throughout his speech, Ñas favored Arabic words when expressing concepts of religious or positive moral significance, using them first and then following them where necessary with French or Wolof glosses:

Kaayleen ñu jël . . . niqāt yi, tomb yi ñiy teg ci ħarf yi.

Come and let's take . . . the dots, the dots that we place on the letters. [*ħarf* (letter, Wolof: *araf*): no need for gloss; *niqāt* (dots): evokes Arabic and religious texts.]

Ci kilifaab kanīsa bi la bokk, église bi.

He was one of the leaders of the church, the church. [There is no well-known Wolof equivalent.]

The Wolof portion of the speech began with a relatively high concentration of French terms as the speaker discussed what Western sociologists had said about the position of women in the modern West. When narrating modern, urban situations he used French terms liberally.

Although he sometimes used French to refer to legal and political terms known in the Senegalese context, he privileged Arabic terms in many places where ordinary conversation would call for a French term:

Nit u Qānūn la, mooy nit u loi.

He [an Arab lawyer] is a person of law, that is, a person of law.

Al-Qānūn al-Faransi, Constitution bu France.

French law, Constitution of France.

His source on French and English laws concerning women, which argued that the West has historically been less liberal toward women than Islam, was an Arabic book, whose technical terms he used even when a well-known French equivalent existed. Thus, following his Arabic source, he referred to the British House of Lords in Arabic (without gloss) as “*Majlis al-Lūrdāt*.”

The speaker’s choice of language makes clear genealogies of academic knowledge. When referring to Arabic works, whether discussing Islamic history or European and American law and politics, he tends to use more Arabic terms, whether or not he is quoting directly or speaking of religious topics. When referring to Western sociological research (whether French or American), the speaker uses French terms. Interestingly, these segments use not only French technical terms but also French connecting words uncommon in religious discourse.

Moo tax ñuy sonder kër yi waaye itam di sonder mbedd mi ndax mbedd mi itam parti la ci kër gi.

That’s why they survey houses but also survey the streets, because the street is part of the house.

Soo analyser-woon ca biiram, sociologues yi ñu ne, perte la loo xam ne su fekke bim la koy wax mat na 40 kilo, 50 kilo, boo ko tegoon ci balance léegi matatul 10 kilo. Et puis dessous nga ko, maanaam, ñàkk na yaakaar ci yaw. . . . benn sorte examiné la.

If you were to analyze deep down, the sociologists say, it's a loss that, [it's as if] if one were to tell you [something] weighs 40 kilos, 50 kilos, if you placed it on the scale now it weighs not even 10 kilos. And then you lowered her. . . . It's a kind of test.

During this portion of the talk, focusing on how the West has enslaved women while claiming to liberate them, Ñas used a large proportion of French connecting words and general, non-specialized vocabulary, his usage of French resembling that of Francophone-educated Dakar dwellers. However, even here he preceded many French terms, especially those with some positive religious or moral implications, with their Arabic equivalents. In many cases, rather than gloss a term immediately, he would use two parallel clauses, placing the Arabic term in one clause and then the French term in the next:

Amut haqq i toxal moomeelu alalam mu jëm ci keneen. Amut droit ci tayle alalam.

She has no right to transfer ownership of her possessions to someone else; she has no right to mortgage her wealth. (Note the Wolof legal terms.)

Ci 18me [siècle], 1805, Qānuun al-Biritānī: ci Àngalteer fii, seen loi yi, luñ wax?

In the 18th [century], 1805, British Law, in England here, their laws, what do they say?

He referred to “history” (an ancient discipline) with an Arabic-French gloss—“*tārīkh—histoire*”—but the modern field of “sociology” simply by its French name (*sociologie*). Note in the first of these two examples that he uses deep Wolof legal terms that he likely learned while studying Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) texts in a *majlis*.

He occasionally used a phrase combining an unmarked French term with a more specialized Arabic term:

dañoó génn ci loi-wu “tabī‘ah,” loi-wu nature bi.

they have departed from the law of nature, the law of nature.

But when using terms of religious significance, he avoided the French whenever possible, instead glossing Arabic into Wolof:

jigéen mbindéef la moo xam ne amul rūh, amul bakkan.

woman [before Islam] is a creation that has no soul, has no soul.

By contrast, when making a negative pronouncement about the West or other cultures (even Muslims or pre-Islamic Arabs), the speaker often used French terms, turning these normally neutral French words into ideological weapons:

dañoó jàpp ne jigéen benn outil la.

they take woman for a mere tool.

