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Research Methodologies in Urban Wolof Studies: A Critical Review of the Literature and Suggestion for New Analytical Perspectives

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Abstract

The aim of this review is to offer a reconceptualization of urban Wolof, the language of millions of Senegalese in Senegal and abroad, in the light of the translanguaging theory. Whereas most of the Urban Wolof literature is principally limited to how this languaging form is spoken in Senegal, the present study considers the effects of mobility on urban Wolof by establishing a correlation between transmigration and translanguaging. Going beyond the confines of Senegal, this investigation examines how the Senegalese diasporans engage in their daily translanguaging practices, as they move across borders, in their capacity as mobile multilingual transmigrants. The review offers a more speaker-centred stance, a sort of bottom-up approach to language, the objective being to move away from the a priori assumptions that the urban Wolophone shuttles between languages or codes, and away from the rigidity of code-based theoretical approaches through which scholars have thus far examined urban Wolof. As such, a more decolonised approach in terms of participatory data collection and analysis is now more than ever in order. And this endeavour should be facilitated by the affordances of the ethnographic gaze of an in-group member.

Keywords: Urban Wolof, translanguaging, codeswitching, codemixing, transmigration, linguistic ethnography

Introduction

In the scholarship, Urban Wolof (UW) has, for the most part, up until now, been viewed through the code-based approach of language mixing. In this review, I will endeavour to survey the different methodologies thus far used in UW studies and attempt to bridge the gap between the latter and the “unitary view” of translanguaging (García et al., 2018, p. 8), which could potentially constitute a solid analytical tool to examine UW. There is a considerable body of research on UW, where the Senegalese urbanites’ speech has been the object of scrutiny. The Senegalese city-dwellers have a rather relatively large linguistic repertoire which scholars have called by many names such as “Franlof”, “Francolof”, “Fran-Wolof” (Thiam, 1994, p. 13); “Dakar Wolof” (McLaughlin, 2001) and “urban Wolof” (Swigart, 1992; Calvet, 1994a, 1994b; Juillard et al., 1994; McLaughlin, 2008a, 2008c). What the scholarship is mainly concentrated on is how the Senegalese city-dweller languages in Senegal. What is missing is the aspect of mobility which this review aims to highlight by taking Wolof outside the confines of Senegal and into the many cities of the Global North. As such, the dynamicity of languaging is observed not only at a micro level (language) but also at a macro level, as speakers move across borders freely, the same way they appear to move across languages with ease, making the urban Wolophones’ language repertoires amenable to change, as they adopt novel features to widen their idiolect. Among the Senegalese who have popularised UW are the Mouride. The Mouride are adepts of the Mouridiyya Sufi order, founded in the Senegalese holy city of Touba, by the spiritual guide Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba, who lived from 1853 to 1927 (Ross, 2011, pp. 2930-1).

This is where migration (migrating) meets languaging. In fact, the parallel between languaging and migrating constitutes one of the reasons why UW should be viewed through the lens of translanguaging because it resonates more with the urban Wolophones’ linguistic behaviour. It merits noting that UW should not just be confined to Senegal, as it is the language of millions of emigrants in Africa but also in the Global North. As such, Wolof, including UW, gets inflected with the notion of mobility. To date, and in my findings, there are very few, if any, linguistic studies on UW outside Senegal, with mobility as a variable. In this review, I will explore the multilingualism literature where translanguaging fits in, in relation to other theories, my objective being to demonstrate and make a compelling case that the Senegalese diasporans’ languaging style is more germane to translanguaging than any other theory. This study can indeed be a vast topic but the space at my disposal will allow me only to touch upon the most conspicuous points in the multilingualism literature, especially those relevant to how UW has thus far been studied.

In what follows, I will explore some of the various methodologies employed in UW studies to collect data both in Senegal and abroad. The focus, in the second part, will be on the theoretical approaches underpinning the analysis of UW corpora, most of which were dominated by the theory of codeswitching, code-mixing, the idea that urbanites shuttle between socially constructed linguistic entities which are generally French and Wolof. Even some of the most recent scholars who recognise English as being part of the Senegalese urbanite's multilingual practices (McLaughlin, 2022) still view it (English) seen as an addition to the UW linguistic repertoire, an idea which the translanguaging theory refutes. Refer to García and Li Wei (2014, p. 14) for more on "additive bilingualism".

The UW literature shows the preponderance of the code-based approach, with the focus on languages rather than on the speakers and their creativity. In spite of the paucity of research on novel, speaker-centred approaches in the UW research, I have endeavoured to build on the existing analytical approaches to UW to offer a new theoretical approach to UW research. I will contrast the dual view of language mixing with the unitary view promulgated by the translanguaging experts (García et al., 2018), with the view to demonstrating why UW should be viewed more in the light of translanguaging than through the rigidity of codes. The review concludes with a synthesis of the various theoretical methods gleaned, culminating with an elaboration on the choice of the translanguaging model as the framework for future studies.

Methodological approaches to data collection

Whilst there are many studies on Wolof in general, its grammar and orthography (Torrence, 2013), UW has proven to be a more popular target for scholars, with most of such studies being concentrated in Senegal. Apart from Poplack's (2018), Smith's (2019), and Tramutoli's (2021) works, studies devoted to UW as spoken in the diaspora hardly exist. As a result, one of the central features on which UW scholars concentrate is the Senegalese urbanites' capacity to switch between French and Wolof. As I'll demonstrate later in this review, this aspect alone is far from the only feature that typify what the urban Wolophones are doing linguistically. A closer examination will reveal that languages other than French and Wolof are discernible in the UW corpora, regardless of whether the data was collected in Senegal or abroad.

