Chapter 5

The Constitution of FOCUS:
Wolof

1. Introduction

Wolof is a member of the Niger-Congo family of languages. The sub-grouping goes: Niger-Congo -> Atlantic -> Northern Atlantic -> Senegambian. There is a Gambian Wolof which is distinct from Senegalese Wolof. The latter is the language described here (International Encyclopedia of Languages 1:131-132):¹

2,000,000 to 3,000,000 first-language speakers reported in 1989, in western and central Senegal, on the left bank of the Senegal River to Cape Vert. Also spoken in Mauritania and in France. Also called Yallof, Walaf, Volof, or Waro-Waro; speakers call themselves Wolof. It is the main language of Senegal, and the second language of at least 500,000 people, predominantly urban. Different from Wolof of Gambia, although related.

2. Some preliminaries

The simple sentence in Wolof is in some instances SVO and SV:

(1) dyigén-dyi fón-nə xále-bi
[woman-the kiss-3rd.sg boy-the]
‘The woman kissed the boy’
‘The woman has kissed the boy’

¹ The Wolof data come from Sadibou Sow, a native of Njarab, Senegal, and from Alioune Deme, a native of Kaolack, Senegal. These data were collected during a two-semester class in field methods and supplemented by correspondence with Sadibou Sow. I much appreciate their patience with our questions. All mistakes of presentation and interpretation are my responsibility. Occasionally, the initials “AD” or “SS” will appear in the margin to identify when an example is assigned to one or the other speaker. Where comments appear in “double quotes,” they come from a speaker of Wolof. If they are not attributed, SS is the source.

The verb-like predicate element displays the following inflection for person and number of the Subject in the ‘past’ tense. The following is for the EVENT ‘to kiss’:

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{Sg} & \text{Pl} \\
1 & \text{fón-\text{na}} & \text{fón-\text{nanyu}} \\
2 & \text{fón-\text{tnx}} & \text{fón-\text{nggeen}} \\
3 & \text{fón-\text{na}} & \text{fón-\text{nany}} \\
\end{array}
\]

Noun-like predicates inflect in a similar way:

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{Sg} & \text{Pl} \\
1 & \text{gúr-\text{la}} & \text{(ay) gúr-\text{lanyu}} \\
& & \text{‘I am a man’} \quad \text{‘We’re men’} \\
2 & \text{gúr-\text{tnx}} & \text{(ay) gúr-\text{nggeen}} \\
& & \text{‘You’re a man’} \quad \text{‘You’re [pl] men’} \\
3 & \text{gúr-\text{la}} & \text{(ay) gúr-\text{lanyu}} \\
& & \text{‘He’s a man’} \quad \text{‘They’re men’} \\
\end{array}
\]

Adjective-like predicates have still another inflection:

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{Sg} & \text{Pl} \\
1 & \text{ma-ngi féébar} & \text{nyu-ngi féébar} \\
& & \text{‘I’m sick’} \quad \text{‘We’re sick’} \\
\end{array}
\]

2 Kihm (1999) in his discussion of focus in Wolof concentrates primarily on the role of this paradigm (Kihm 1999.248), particularly la (or l-a), and argues that it is a “verbal element” (Kihm 1999.247) claiming that “la compacts an entire VP” (Kihm 1999.248). He goes on to segment the form into la that is “identified with the noun class prefix L- of generic reference” and the “a copula” (Kihm 1999.249). Here and below, no such segmentation is proposed, and whole forms such as those in (4) are taken to be stem plus suffix and to constitute (because inflected for person and number of the Subject) a “verb”, because that is what “verbs” do. But this is not really germane to understanding Wolof. It is the function of the forms that is at issue.
2  yaa-ŋgi féébar  yée-ŋgi féébar
    ‘You’re sick’          ‘You’re [pl] sick’
3  mu-ŋgi féébar  nyu-ŋgi féébar
    ‘S/he’s sick’          ‘They’re sick’