Léegi ndax jigéen war na jàng walla waruta jàng, ndax . . . ? Ignorance!

Now, should women study or not study, should . . . ? Ignorance!

*Comportement yu . . . góori jullit ñi baaxut envers jigéen ñi jullit ñi. . . .
Seen mentalité, seen comportement la, waaye Yàlla waxu ko.*

The behavior of . . . Muslim men toward Muslim women is not good. . . .
It's their mentality, their behavior, but God didn't say it.

Tubaab façon bi ñuy traiter, maltraïter jigéen,

Europeans' way of treating, mistreating women.

pas pour ngeen taaj ñu, ñu doon ay marchandise . . .

not for you to set us out to be merchandise.

Exploitation ba jāhiliyah gēmoon ne moom lañ war a def jigéen. . . .

The exploitation that the jāhiliyah [pre-Islamic Arabs] believed they needed to do to women. . . .

Interestingly, the passage containing the highest frequency of French terms had similar moral connotations and took place in an urban

environment, but the object of its criticism was not the West but the speaker's Egyptian neighbor in Cairo whose wife was giving birth the same day the speaker's wife gave birth. The neighbor yelled at God when he found out his wife had had a girl:

Clinique bi yaayam accoucher, dañu toog. Maa ngi ànd ak benn dèk-kandoor ci immeuble bi, man premier étage laa nekk, moom mu dèkk deuxième. . . . Man docteur bi génn, ne ma, félicitations. . . . Ba ci tuuti, moom itam, génn ci moom, salle d'accouchement. . . .

In the clinic where [my son's] mother gave birth, we sat. I went with a neighbor in the building—I lived on the first floor, he lived on the second. . . . The doctor came out and said "congratulations," . . . a little later, he came out to him [the neighbor] too, in the delivery room. . . .

Some of these French loanwords are names for modern things in cities and therefore would normally be in French, yet the passage as a whole is in a contemporary urban register that favors French terms where Wolof terms would normally be used in a religious speech ("gave birth," "congratulations"). His greatest scorn is reserved for colonialism, Orientalism, overly Westernized Senegalese, and liberal critics of Islam who fabricate lies about Islam oppressing women. These passages are full of French terms, even ones whose Wolof equivalents are more commonly used:

Orientalistes yii ak occident dañuy blamer Lismaam, di wax ne Lismaam diine boo xam ne même ci religion bi dañuy dóor jigéen ñi.

Orientalists and the West accuse Islam, saying that Islam is a religion [Arabic root] that, even in the religion [that is religious texts, as opposed to custom], they beat women.

A formal speech that sought to avoid French could have easily made a similar point without any of these French words. It is especially interesting that he first uses the universally understood Wolof word for "religion" and then the uncommonly used French word, iconically depicting a Western voice to represent false accusations against Islam.

When reporting a conversation between Baay Ñas and the Catholic first president of Senegal, Léopold Sédar Senghor, the speaker contrasts the latter's voice to that of the former not only by having Senghor use more French words but in ascribing to him drawn-out, French-style guttural *r*'s:

[Baay:] “Lenn rekk a la dese: duggal ci Lislamm.” Mu ne ko “Sëriñ bi, man am naa diine, te yeen seen diine bi dangay am ay jabarr yu barrri. Te man benn jabarr rrekk doy na ma—Colette—Xanaa ab ak ñaarri maîtresses.” Tu vois?

[Baay says:] “You lack only one thing: enter Islam.” He [Senghor] said: “Sëriñ, I have a rreligion. And in your rreligion, you have a lot of wives. As for me, one wife is sufficient—Colette—that is, one with two mis-trresses.” [Speaker:] You see?

While not heavy on French words, this passage couples a depiction of Wolof spoken with a heavy French accent—typical among urban non-Wolof with a Francophone education³⁷—with the presumably French vice of the “maîtresse,” aligning the overly Europeanized former president and perhaps even Christianity with Western moral depravity.

Sometimes a single sentence describes virtuous people or attributes with an Arabic term and vices with a French term:

Kuy xas jigéen juy séy, joo xam ne muḥṣnah la, . . . nga ne “Ajaa foo dëkk,” mu naan la “lu ma joteek yaw ba nga di laaj fu ma dëkk?” rekk nga jàpp ne kii femme bu vulgaire la.