One of the most popular methodologies of collecting UW communicative speech samples are those ethnographically-informed, involving, principally, observation and interviews. In his research in Saint-Louis, the former capital of Senegal, NGom (2003) set out to examine the situations in which Wolophones included French, Arabic, and English features in their daily conversations. In order to analyse their various motivations for

which they used each of those languages in their translingual practices, he used structured interviews, with a set of questions designed to elicit such specific topics as politics, religion, and culture from a selection of 200 informants, comprising 100 males and 100 females. The group was then divided into 2 sub-groups according to their ages: the over 50s on the one hand, and those aged between 20 and 30 on the other.

Most linguistic ethnographically-informed methodologies use interviews mainly as a way of triangulating observational data from naturally-occurring conversations. In that regard, such data as the one collected by NGom (2003) can be said to lack spontaneity, as far as what Poplack (2018, p. 18) calls “good data” is concerned. According to Poplack’s (2018, pp. 18-21) variationist methodology, good data should not only be representative of the informants but also be varied enough to allow for enough patterns of speech to emerge from the corpus. As such, in collecting her bilingual Wolof-French data, she privileges large corpora of quantitative data whilst employing linguistic ethnographic means (2018, p. 82). NGom’s (2003) approach differs with other ethnographically-informed methodologies in the sense that his data was collected within the framework of pre-established themes he wished to see as emerging from the data. In other words, he was interested in how specific, pre-existing themes were linguistically framed by those UW speakers. This approach runs counter to that employed by proponents of translanguaging, whose modes of analysis tend to be more speaker-centred, therefore more geared towards decolonised methodologies which place the speaker at the centre of the verbal event.

Adepts of translanguaging prioritise the exploration of themes that emerge, spontaneously, from the multilingual corpora, with the speakers and data as a starting point. As such, this stance will inform their data collection procedure. In Casamance, South of Senegal, where Joola, Wolof, and French are among the dominant languages, Goodchild and Weidl (2019) examined the translanguaging practices of multilinguals’ daily practices. The data was comprised of several hours of video-recorded speech samples of naturally-occurring conversations collected between 2014 and 2017. Their principal objective was to look at how the speakers used their varied linguistic repertoires, including multimodal features, in their daily interactions. Therefore, their focus was more on collecting spontaneous speaker samples. Their approach can be seen as novel in the respect that they have moved away from code-based methodologies, which they have found to be too rigid.

It is well to note that most African languages are not predominantly written, although some, like Wolof, have been codified, and have a grammar and an orthography (Republique du Senegal, 2005; Torrence, 2013). It is not surprising, therefore, that most of the source of data is to be found in orality. In addition, because of the epistemic biases and stigma attached to translingual

practices (Swigart, 1994, p. 181, Irvine, 2011, p. 63), the Wolof found in print is generally the monolingual, rural type and, as such, does not reflect the true way that the Senegalese urbanites language. However, more recently, with the advent of social media, the ethnographic research has spread beyond just real-life situations to encompass virtual interactions. The new technologies have helped spread the use of UW beyond the confines of Senegal, as diasporans engage in discussions relating to unemployment and poverty back home. I will concur with Irvine (2011, p. 60) that those topics are one of the most discussed among the Senegalese diasporans.

This deterritorialization of UW, occasioned, in part, by the development of online networks, has triggered the interest of many UW scholars whose main works had so far been limited, in the main, to Wolof in Senegal. In that regard, McLaughlin (2014) examined various ways in which the Senegalese, including the diasporans from Europe and America, use the social media platforms to engage in daily digital practices, using unconventional orthography. Most urbanites, rather than using the codified Wolof orthography in their daily texting, tend to use the French one instead. This is most observable nowadays on social media platforms. Consider, for example, this WhatsApp discussion below, which is part of data collected during my ongoing ethnographic research (Dieng, 2021). The interaction is an ethnic banter between two Senegalese. It is known that West Africans engage in such joking relationships as part of their everyday interactions (Attino, 2021; Dieng, 2021, pp. 127-130). I will not get into the language analysis here but wish to merely point out how urban Wolophones tend to have the predilection for the French orthography even when framing deep African cultural concepts.



Figure 1. WhatsApp banter

The interaction should be spelt thus:

Nga xam gàmmu gii duhut sa gàmmu
[Know that you're not invited in this celebration]
Aziz bàyyil Sereer yi soo béggee lift suba
[Aziz, leave the Sereer alone if you want a lift tomorrow]

With the advent of the Internet, there is a growing body of such digital UW data. The diasporic news platforms and social media constitute a rich source of communicative data (McLaughlin, 2022), for ethnographic study. McLaughlin (2014) contends that her approach for collecting digital UW data is nothing short of ethnographic, basing her argument on Blommaert and Jie's (2010) view that language, being dynamic, is inseparable from the many situations in which it occurs. One of those situations was the comments section of the New York-based Senegalese "Web portal", Seneweb (2014, p. 30). As a digital platform for the diasporic Senegalese, it constitutes a medium for the dissemination of UW abroad, echoing Smith's (2019) "Senegal Abroad". In her latest work, Smith (2019) was interested in the Senegalese transnational identities. Her sojourns in Dakar, Rome, Paris, and New York allowed her to collect ethnographic communicative data from Senegalese informants. She examined how the Senegalese frame notions of identity and blackness in real life multilingual interactions from an UW corpus she had compiled over a period of three months, with observation and interviews as her main methods of data collection.