When an overtly named Subject PARTICIPANT occurs with a predicate (verb, noun or an adjective), it commonly precedes, and other PARTICIPANTS follow:

(6)  (a)  xády-bi mbów-nɔ
       [dog-the bark-3rd.sg.]
       ‘The dog barked’

       (b)  xáleb-bi ɔlɔf-lɔ
            [boy-the Wolof-3rd.sg]
            ‘The boy is Wolof’

       (c)  dyigén-dyi dé-fɔ féébar
            [woman-the be-3rd.sg sick]
            ‘The woman is sick’

The semantics of word order will be treated in some detail in sections 3 and 5.

2.1  *Nouns*  
     PARTICIPANTS in a PROPOSITION fall into several classes depending upon the shape of the ‘definite’ article that occurs with them. Indefiniteness is marked by the absence of the suffix:

(7)  (a)  xále-bi fón-nɔ dyigén
       [boy-the kiss-3sg woman]
       ‘The boy kissed a woman’

       (b)  xále-bi fón-nɔ dyigén-dyi
            [boy-the kiss-3sg woman-the]
            ‘The boy kissed the woman’

The following classes have been identified:
Some PARTICIPANTS may accept more than one shape of the article:

(9) (a) fas-bi fas-wi
     ‘the horse’

(b) dyígen-dyi dyígen-bi
     ‘the woman’

Others may not:

(10) gel-bi
     *gel-si

Lengthening the vowel of the ‘definite’ article signals a proximal
demonstrative sense which contrasts with a distal demonstrative:

(11) (a) dyigén-dyi fón-nə xále-bi
dyigén-bi fón-nə xále-bi
     ‘This woman kissed the boy’
     ‘This woman kissed the boy’
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(b) xále-bii fón-na dyigén-dyi
   ‘This boy kissed the woman’

(c) kár-gii
   ‘this house’

(d) fas-bii
    fas-wii
   ‘this horse’

(e) ndóx-mii
   ‘this water’

and with the distal demonstrative:

(12) (a) dyigén-dyee
       dyigén-bee
   ‘that woman’

Here a difference emerges between the shapes. Dyigén-dyee is further away than dyigén-bee; it seems to “minimize the person ... You don’t know the person” (AD). “I’d think of it in terms of distance” (SS). Lengthening occurs elsewhere:

(13) (a) k-ee
       ‘that person’

(b) l-ee
    ‘that thing’

(c) f-ee
   ‘that place’

Plurality can be signaled by choice of ‘definite’ article:

(14) (a) dyigén-nyi fón-nanyu xálebi
       ‘The women kissed the boy’

(b) xády-i mbóo-nany
    ‘The dogs barked’
The plural demonstrative:

(15) dyigén-yee
    ‘those women’

is the plural of both:

(16) (a) dyigén-bii  (b) dyigén-bee
    ‘this woman’  ‘that woman’

2.2 Pronouns
In addition to the inflections of (3), (4), and (5), which indicate ‘subject’, Wolof seems to have a set of object pronouns which are post-posed to the Verb. The pronominal object shapes are as follows:

(17) (a) dyigén-dyi fón-nə ma
    ‘The woman kissed me’

(b) dyigén-bi fón-nə la
    ‘The woman kissed you’

(c) dyigén-bi fón-nə ko
    ‘The woman kissed him/her’

(d) dyigén-bi fón-nə nyu
    ‘The woman kissed us’

(e) dyigén-bi fón-nə leen
    ‘The woman kissed you [pl]’
    AD/SS

(f) dyigén-bi fón-nə leen
    AD
    dyigén-bi fón-nə nyom
    SS
    ‘The woman kissed them’

Following Prepositions, e.g. *ak* ‘with’, the set of Pronouns in (18) occurs:

(18) (a) dyigén-dyi  ándə-nə  ak  mán
    [woman-the walk-3rd.sg with me]
    ‘The women went with me’
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3. ROLES and VOICE