Anyone who puts down a married woman, who is a lawfully wedded woman [positive moral connotation], . . . who says ‘Ajaa, where do you live?’ she replies ‘What business do I have with you that you should ask me where I live?’ has taken this woman for an indecent woman [negative moral connotation].

Here not only the negative attribute is in French but the accompanying word “woman” too. Perhaps most strikingly, the speaker appropriates the West’s terms in passages that describe how Western society devalues, objectifies, and enslaves women:

³⁷ Speaking Wolof with guttural *r*’s is a form of “interference” (Haugen 1956) common among educated Dakar urbanites, especially those of non-Wolof backgrounds. Television advertisements often feature Wolof voices that not only use guttural *r*’s but pronounce Wolof according to French phonology, for example, not distinguishing long and short vowels, emphasizing the last syllable of a phrase, and nasalizing vowels followed by *n* or *m* (for example, pronouncing the Wolof surname Sàmb as if it were French Sambe). The guttural *r* may have entered into Wolof due to the prestige of French, yet speakers whom I have asked about their guttural *r*’s seemed unaware of it.

Libération *bu dof*. Loolu mooy liberté *bu dof*. *Moom la tubaab yi indi.*

An insane liberation. That's an insane freedom. That's what the Europeans brought.

Jigéen, góor dafa jàppoon ne daffee war a nekk rekk, pur ñu di ci am satisfaction, *dégg nga, biologique, dégg nga, sèxe rekk, laysa ʔillā.*

Women, men decided that they should just be there for them to have biological, you see, satisfaction, just sex, nothing more.

In the last phrase of this last quote he switches from criticizing Western reductionism using the West's terms to moral condemnation from an Islamic standpoint.

The speaker leans toward Arabic to speak about church-related topics and philosophies, even though these things in Senegal are associated more with European epistemological traditions (a tendency that may be influenced by the fact that he is relying on Arabic texts):

Philosophe *yi ak rijālu l-kanīsa, mooy nit ñi nga xam ne kilifaay* eglise *bi ak philosophes* *yi, . . .*

Philosophers and church men, that is, people who are church leaders and philosophers, . . .

Mafāhīm yim fi fekkoon yépp, idéologie-āt yim fi fekkoon yépp, nga xam ne noonu lañ doon traïter jigéen, . . .

All the notions that preceded it [Islam], all the idéologie-s [French word, Arabic suffix, used as a gloss for “notions”] that preceded it, which treated women like that, . . .

As the speech progressed, the speaker switched away from this mixed political/academic register into registers more typical of formal religious oratory involving direct quotes from Arabic sources, deep Wolof translations and elaborations, and more conversational Wolof using ordinary French loanwords. Translations of classical Arabic narratives completely dropped French terms, whereas narratives of more recent events took on a more conversational, mixed Wolof. The switch from deep Wolof to conversational Wolof, marked partially by more French terms, shifted attention from a sacred space-time to a modern context shared with the audience.

Thus, in the narrative of Islam's founding, he quoted the Qur'an and other sources in Arabic, translating them into pure Wolof:

bam ne ko: 'iqra'—mā 'anā bi-qāri'in! la ko wax: jàngal! Mu ne ko duma jàng sëkk! Mu jox ko mu jàng.

when he said: *Read!—I cannot read!* he [the Angel Jibrīl] told him: Read! He [Muhammad] told him, I can't read a thing! He gave it to him to read.

In contrast, the follow-up explanation to the classical narrative related it to the modern topic of women's roles in Islam, using several French words that are common in contemporary conversation:

Jigéen a njëkk a joxe alalam ci Lislaam: Xaadijatu moo njëkk a financer Lislaam . . . ndax multi-milliardaire la woon.

A woman was the first to give her possessions to Islam: Khadijah was the first to finance Islam . . . because she was a multi-billionaire.

He followed the same pattern in the story of Sayyidinā 'Umar killing his daughter before converting to Islam. He began with pure Wolof and some Arabic during the narrative:

Booba tuubagul, mu ngi ci jāhiliyya. . . Mu ne dafa am doomam bu jigéen, bam am juróom-ñeenti at.

At that point, he had not yet converted—he was in pre-Islamic ignorance. . . He says that he had a daughter, up until she was nine years old.

The use of Wolof to tell the daughter's age clearly marks this as deep Wolof, as conversational Wolof almost always gives ages in French. During the follow-up, he related the story to his audience in the second-person singular, repeating some of the same details but this time using French words:

Waaye, imaginer-el, am sa doom bam am neuf ans.

But imagine, you have your child until she is nine years old.