By and large, UW scholars employ fairly similar methods of collecting data, which, for the most part, are linguistic ethnographically informed. However, in my findings so far, there does not seem to be long-standing immersions with the researched from the researchers' part, in order to allow for patterns of speech to emerge over time. Whilst it may be a valid approach to work with synchronic data, for, say, other analytical purposes, certain theoretical assumptions are best made with diachronic data, collected during a long period of cohabitation with the informants. This is where, according to Poplack (2018), in-group membership is fundamental for the collection of "good data" (2018, p. 18). Irvine (2012, p. 58) notes, to that effect, that a long sojourn with the subjects, "an intensive, long-term ethnography" is key in the data collection process. It is in that regard that being one of them can be highly beneficial.

In-group membership can facilitate understanding of certain practices observationally. It also enables the researcher to grasp intertextual references made by the group during their discussions without having to ask for elucidations. This is particularly important because observational and reported data do not always tally. In other words, what an informant reports to a researcher (especially to an outsider) may not reflect the truth, though truth is relative. In addition, with ethnographic research, there is the risk of exoticizing the research participants (Smith, 2019, p. 15; Perry, 1997, p. 230) by looking at them through the lens of accepted stereotypes. This is not to say that outsiders cannot become in-group members for the duration of the research. For example, some Westerners who are interested in African urban languages do endeavour to look beyond the long, overworked clichés.

In studying the Senegalese immigrants in the United States, Perry's (1997, p. 230) aim was to "transcend media-produced stereotypes of exotic otherness in order to describe how and why Wolof immigrants engage in the cultural production of difference". Smith (2019) also made a conscious effort to immerse herself in Senegalese communities in Senegal, in Europe, and in America, in an effort to better understand how the Senegalese frame certain ideological concepts such as race (and issues of identity) in their everyday language practices. Smith's (2019) and Tramutoli's (2021) works are not only some of the latest on Wolof, but they are also among the most original, in that they look at the Senegalese translingual practices outside Senegal. Both authors collected data in a context of migration, with mobility as one of the variables. Only, they are still, in my view, looking at the collected verbal data as being separate from the speakers, and understandably so because they do not seem to be analysing the data from the (emic) perspective of the speakers.

This is why the aforementioned studies look at UW from a code-based perspective, where languages making up the UW repertoire are seen as separate, reified, entities. In Italy, Tramutoli (2021) views Italian as an added

code to the Senegalese language repertoire, approaching her data from the code-mixing perspective, while still Smith (2019) approaches hers from a codeswitching perspective. In any case, the fact that they both examine UW in the Global North, rather than in Senegal only, like the mainstream research, makes their research innovative in that aspect. The following chapter will treat of the theoretical perspectives through which the UW data have been analysed in the scholarship.

Theoretical perspectives on data analyses

The dual view of codeswitching and code-mixing

On account of most urban languages being a postcolonial phenomenon, the post-independence era saw a flux of interest in the study of urban languages in Africa. One of the most frequently studied urban languages is undoubtedly UW. It was Wioland and Calvet (1968) who, for the first time, spoke of Wolof in terms of it being the main vehicular language of Senegal (Calvet, 1994a, pp. 91-92) but it was Swigart (1992, p. 84), Calvet (1994a, 1994b), and Juillard et al. (1994) who highlighted more thoroughly the urban qualities of the language. They are perhaps the earliest authors to have used the appellation “urban Wolof”. The term was later popularised by subsequent authors such as McLaughlin (2008a, 2008c) who had also spoken of “Dakar Wolof” (2001) previously, following Thiam (1994, p. 20) who called it “le wolof des Dakarais”.

Most of the theoretical perspectives elaborated in the study of UW are principally based on the presupposition of the existence of what is known as codes between which the urban Wolophone is supposed to switch. This is why many UW scholars saw the necessity to view UW through the lenses of codeswitching (Dreyfus & Juillard, 2001; NGom, 2006; Smith, 2019) or code-mixing (Tramatoli, 2021). For the proponents of this theory, the French features in UW are seen as additions to the Wolof language, thereby looking at this mode of languaging as a mixture of two languages, much the same as in the phenomenon García and Li Wei (2014, p. 14) call “additive bilingualism”. Whilst this is a valid point, adopting this view is tantamount to compartmentalising the linguistic repertoire of this speech community into bits of politically charged appellations like Italian, English, or French. On what, for example, do we base the appellation “Spanish” to “name” the speech of people living in Chile or Cuba, for example. This preceding remark, though apparently disconnected from my line of reasoning, affords nonetheless a rough illustration for what I mean by “politically-charged”. In fact, and still in this connection, it is these socially constructed appellations that occasioned the adoption of terms such as Francolof, Franlof or Fran-wolof (Thiam, 1994, p. 13), where the urban Wolophone’s translingual practices are merely seen as a forward and backward movement between two named languages.

Incidentally, the fact that the prefix “Fran” is the first part of the term is not fortuitous. In semiotics, the first part in such annexed terms constitutes generally the ideologically more “dominant” part (Chandler, 2007, pp. 110-114). This is also valid for appellations like *La Françafrique*. Françafrique is supposed to be a “cordial” relationship between France and its African colonies. It is in that regard that the latter are known by “Les amis de la France”, a friendship which could easily be the object of criticism in view of the visible imbalance in this relationship (France vs Francophone Africa). It is this imbalance which is also translated linguistically when translingual speakers are viewed as waltzing between a local vernacular and a more politically dominant one, thereby making the divide even more entrenched. Perhaps, looking at what is termed “Francolof” as one unified linguistic repertoire could offer a new platform from which all languaging forms are seen as equal.