Wolof exploits three syntactic positions for the expression of ROLES: _V, V₁_, and _V₂_:

(b) dyigén-dyi ãndə-nə ak yáw  
‘The women went with you’

(c) dyigén-dyi ãndə-nə ak móóm  
‘The women went with him/her’

(d) dyigén-dyi ãndə-nə ak nyúny  
‘The women went with us’

(e) dyigén-dyi ãndə-nə ak yéén  
‘The women went with you [pl]’

(f) dyigén-dyi ãndə-nə ak nyóóm  
‘The women went with them’

The immediately preverbal position signals an Agentive-like ROLE, and the EVENT will normally encode person and number information for the PARTICIPANT filling it. When the AGENT is an overt noun, the inflection and the noun co-occur. The first and second persons are not coded as independent pronouns, but do appear as verbal inflections. The two postverbal positions do not appear as agreement affixes. Sentences will either contain nouns filling the two postverbal ROLES or an affix appropriate to the person and number of the PARTICIPANT filling the ROLE. When expressed pronominally, the
PARTICIPANTS appear post-verbally as suffixes following the inflection for the AGENT.

(22)  
(a)  dyóx-na-ma-ko  
[give-3rd.sg-1st.sg-3rd.sg]  
‘S/he gave it to me’

(b)  lóó-ma-ko  deŋk-ee  
[what.2nd.sg-1st.sg-3rd.sg  leave-EE]  
‘Why did you trust me?’  
[I.e., ‘Why did you leave it with me?’, hence ‘trust me’?]  
‘What did you give me to get me to look after it?’

Wolof appears to grade the postverbal content semantically in the following way. The position immediately following the verb is the most involved, defined, and precise. The second position following is less involved, defined, and precise. Neither of these positions is associated with an overt mark. While the V₁ and V₂ positions are frequently associated with a given ROLE, the position by itself is not sufficient to identify the ROLE, which is then signalled by a combination of position, EVENT semantics, and verbal morphology. Cp. xále-bi ‘the boy’, yááy-am ‘his mother’, and sáma-rak ‘my young sibling’ in (19) - (21). The third position in V₃ (and the least involved, defined, and precise PARTICIPANT) is marked by one of several prepositions: ngir ‘for’, tyi ‘to’, ak ‘with, and’, si ‘at’.

3.1  -ee-

The claims of the preceding section are most easily seen in the examination of two verbal suffixes (-ee- and -al-), which manipulate the semantics of ROLE and VOICE (i.e. position in the PROPOSITION). We will begin with -ee-.

As noted above, the V₁ position appears to be appropriate to Recipients (in [19]), a second sort of Recipient in (20), and Beneficiaries (in [21]). Both (20) and (21) are possible because of -ee- and -al-, resp. Without those derivational affixes, the expressions differ:

(23)  bááyi-naa  Awa  tyi  sáma-rak  
[leave-1st.sg  Awa  to  my-younger.sibling]  
‘I left Awa with my sister’
The comparison of (24) with (21) and of (23) with (20) suggests that in each, the ‘mother’ and ‘Awa’ are more intensely involved when they appear in the \( V_{-1} \) position. In (21), the mother is present at the site of the EVENT, whereas in (24), she can be absent, and the sense of a memorial is possible. Although the English glosses of (20) and (23) are identical, there is a difference in that \( baay-ee \) implies a focus on the PARTICIPANT in \( V_{-1} \).