Another story from Islamic history follows the same pattern, telling of a man whose only possession was having memorized verses from

the Qurʾān who was told that his dowry would be teaching his wife the Qurʾān. The narrative was entirely in deep Wolof, while the conclusion relating the moral of the story not only shifted to conversational Wolof but appropriated Western discourses on women's education:

Kooku, scolarisation bu ñuy wax ci les filles, xanaa kookoo ci njëkk?

That man, the schooling that they're talking about for the girls, might we say that he was the first?

This commentary leaps away from the classical Arabic and deep Wolof gloss that preceded it to use not only the French word "filles" (girls) but its French definite article. This hybrid utterance seizes a liberal Western voice to undermine Western attempts to school Muslims about women's oppression.

Conclusion

This speech demonstrates the importance of understanding loanwords and instances of code-switching within a heteroglossic context. In most cases, French terms do not interrupt an otherwise pure Wolof utterance but rather mark the whole utterance as part of a conversational register and contemporary context. Bashiir Ñas's use of such French terms indexed neither hegemonic foreign powers nor the speaker's alignment with them, but rather the speaker's and attendees' shared relationship to contemporary questions. Yet the speaker still distinguished such conversational segments from everyday speech by replacing many French terms with Arabic terms, even though most of these French terms persisted as glosses. Placing the Arabic term first, especially those having positive moral significance, the speaker demoted the French term to the role of gloss, rhetorically anchoring contemporary concerns in traditions of Islamic knowledge and moral authority. Privileging Arabic when describing virtues is a reminder that these concepts are not rooted in Western knowledge regimes even if the speaker needs French terms to communicate with the audience.

In other segments of this speech, an absence of French terms indexed not resistance against Western hegemony but a shift to specialized oratorical registers associated with Islamic knowledge. As we saw earlier, not all Wolof speakers can speak such "deep Wolof," and Islamic specialists' majlis education gives them a particularly strong pedagogical

grounding in discussing Islamic texts and topics in deep Wolof. As other scholars have noted, Wolof speakers tend to align Wolof as a whole with Islam (Swigart 1994) and even to consider it to be similar to Arabic (Irvine 1989). This association may stem largely from pervasive Wolof discussions on Islamic topics, most notably in the form of oratory. However, it is important to remember that all widely known Taalibe Baay orators can quote extensively from Arabic texts, which they then gloss into deep Wolof and then most often relate to contemporary concerns using a more conversational Wolof. Even lesser known leaders who had not studied Arabic spend considerable energy memorizing Arabic texts and their Wolof gloss in order to be able to speak authoritatively about Islam.

Islamic oratory among Taalibe Baay, and probably among other Senegalese Muslims to the same degree, is therefore deeply heteroglossic through juxtaposing multiple registers. Equally important, speakers invoke multiple registers and voices in hybrid constructions. While many French terms merely mark a conversational register and do not stand out in themselves as foreign, other terms are ideologically marked with either positive or negative connotations. When speakers invoke “Western” values such as freedom and equality, less ideologically marked terms often enter into their discourse as well, suggesting that a Western voice has materialized to be appropriated and undermined in support of an Islamic position. Such hybrid constructions make present globally powerful discourses—for example, in one speaker’s words, those of “feminist movements” backed by “big organizations that are international and have a lot of money”³⁸—and wrest these powerful discourses away from the West. Projects to bring about liberty and equality, such hybrid discourses insist, can only succeed if situated within Islamic epistemology and morality.

My purpose in focusing on language use in religious oratory has been to draw attention to an important aspect of the larger question of how religious figures perform religious authority in relation to competing yet mutually constitutive institutions and knowledge regimes. These religious authorities seek neither to purify Islam from foreign influences nor to liberalize Islam to fit into a modern, secular world. Rather, they engage in a conversation with multiple knowledge regimes, appropriating liberal discourses while simultaneously resisting the hegemony of liberal institutions and secular assumptions by emphasizing Islam’s transcendent

³⁸ “*Ay organismes yu mag ñoo xam ne international lañu, bare xalis.*” Abdul Baaqi Dem, Lewna Ñaseen Kaolack, June 12, 2010.

authority. Linguistic hybridity is thus an aspect of a more general hybrid subjectivity informed by an ethos of pragmatic engagement that does not refuse all things “modern,” “Western,” and “secular.” Speakers thus uphold the ultimate legitimacy of Islamic knowledge, authority, and community while acknowledging the practical importance of multiple sources of knowledge.

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