With codeswitching as the most popular theory in the UW scholarship, a few distinctions are often made regarding the way speakers switch codes. In their study of the Wolof spoken in Dakar and Ziguinchor¹, Dreyfus and Juillard (2001, pp. 674-676), make the distinction between three modes of codeswitches: intrasentential, intersentential, and extrasentential, where intrasentential refers to the occurrence of a French feature within a Wolof sentence; intersentential, to the alternation between relatively long stretches of French and those of Wolof in one utterance. Extrasentential switches occur in dialogues, where one speaker makes a monolingual utterance in a given language and the interlocutor replies in another. Prior to this, Poplack (1988) had already elaborated on the distinction between intrasentential codeswitches and borrowings. More recently, she extended the theory and applied it to her study of UW, arguing that borrowing is a more appropriate term to reference the presence, within Wolof, of French lexical items (Poplack, 2018). However, she speaks of codeswitching to reference the alternation between stretches of French and Wolof. The latter would be equivalent to Juillard et al. (2001)’s intersentential switches mentioned above. These theories, applied to the study of language mixing over the intervening years, will reveal that some of these theoretical precepts are flouted by speakers of UW as we will see further below.

The study of UW has gained popularity over the past decades on account of the fact that some scholars have considered it to have a unique status among the African urban languages. It has evolved to become the national language of Senegal, despite the attempt, by the French and the Francophile elite in Senegal, to promote the French language. For example, in other neighbouring African nations like Côte d’Ivoire, a form of Creolised

¹ One of the 14 departmental regions of Senegal.

French popularly known in Senegal as *le français ivoirien* emerged in the post-independence era. In many other Francophone African countries like Gabon, Togo, or Benin, urbanites tend to mainly speak French, whereas the Senegalese somewhat resisted this French domination. Wolof is instead more popular throughout the country. Despite the long-standing relationship between France and Senegal, only around 10% of the Senegalese speak French (Smith, 2019, pp. 7-8). It is instead the “shadow politics of Wolofisation” (O’Brien’s, 1998) that took root and hoisted Wolof to the state of de facto national language. To that effect, much research has been conducted on UW and the Senegalese linguistic landscape.

The popularity of this dual view of codes spans across decades and is, to date, the preferred theoretical approach for many in the UW scholarship. This is observable even in the most recent studies on UW (Smith, 2019; Tramutoli, 2021). One of the most prominent frameworks in codeswitching is the Matrix Language Framework (MLF) theorised by Myers-Scotton (1995). The theory stipulates that the bilingual does not just mix languages randomly, but that in a postcolonial African context of codeswitching, the European language constitutes the embedded language, and the local vernacular represents the matrix language. The embedded language is, as if, housed in the matrix language. Furthermore, the author argues that it is the matrix language which defines the grammatical rules of the translingual utterance. This theory echoes Dumont’s (1983, p. 153) view that the Wolophones’ extensive use of French verbs has not altered the Wolof verbal system because all French verbs are inflected in accordance with Wolof grammatical rules. The MLF model has inspired many proponents of the dual view of codeswitching, including Muysken (1997, 2000, 2013) whose theories have, in turn, inspired Tramutoli’s (2021).

Tramutoli (2021) found that the code switches that the Senegalese migrants in Italy engage in are generally of an intra-sentential nature, that bits of Italian are inserted to the already existing UW repertoire. Looked from that angle, the findings seem to support the MLF notion of embeds within another language. However, despite the existence of rules which characterise codeswitches and code-mixes, including those supported by the MLF model, many of them are violated by UW speakers. To cite an example, scholars like MacSwan (1999, 2005, 2009) have argued that some forms of language mixing do not occur because of some grammatical constraints proper to the codeswitching theory, echoing Myers-Scotton’s (1993a) Blocking Hypothesis which stipulates that some morphemes are incompatible with other morphemes from other languages, or that the use of a given morpheme is inhibited by another to which a codeswitcher attempts to juxtapose it.

The aforementioned precepts are based on the assumption that the so-called hosting language (matrix) dictates the morphosyntactic rules.

Therefore, linguistic elements that do not comply are inhibited or blocked. For example, urban Wolophones can equally say: “*My laax*” (my porridge) or “*Sama porridge*” (my porridge). According to the Blocking principles, the former should not be allowed because the grammatical elements should come from Wolof and not from English. *Sama porridge* would be acceptable according to this principle because *porridge* is a lexical term, and thus can be borrowed (the Blocking Hypothesis prohibits grammatical items from being borrowed). Any urban Wolophone would find those rules to be unfounded.

Several decades later, Myers-Scotton and Jake (2017) refined the MLF model to include a reinforcement of the distinction between grammatical elements (system morphemes) and the lexical elements (content morphemes) in a codeswitching utterance. The authors contend, for example, that definiteness (definite articles, possessives, etc.) are part of the system morphemes (2017, p. 344) and should, according to their codeswitching precepts, come from the matrix language, but our example above (*my laax*) infirms this assumption, where the definiteness or determinacy is framed in English instead. Other authors have been inspired by the MLF model and elaborated many other rules

Regarding precepts and rules of language mixing, Schindler et al. (2008) and Legendre and Schindler (2010), in their analysis of their UW data collected in Thiès, the second largest city in Senegal, found that the speakers flouted many of those precepts of language mixing, including, principally, the ones theorised by MacSwan (1999, 2005, 2009). It is well to note, too, that the dual view of bilingualism can be valid to a certain extent, when the language practices of multilingual language users are viewed from the outside, but I will agree with Otheguy et al. (2015, p. 298) that the researcher must not assume, from the outset, that multilingual speakers are just adding languages together. It is those assumptions which are at the very heart of most, if not all, UW studies. It is the insistence that languages must be viewed as distinct named entities that is also at the very heart of the codeswitching theory and is related to what García et al. (2018, p. 5) call the “dual correspondence view”. Many of the prominent authors of bilingualism such as MacSwan (2017) still support this theory, or, at least, view translingual practices through this theory. However, a relatively more recent view on multilingual languaging, based on the theory that the multilingual speakers possess one unified linguistic repertoire, has emerged. García et al. (2018, p. 8) call it the “unitary view” which is a fundamental aspect of the notion of translanguaging.