The suffix \( -ee- \) produces a second effect in these:\(^3\)

\[
(25) \quad \begin{align*}
\text{(a)} & \quad \text{Sadibou dóó-\(n\) mbam-bék bánta-}\text{-bi} \\
& \quad \{\text{Sadibou hit-3rd.sg donkey-the.with stick-the}\} \\
& \quad \text{‘Sadibou hit the donkey with the stick’} \\
\text{(b)} & \quad \text{Sadibou door-}\text{-ee-}\text{-n} \text{ mbám-bi bánta-}\text{-bi} \\
& \quad \{\text{Sadibou hit-EE-3rd.sg donkey-the stick-the}\} \\
& \quad \text{‘Sadibou hit the donkey with the stick’} \\
\text{(c)} & \quad \text{*Sadibou door-}\text{-ee-}\text{-n} \text{ bánta-}\text{-bi mbám-}\text{-bi} \\
& \quad \{\text{Sadibou hit-EE-3rd.sg stick-the donkey-the}\}
\end{align*}
\]

the “focus is more on the tool” in (25b). Both \( bááyi \) ‘leave’ and \( dóór \) ‘hit’ are grammatically transitive verbs. The \( -ee- \) affix, when added to them, does not seem to produce the same effect in terms of ROLE. The result in (20) seems to be more Recipient-like, and in (25b), more Instrument-like. Note also that (25c) indicates that the order of PATIENT and INSTRUMENT does not change as the order of PATIENT-RECIPIENT changed to RECIPIENT-PATIENT in (20). This suggests that the content of a \( tyi \) phrase and what precedes are more tightly bound than is the content of a phrase introduced by \( ak \).\(^4\)

Still a third result emerges when the affix \( -ee- \) is added to ditransitive EVENTS:

\(^3\) \( Mbam-bék \) is a morphophonemic variant of \( mbam-bi \) \( ak \), and \( ak \) is one of the Wolof prepositions, as noted above.

\(^4\) One speaker (AD) accepts (25c). Another, (SS) asserts “Here \( mbam-bi \) should come before \( bant-bi \)”. 

The semantic effect of -ee- is expressed in the English ‘away’. There is a sense of disposition in (26), which is absent from the alternate expressions without -ee-. In (26a), the child was given up for adoption, and in (26b), the impression is that the money was not given to someone just to hold, but its ownership was relinquished.

Figure 1 depicts the three effects of -ee-. In that figure, (a) represents the effect of -ee- in (20). The relation of RECIPIENT is expressed in the V₁ position. The alternate expression is one with tyi in the V₃ position. The effect described by (b) is that of (25), in which an INSTRUMENT is expressed in V₂, and that is an alternate to one in which the INSTRUMENT is expressed in V₃ with ak. In (c), the PATIENT is drawn to the V₁ position as in (26), and

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{First position following} & \text{Second position following} & \text{Third position following} \\
\text{EVENT} & & \\
\uparrow & \text{tyi} & (a) \\
\uparrow & \text{ak} & (b) \\
\uparrow & & (c) \\
\end{array}
\]

Figure 1: The effects of -ee-.

and the Recipient has no possible expression:⁵

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⁵ One speaker (AD) will accept

(i) dyox-éé-naa sáma-dom dyigen-dyi 
    [give-EE-1st.sg my-child woman-the] 
    ‘I gave my child to the woman’

with an inverted DO IO order, but SS will not.
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(27) (a) *dyox-éé-naa dyigend-yi sámã-dom
[give-EE-1st.sg woman-the my-child ]
(b) *dyox-éé-naa sámã-dom tyi dyigen-dyi
[give-EE-1st.sg my-child to woman-the]
(c) *wáá-dyi dyóx-ee-na-ko xáális
[man-the give-EE-3rd.sg.3rd.sg money]

This RECIPIENT has no nominal nor pronominal expression as the RECIPIENT in (28) allows both:

(28) (a) dyóx-na-kó-ko
[give-3rd.sg-3rd.sg-3rd.sg]
‘S/he gave him/her it’
(b) wáá-dyi dyóx-na-ko mbamxóóx-bi
[man-the give-3rd.sg-3rd.sg pig-the]
‘The man gave him the pig’
‘The man gave it to the pig’