The unitary view of translanguaging

In this section, I will examine a different perspective on UW where scholars have questioned the legitimacy of the dual view described in the previous section. Even some of the proponents of codeswitching acknowledge

that the Dakarais' translingual practices exhibit a certain fluidity and ease to the point where early appellations of UW such as "Francolof", "Franlof", or "Fran-Wolof" (Thiam, 1994, p. 13) have now become virtually outdated, so to speak.

UW on its own is a translingual languaging system. In addition, the mere fact of viewing it as a variety of Wolof, i.e., one integrated system under one name, should be a reason to shift to a more unified communicative system. The urban Wolophones' daily translingual practices resemble more what Pennycook & Otsuji (2015, p. 19) call "the dynamic interrelationship between language practices and urban space". Because UW is the language of the city-dwellers, Pennycook & Otsuji (2015)'s metrolingualism is, in my view, a potentially acceptable theoretical approach for studying UW, all the more so because metrolingualism, like translanguaging, is about understanding crystallised or spur-of-the-moment languaging forms in a specific space (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015, pp. 86-87). I would consider Swigart (1992) to be the closest, of all the UW scholars, to the concept of the unitary view.

Swigart (1992, p. 84) agrees that the urban Wolophone seems to be putting two codes together but, rather than remaining dual, the linguistic system thus obtained is transformed into a *new*, unified entity she calls "third code", thus concluding that UW is "one code" (1992, p. 99). This concept of *third code* is somewhat analogous to (Bhabha, 1990)'s notion of "Third space" where something new is birthed from a combination of elements. In line with this theory, UW can be viewed as a form of languaging creatively improvised in a space of language and culture shock as a response to specific communicative needs. This move is, however, not without social tensions due to the epistemic biases surrounding translingual practices.

This is where, according to Li Wei (2011, p. 1223) translanguagers need spaces where existing rules are apt to be defied, and new concepts creatively coined (see also Li Wei, 2018, p. 15). This "criticality and creativity" (Li Wei, 2011), which is observable in the urban Wolophones' translingual practices, was adumbrated in the previous section. Swigart (1992, p. 84) contends that the fluidity with which the urban Wolophones speak makes this way of languaging "the norm", the unmarked form of speech for the Dakarais, suggesting that the author adopts, in that regard, a more speaker-centred view to be able to see their repertoire as the default way of languaging. She is therefore moving away from the ideas of shuttling between languages. Although some of her statements still sound like duality, her theories on UW are nonetheless consistent with one of the three principles of the translanguaging theory elaborated by Vogel and García (2017, p. 3), that translanguaging "...takes up a perspective on bi- and multilingualism that privileges speakers' own dynamic linguistic and semiotic practices above the named languages of nations and states". Similarly, García and Li Wei (2014,

p. 22) spoke of the linguistic practices of the bilingual language users as being “the norm”. Furthermore, Swigart’s (1992) assumption that UW is “One code” is also not very far off from the theoretical foundations of translanguaging of the “unitary linguistic repertoire” (Vogel & García, 2017, p. 3).

Additionally, what draws Swigart’s (1992) views even closer to the theories of translanguaging, at least as far as UW is concerned, is her insistence that the Dakarois urban Wolophones are not switching between codes, reasoning that their languaging pattern is, in essence, different from patterns observable in code switches (1992, p. 84). These findings attest to the theory that UW, though resultant from different “languages”, if viewed from the inside, constitutes a unitary whole. This theory is in keeping with the one championed by some of the proponents of translanguaging such as García and Li Wei (2014, p. 21) who speak of “new whole” to refer to the bilingual’s linguistic system.

The newness of the whole appears to suggest that something has been added. This is what it looks like from the outside but translanguaging experts insist that the reality within the multilingual speaker’s mind is otherwise (Otheguy et al., 2015), that despite the fact that, from a social perspective, multilingual language users may be said to be using more than one named language, they are still producing speech from a “unitary” linguistic system (García et al., 2018, pp. 8-9). Put another way, what is seen as additions by proponents of the dual correspondence, or of the enumerative approaches to language, is only an enlargement of the one linguistic repertoire. Only, even in describing the unitary nature of the bilingual’s repertoire, the use of certain terms is sometimes inevitable, even if they evoke duality.

The aforementioned translanguaging experts, and perhaps others, do account for that fact. Because of the language planning and policies that have been forced on to us, some of us may have to use terms such as, say, “language features”, rather than what Otheguy et al. (2015) rightly call “idiolectal features”. It is therefore not rare for even scholars who champion the unitary view, like Canagarajah (2011a, p. 401), to use terms which evoke duality such as “shuttling between languages”. But the merit the use of such terms has is that it can concur towards explicating the notion of translanguaging, especially after we have so long been exposed to the theory of the code-based approach.