When -ee- expresses a relation of a PARTICIPANT for which the alternative is an expression in V₃, i.e., (a) and (b) in Figure 1, the effect is not so severe, and the PARTICIPANT can — in contrast with (c) in Figure 1 — be expressed as a noun or a pronoun:7

(29) (a) rey-éé-naa-ko mbamxóóx-bi
[kill-EE-1st.sg-3rd.sg pig-the]
‘I killed the pig with it’
(b) rey-éé-naa-ko-ko
[kill-EE-1st.sg-3rd.sg-3rd.sg]
‘I killed it with it’

---

6 One speaker (SS) rejects both expressions (60a) and (60b), while the other speaker (AD) will accept (60b). Both reject (60c).

7 The order of pronominal suffixes, especially in (30b), confirms that the effect of -ee- is to place a PARTICIPANT in V₂, even though the order of this ‘new’ PARTICIPANT may be variable (Cf. foontote 6).
These patterns suggest several conclusions. **First**, **ee-** is clearly not the mark of a ROLE. Its function seems to be more one of VOICE. It identifies a PARTICIPANT in a less involved ROLE:

(i) The Recipient in (23)
(ii) The Instrument in (25a)
(iii) The Patient in (26)

and it makes each more heavily enveloped by the EVENT. **Second**, the **v_1**, **v_2**, and **v_3** positions are graded semantically in such a way that **v_2** has more definition than **v_3**. Cf. the speakers’ reactions cited above and contrasts such as:

(31) (a) má-ngi si Senegal
[1st-sg.-NGI in Senegal]
‘I’m somewhere in Senegal’

(b) má-ngi Senegal
[1st-sg.-NGI Senegal]
‘I’m in Senegal’

In (31a) with the preposition **si**, the location is less a precise ‘somewhere’. In answer to the question *fún ṣe ṣe nékk* ‘Where are you?’, (31) is a “vague response”. In (31b), the location is more focused, and the speaker is precisely in Senegal as opposed, say, France. The greater precision of **v_1** over **v_2** can be further seen in the inability of the language to exploit the indefinite grammar in **v_1**, while it is possible in **v_2** (cf. [7]):

(32) (a) *dyóx-naa wááy xáális-bi*
[give-1st.sg man money-the]
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(b) dyóx-naa **benn** wááy xáális-bi
[give-1st.sg one man money-the]
‘I gave the money to a man’

The V₁ requires the preciseness of **benn** ‘one’ to achieve a kind of indefiniteness.

Certain relations remain beyond the reach of -ee-. Let us begin with (33):

(33) (a) nelaw-nə  si kórgi
[sleep-3rd.sg in house-the]
‘S/he fell asleep in the house’

(b) *nelaw-ee-nə kórgi
[sleep-EE-3rd.sg house-the]

From (33), it would seem that the **si** of location cannot interact with -ee-, but the sentences of (34) indicate otherwise:

(34) (a) fíi -lə nelaw-ee
[here.DEM-3rd.sg sleep-EE]
‘This is the point [in watching a movie] s/he went to sleep’
‘This is here s/he passed away’

(b) *si kórgiì-lə nelaw-ee
[in house-the-3rd.sg sleep-EE]

The contrast in (34) shows three things: (1) -ee- is possible with times and places, (2) the time or place has to be FOCUS (Cf. section 5), and (3) it must be deictically indicated (i.e., ‘here’ as opposed to ‘in this house’). The second and third constraints on the interaction of place with -ee- support the ‘precise’ character of -ee-, and speakers will note the impression of “starting point” with sentences such as (34a). This pattern extends to other uses:

(35) (a) lóò-mə-kọ deŋk-ee
[what.you-1st.sg-3rd.sg leave-EE]
‘Why did you trust it to me?’
The sense of ‘why’ also has expression with -ee-, but again only when the cause is FOCUS.