Before proceeding, let me bring a brief parenthetical clarification, regarding appellations of multilingualism. Makalela and Dhokotera (2021) make the distinction between “monolingual multilingualism” and “multilingual multilingualism”. The former is more in line with enumerative approaches of multilingualism, denoting rigid boundaries with languages. They insist that African multilinguals who engage in multilingual language practices are multilingual multilinguals and not monolingual multilinguals because their translanguaging practices do not consist in an aggregation of separate

named languages, but goes beyond that, in keeping with the theory of translanguaging.

However linguistically diverse a society can be, one can observe a certain fluidity in the way people translanguage. This is especially true in an African context where people are born multilingual only to later acquire, at school, additional languages often viewed, wrongly, as more prestigious. In any case, my point here is that with a plethora of languages, viewing the so-called shuttling between them in terms of switching codes can prove somewhat of a difficult endeavour. Sometimes, the linguistic system may comprise up to five or more named or nameable languages. I would strongly align my view with that of Otheguy et al. (2015, pp. 286-9; see also Li Wei, 2018, pp. 18-19) that, in the mind of the African multilingual speaker, switching between languages or codes is exactly what is not happening. They are simply deploying idiolectal features, housed, as it were, in a large repertoire that knows no boundaries, unfettered by linguistic rules and precepts. It is an expression of linguistic freedom which can appear as a threat, for lack of a better term, to the language policy makers.

This is why more recent scholars regard the unitary view as the most suitable to analyse translingual practices in some African contexts where translanguaging is what many Africans naturally do as multilingual multilinguals. What is noteworthy, additionally, is that in Senegal, many of the 30 or so languaging forms are still not codified. Where, then, would one start, to view those as codes? This is exactly what Goodchild and Weidl (2019, pp. 133-149) stumbled upon in Senegal. Using the translanguaging model, they analysed video-recorded multilingual conversations in Casamance, South-Eastern Senegal. The linguistic ecology of this part of Senegal is one of the most diverse and people from different ethnic backgrounds with highly varied linguistic repertoires engage, fluidly, in daily language practices. They found several local languages such as Joola, French, Mandinka, Wolof, Kriolu, etc. that composed the local linguistic system.

The authors demonstrated how, with a code-based approach, it would have been impractical to analyse this highly multilingual setting. The reason is that specific codes could mean different things for different locutors and there can be confusion in the apprehension of some lexemes. As such, because some of the languaging forms do not yet fully have an official name, one can only obtain a vague idea of what a code could be in those circumstances. They also found that speakers may not always report all the languages that they speak. What is innovative about the study is the inclusion, in the data analysis, of multimodal features as part of the speakers daily translanguaging practices. In fact, there is a growing interest, within the translanguaging scholarship, in multimodality.

More recently, multilingualism has grown to include social semiotics to create larger linguistic systems that would include semiotic repertoires. Some of the most eminent scholars in multilingualism such as Vogel and García (2017, p. 13) agree that multimodality and social semiotics could add to the understanding and furtherance of translanguaging (see also García & Otheguy, 2020, p. 25). In this connection, Adami and Sherris (2019) reason that multimodality is a form of communication that can be said to comprise language and other prosodic features not often accounted for in linguistic analyses. To this end, Perera (2019) examined how translanguaging repertoires have come to include visible corporeal actions such as gestures, gaze, etc. Because gestures can complement the meaning-making process and can direct an interlocutor to a desired meaning (Li Wei, 2018, p. 21; García & Otheguy, 2020, p. 25), sometimes even before words are uttered (Perera, 2019, p. 129), it is well to take them as integral multimodal features of the translanguager's linguistic repertoire.

Whether it is multimodality that is part of language, or the other way around is an object of debate. But what is clear is that proponents of translanguaging adopt such terms as multimodal translanguaging or multimodal languaging (Adami, 2019, pp. 36-38). In the production of a multilingual repertoire, lexical items seem to be playing the same role as do signs in a semiotic repertoire. This is also consistent with Pennycook's (2017, p. 273) observation that, in translanguaging practices, the language features are important, but, of equal importance is also the semiotic repertoire against which the linguistic signs are set. The setting of the author's research was a Bangladeshi-run corner shop in Sydney. In the study of multimodal translanguaging, shops and businesses have proven to be a rather popular setting.

Banda et al. (2019), for example, examined how Chinese signage harmoniously blends with local signs in Zambia to create new meanings. Similarly, Shiohata (2012, pp. 274-283) observed that, in Dakar, shopkeepers designed a rather ingenious way of attracting customers. They inscribe Wolof multimodal signs, using an unconventional orthography (i.e., the French alphabet), on their shop fronts with the name of their revered spiritual leader juxtaposed to the product they are selling to attract other adepts who follow the same marabout (spiritual guide) to visit the shop (2012, pp. 274-283). All the works cited above concur to support the idea that the semiotic space in which the languaging happens is of paramount importance. In fact, one can even argue that there is no space (apart) in which translanguaging occurs because, according to Mazzaferro (2018, p. 3), this notion of space is, in and of itself, part and parcel of the multilingual language users' linguistic resources (see also Otsuji & Pennycook, 2015, p. 85).

The multimodal design can also be bodily. For example, when two Senegalese people meet and shake hands, as they systematically do, if one of them prostrates on the back of the hand of the other, the latter understands the message conveyed, and the ensuing conversation will inevitably be marked by this gesture which is characteristic of the Mouride way of greeting. García and Otheguy (2019, p. 8) posit, in this connection, that our corporeal actions also participate in the “meaning-making” of our communicative process. The same is equally valid for signage involving types of garments but also of signage outside the body, such as special decorations, which marks the communicative system. We know how fundamental the Touba visual culture is in the Senegalese transmigrant identity work (Ross, 2011, p. 2942). The Touba visual culture includes religious objects such as prayer beads, prayer mats, and special clothing proper to Touba, not to mention the photographs of the revered Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba which decorate the many businesses owned by the Senegalese in the West (2011, p. 2942). In such environments of semiotic assemblage, the speaker’s speech and actions become inseparable from the semiosis within which everything happens, and, language, rather than being just a tool, is now part of the setting, as an entity birthed within this semiotic décor (Pennycook, 2017, p. 277).

If we consider the concept of text in the general, semiotic sense of the term, to also include multimodal signage, then hermeneutics, as “the study of human cultural activity as texts with a view towards interpretation to find intended or expressed meanings” (Laverty, 2003, p. 24, citing Kvale, 1996), can be a useful analytical framework when seen as a macro-level philosophical underpinning behind translanguaging as a micro-level analytical tool for scrutinising speech samples. This view, adumbrated earlier, which consists in seeing the speech-speaker-environment as one continuum, affords a fresh perspective on language as being something humans do, echoing the notion which the gerund form *-ing* encapsulates. Note, in passing, that it is from the perspective of *linguaging* that Li Wei (2018, p. 16) initially developed his views on *trans-linguaging*.

Another fundamental aspect of language not fully accounted for, and which can be said to be part of the Wolof prosodic elements, are verbal gestures. In their study of the Wolof language in rural Senegal, Grenoble et al. (2015), inspired by the works of Dialo (1985), examined what they call “verbal gestures”, which they define as “a group of sounds that stand outside of the basic phonemic and lexical inventory of Wolof, but are a core part of the Wolof communicative system” (2015, p. 110). Common Wolof verbal gestures are, for example, “walis”, “piis”, or “ciipetu” (or cipetu). The most common of them all is the *ciipetu*, characterised by a lateral sucking (long or short) of the teeth which produces a fricative sound. Grenoble et al. (2015, p.

115) describe “ciipetu” as a “bilabial-dental click” produced by an “elongated sucking” which carries the illocutionary force of “I don’t like this!”.

To avoid confusion, a precision is in order: the Wolof verbal gestures are not gestures. They are sounds. Contrary to what Li Wei (2018, p. 21) refers to as “manual gestures” in multimodal translanguaging, verbal gestures are sounds that are in the same order as what Gil (2013) terms “paralinguistic clicks”, used in some parts of Senegal, which carry meanings of affirmations or negations, depending on the production of the sound. They also convey disagreement, sadness, despondence, etc. Grenoble et al.’s (2015) work was centred principally on how those verbal gestures are used in RW. As such, in my findings, there does not seem to be any studies which account for verbal gestures as used in translanguaging practices in urban contexts.

Concluding thoughts

The general aim of the above chapter was to highlight some of the theories developed throughout the years in multilingual languaging studies. I have endeavoured to focus on UW studies as it would be beyond the scope of this review to attempt to critique the plethora of works available in the field of multilingualism. From what precedes, it has emerged that UW has mostly been studied through the dual correspondence view of theories such as codeswitching (Smith, 2019; Swigart, 1994, p. 175; Dreyfus & Juillard, 2001; NGom, 2006), codemixing (Tramutoli, 2021) and borrowings (Poplack, 2018), etc. The analysis of UW almost always involved looking at the Senegalese urbanite as switching between pre-existing codes, principally Wolof and French. The code-based theory regarded one language as the recipient and the other as the donor (Poplack, 2018), echoing Myers-Scotton’s (1995) MLF model of matrix and embedded languages.

However, it was observed that the urban Wolophone’s shuttle between the two so-called codes was so smooth that Swigart (1992) considered the resultant of that “new” linguistic mixture to be just “one code”, a “third code” created in a “third” space. Furthermore, new research into the Senegalese linguistic ecology, namely in the South, has revealed that a code-based method of studying multilingualism in this part of Senegal was almost an incongruity on account of the fact that what a code can signify in one language could connote a different thing altogether in another (Goodchild & Weidl, 2019, pp. 133-149). In light of the reasons thus enumerated, I believe it is time to allow for more decolonised, speaker-centred approaches and ways of analysing the UW data.

Realising, after Otheguy et al. (2015), that translanguaging goes beyond the notion of smoothness, and that speakers do not produce languages but their own idiolect, one realises that scholars of the dual correspondence theory not only view multilingual speakers from the outside, but some of their

assumptions on bilingualism can be said to be unfounded if we adopt a more speaker-centred approach. The fact, in addition, that translanguaging is a bottom-up phenomenon, with the speakers occupying a central position (García & Otheguy, 2020, p. 24), makes it more appropriate if scholars are to move towards decolonising the study of languages of Africa. Indeed, rather than assuming, a priori, how urban Wolophones speak, there needs to be novel approaches to UW studies, where researchers adopt a more emic and indigenous stance.

In addition, what makes the translanguaging model more amenable for UW studies is that the multilingual language user's thought process is different to that of the monolingual speaker. Li Wei (2018, p. 18) posits that even when the multilingual decides, momentarily, to be in a "monolingual mode", he or she still does not think along the lines of monolingualism as a social construction. As such, and in accordance with the findings of Goodchild and Weidl (2019) in the south of Senegal, codes do not seem to exist in the imaginary of the Senegalese multilinguals.