The behavior of -ee- in (33) - (35) now suggests a further organization of material expressed by preposition, an organization in which tyi is more closely allied with the preceding content, ak less so, and sí, least. Some content, e.g. a comitative relation, is beyond the pale of -ee-:

(36) (a) nelaw-nə ak dyigen-dyi
[sleep-3rd.sg with woman-the]
‘S/he slept with the woman’

(b) *nelaw-ee-nə dyigen-dyi
[sleep-EE-3rd.sg woman-the]

This suggests that a relation like the Comitative is not a ROLE since it has only the peripheral expression marked with ak.

3.2 -al-

The suffix -al-, like -ee-, seems to interact with word order, and to elaborate on the semantics of V__2. Sentences (24) and (21) are repeated here as (37a) and (37b):

(37) (a) wáá-dyi réy-nə mbamxóóx-bi ŋigir yááy-am
[man-the kill-3rd.sg pig-the for mother-his]
‘The man killed the pig for the sake of/to honor his mother’

(b) wáá-dyi réy-al-nə yááy-am mbamxóóx-bi
[man-the kill-AL-3rd.sg mother-his pig-the]
‘The man killed the pig for his mother’

(c) wáá-dyi réy-al-nə mbamxóóx-bi yááy-am
[man-the kill-AL-3rd.sg pig-the mother-his]
‘The man killed the pig for his mother’
In (37a), the AGENT’s mother is a remote Beneficiary, i.e. ‘for the honor of’. It expresses a commemoration, whereas in (37b) with -al-, the mother is present and is more directly involved and affected: “His mom came to visit him and he killed the pig to celebrate.” The alternative order of (37c) maintains a greater involvement than in (37a), but the focus is on the pig.8 In (37c), yááy-am ‘his mother’ is involved only because she cannot kill the pig, which was killed then by someone else. Note that in

(38) (a) wáá-dyi réy-al-nə-mə mbamxóóx-bi
[man-the kill-AL-3rd.sg-1st.sg pig-the]
'The man killed the pig for me'

(b) wáá-dyi réy-al-nə-mə-kə
[man-the kill-AL-3rd.sg-1st.sg-3rd.sg]
'The man killed it for me'

both the BENEFICIARY and the PATIENT can have pronominal expression as the INSTRUMENT with -ee- could in (29). The BENEFICIARY and the INSTRUMENT differ in that the INSTRUMENT can also exploit the V₁ position (cf. [37b] and [37c]), a possibility denied to the INSTRUMENT (cf.[25b] and [25c]).9

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8 Note here that both speakers accept the alternate orders of (37b) and (37c), whereas there was some disagreement with respect to parallel expressions with -ee-. Cf. (25b) and (25c) and footnote 6.

9 The -al- suffix in (21) appears to be a Beneficiary gloss, but these examples

(i) (a) xéény 'to smell'
(b) xéény-al 'to make a place smell'

(ii) (a) dàŋ 'to be thick'
(b) dàŋ-al 'to make thick'

(iii) (a) magg 'to grow [of a plant]' 
(b) magg-úl 'to make grow'

(iv) (a) xát 'narrow'
(b) xát-xát-al 'to squeeze into a narrow place'

imply an expanded sense for the suffix.
3.3 Summary of ROLES

Overall, the PARTICIPANT relations have a graded relationship to the EVENT:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVENT</th>
<th>RECIPIENT</th>
<th>PATIENT</th>
<th>RECIPIENT</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>COMITATIVE</th>
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<td>BENEFICIARY</td>
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<td>INSTRUMENT</td>
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*Figure 2: The functions of PARTICIPANTS ranked by semantic closeness to the EVENT.*

Of the relations which follow the EVENT in the grammatical expression, the RECIPIENT seems to be the ROLE most closely associated with the EVENT, followed by the PATIENT. The V<sub>2</sub> expressions of the INSTRUMENT and the BENEFICIARY approximate the semantic relation of the PATIENT, with the BENEFICIARY being perhaps slightly more bound to the EVENT. The RECIPIENT (e.g. [23]), BENEFICIARY (e.g. [24]), and INSTRUMENT (e.g. [25a]) lie in the next tier. They are all related by prepositions to the EVENT, but they may also occur with a tighter bond (with the appropriate affix, -ee- or -al-). Finally, there are those relations which give no evidence of having the status of ROLE; they are only expressed by preposition, e.g. expressions of Time, Location, and the Comitative.

There are further observations that can be made about the organization of Figure 2. Grammatically, there is an opposition between expression of PARTICIPANTS with a preposition and without. There is an opposition between the expression of a pronominal PARTICIPANT by verbal suffix and by a pronominal shape following a preposition. This dichotomous opposition suggests a binary opposition of this sort:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>INSTRUMENT</td>
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</table>

*Figure 3: Other organization to a Wolof PROPOSITION.*

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10 Recall the order options available to -al- which were not possible for -ee-.

11 Cf. also section 5.1.1, which suggests a PERIPHERAL relation for TIME and PLACE.
The fact that a PATIENT may be expressed along with the BENEFICIARY created by -al- as in (37), while no PARTICIPANT could accompany the PATIENT created by -ee- from ditransitive verbs in (27), suggests that there may be additional organization to the NUCLEAR ROLES. The V₁ PATIENT created with -ee- and ditransitive EVENTS is more tightly entwined with the EVENT than is the V₁ BENEFICIARY created by -al-. The former does not admit other PARTICIPANTS to be in the NUCLEUS (nor perhaps in the PROPOSITION at all), while the latter allows another PARTICIPANT in the NUCLEUS but does not require them; for example, (39) has only two identified PARTICIPANTS, not three as in the English gloss:

(39) wáá-dyi réy-al-naa-mə
    [man-the kill-AL-3rd.sg-1st.sg]
     ‘The man killed it for me’

This suggests a scale of ROLES in the V₁ position.

4. Varieties in aspect and time
To this point, most of our examples have been cited in the past perfective form of (3). But other aspects and times exist in Wolof. Having described the outline of a Wolof simple sentence, we can now turn to some of the variety in the encoding of Aspect, which exploits this syntax.

4.1 Imperfective
There is an imperfective that is said to be “present or past”:

(40) (a) wáá-dyi dí-mə néttali
 [man-the -1st.sg tell]
     ‘The man was telling me’

(b) wáá-dyi dí-la néttali
 [man-the -2nd.sg tell]
     ‘The man was telling you [sg]’

(c) wáá-dyi dí-ko néttali
 [man-the -3rd.sg tell]
     ‘The man was telling him/her’

(d) wáá-dyi dí-nyu néttali
 [man-the -1st.sg tell]
     ‘The man was telling us’

(e) wáá-dyi dí-leen néttali
 [man-the -2nd.pl tell]
     ‘The man was telling you [pl]’

(f) wáá-dyi dí-leen néttali
 [man-the -3rd.pl tell]
     ‘The man was telling them’
When the inflection appears not on *di-*, but on another constituent because of the requirement to express a FOCUS, the shape *don* appears:

(41) (a) kán móó nyu *don* dór
[who lst.pl IMPF hit]
‘Who was hitting us?’

(b) wáá-dyi móó *nā don* dór
[man-the lst.sg IMPF hit]
‘The man was hitting me’

Compare the forms of (40) to (46) and (56) below.

The following forms illustrate a contrast between *di* and *don*: 12

(42) (a) dyigén-dyiī *de* nélaw
[woman-this IMPF sleep]
‘the woman who is sleeping’

(b) dyigén-dyiī *don* nélaw
[woman-this IMPF sleep]
‘the woman who was sleeping’

with *di* being present (and past? Cf. [40].) imperfective, and the *don* being just past time imperfective. 13

4.2 Future time

Note that the forms in (40) lack a suffix encoding the AGENT *wáá-dyi* ‘the man’. An inflection for AGENT can be added, and the effect is “the real future”:

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12 Although the two seem parallel in (42), they differ in that *don* has been to this point always an uninflected form. Cf. the co-occurrence of the two forms in (43c).