Of late, there has been a genesis of multimodality in the study of multilingualism (Adami & Sherris, 2019; Perera, 2019; Adami, 2019; Banda et al., 2019; Li Wei, 2019). It is in that regard that, that translanguaging scholars speak of multimodal translanguaging as being the new area to explore in multilingualism. Multimodality has always been considered ancillary in communication studies, in the same way that Wolof verbal gestures are hardly ever accounted for when referencing the Wolof phonemic repertoire. The study of Wolof verbal gestures will, I believe, play a major part in the understanding of the UW speakers' translanguaging practices, much the same as the understanding of translanguaging will be enhanced by the inclusion of multilingual multimodal analysis. With all these elements in play, it would be malapropos or at least discrepant, in my view, not to consider the urban Wolophone's linguistic repertoire, comprising Wolof, English, French, verbal gestures, and multimodal gestures as constituting one linguistic system, in accordance with the translanguaging theory.

Moreover, even such entities as Wolof, English, French, etc. politically considered to be monolingual languages can be said to carry the vestiges of multilinguality even if we reason in terms of codes. For example, what is officially considered monolingual Wolof has had influences from various other languages such as Arabic (Diop, 2006; NGom, 2006, p. 104) and even Portuguese because the Portuguese had been in Senegal centuries before the French (McLaughlin, 2008b, p. 83). In addition, as early as the 11th century, some parts of the Senegambia area were already Islamised (NGom, 2003). As such, it was inevitable that the indigenous people's languaging practices be

impacted by Arabic. So “established”² are some of the Arabic terms in Wolof that many Senegalese, including my participants, see them as “original” (as in “of origin”) Wolof terms per se. Whilst the linguist can detect the appurtenance of a term, it is less evident for the common Senegalese. Therefore, in a code-based approach, the question of where a code belongs becomes problematic. The same could be said about French, Italian, English, etc.

All the reasons enumerated above concur to solidify the need for the choice of the translanguaging model, which coheres also with the notion of translocality, when studying UW. The central theme of translocality is consonant with the concept of translanguaging in many respects. People from a particular linguistic community in a given *locality* engage in *linguaging* practices that they have in common. The fact, in addition, that they can go beyond the official or political forms of linguaging (*translinguaging*) and carry that across borders (*translocality*) to enlarge their linguaging spaces (and thus linguistic repertoire), lends more weight to the notion of translanguaging as being best suited when analysing the transnational communities’ translingual practices. Translocality, therefore, I will argue, is the (physical) space, dynamic as it is, in which translanguaging (as a theory) occurs. Put another way, transnational processes such as *transmigration* and *translocality* are the macro-level contexts in which the micro-level context of *translinguaging* occurs.

What needs more attention in translanguaging studies is whether speakers follow special patterns in their choice of language features in their daily translanguaging practices. There does not seem to be many studies that focus on patterns of translanguaging. This may be due to the fact that, in translanguaging, the scholarship tends to focus more on the unitary nature of the speakers’ repertoires. Understandably, the unitary view is fundamental in translanguaging but it does not preclude the potential presence of patterns of speech informed by the languagers’ various motivations, spurred, as it were, by the desire to tailor their speech to a specific interlocutor or to comply with some societal or social restrictions which causes them to frequently alter their speech style. I am fortified in this idea by Otheguy et al.’s (2015, p. 297) view that translanguagers do not translanguage in the same fashion every time, that they may be in situations where they do not use their “idiolects” “freely” or fully. In other words, they may have to “monitor” their repertoire with the view to adapting “to the interlocutor and social situation at hand” (2015, p. 297).

² Proponents of codeswitching use the term to denote lexical items from a so-called donor language that are so frequently used that they are now considered part of the so-called recipient language (Poplack, 2018; NGom, 2006).

The above idea echoes Bell's (1984) "Audience design" where speakers appear to design their speech, depending on the circumstances at hand, to a special "audience" or "addressee". For the urban Wolophone in the West, for example, the monitoring of his idiolect can take multiple forms. Sometimes the UW repertoire can be deployed to (or close to) a maximum. Sometimes it is constricted to appear like monolingual Wolof, French or English. At other times, it may appear that they are only selecting a particular language pair. Finally, it may also look as if they are using their whole idiolect but that one of the languages is more salient in a specific moment. As such, and in accordance with the foregoing, more needs to be done to examine how the monitoring is done and in which specific situations certain choices of specific linguistic features occur to the exclusion of others. In short, it would be useful to identify which types of interactions or social situations make certain parts of the speaker's repertoire more, or less, prominent.

At a micro level of languaging, applying the translanguaging model to UW studies will require the scholarship to look at the urban Wolophones' linguistic repertoire as comprising gradient patterns rather than a juxtaposition of socially constructed entities we call French, Wolof, or English. As such, and in accordance with the unitary view, concepts like shuttling or switching between languages become at once discrepant. It is true that, viewed from the outside, the urban Wolophone does appear to switch between codes, but because translanguaging is speaker-centred, the translanguaging model will offer a platform from which the Senegalese urbanites can offer narratives of their own translanguaging practices rather than having them defined for them from the outside. Hence, a departure from traditional Euro-Western theories such as codeswitching, and a move towards more decolonised postulations will greatly supplement the already rich body of UW literature. When analysing UW utterances, what should be born in mind is that the different linguistic features forming the speaker's repertoire are organised in a *heterarchical* system where they are all created equal, so speak. This approach runs counter to code-mixing and codeswitching theories where languages are arranged *hierarchically*. As such, the Dakarois is seen as switching between Wolof and a more prestigious language called French. The translanguaging model would therefore be a powerful tool in dismantling such hegemonic ideologies based on language hierarchies.

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