13 The use in (40) and (43) suggests the existence of questions parallel to (41a):

(i) kan moo nyu *di* door
[who us hit]
‘Who is hitting us?’
In this regard, re-examine these expressions based on -ŋgi-:

(43) (a) wáá-dyi ðí-na-ma doór
[man-the -3rd.sg.-1st.sg hit]
‘The man will hit me’

(b) wáá-dyií ðí-na-nyu doór
[man-this -3rd.sg.-1st.pl hit]
‘This man will hit us’

(c) ðí-na don táálibe
[ -3rd.sg IMPF student]
‘S/he will be a student’

In (44), the clause máá-ŋgi-ko-y wɔɔ ‘I be calling him/her’ is heard as past time because of the past context bĩ-ŋgɔ nyów-e ‘When you arrived ...’ In another context, the same form could be heard as ‘I am calling him/her’.

4.3 Past Time
A past time sense is commonly expressed with -oon (with a varying first consonant):

(44) bĩ-ŋgɔ nyów-e máá-ŋgi-ko-y wɔɔ
[when-2nd.sg arrive-E 1st.sg-NGI-3rd.sg IMPF call]
‘When you came, I was calling him’

In (44), the clause máá-ŋgi-ko-y wɔɔ ‘I be calling him/her’ is heard as past time because of the past context bĩ-ŋgɔ nyów-e ‘When you arrived ...’ In another context, the same form could be heard as ‘I am calling him/her’.

4.3 Past Time
A past time sense is commonly expressed with -oon (with a varying first consonant):

(45) (a) táálibe-láá-woon
[student-1st.sg.-PST]
‘I used to be a student’

(b) de-maa féébar-oon
[ -1st.sg sick-PST]
‘I was sick’

(c) dyigén-dyi fon-óln-aa xále-bi
[woman-the kiss-PST-3rd.sg boy-the]
‘The woman had kissed the boy’
5. **FOCUS in Wolof**

As noted in (1) and (2), word order in Wolof appears to be SVO. The behavior of questions and responses to them reveals another pattern in which FOCUS is grammatically encoded in sentential initial position.

5.1 *The expression of FOCUS in PARTICIPANTS*

Consider the question of (46) and its answer:

(46) kán mó fon xâle-bi
[who kiss boy-the]
‘Who kissed the boy?’

The response to this question is neither sentence in (47), but (48) or (49):  

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14 The set of pronominal forms that respond to (46) are:

(i) **man máá fon xâle-bi** (iv) **nyun nyóó fon xâle-bi**

*‘It’s I who kissed the boy’*

(ii) **yaw yaa fon xâle-bi** (v) **yen yééna fon xâle-bi**

*‘It’s you who kissed the boy’*

(iii) **moom moo fon xâle-bi** (vi) **nyomnyom nyóó fon xâle-bi**

*‘It’s s/he who kissed the boy’*

See also the pronominal forms of (18) above. Both AD and SS agree that the longer Wolof expression is the equivalent of the English cleft gloss, and that the shorter expression is the equivalent of the sentence-accented subject gloss.
While the sentences of (47) are valid Wolof utterances, they do not properly respond to the question of (46). Only those in (48) and (49) do. The question of a post-verbal PARTICIPANT takes this shape:

(50) kán lə dyigén-dyi fon
[who woman-the kiss] ‘Who did the woman kiss?’

and its answer is not (51), but either expression in (52):

(51) (a) dyigén-dyi fón-nə xάle-bi
[woman-the kiss-3rd.sg boy-the] ‘The woman kissed the boy’

(b) fon-nə xάle-bi
[kiss-3rd.sg boy-the] ‘S/he kissed the boy’
The sentences of (47) not only do not answer the who-question of (46), they do not answer the whom-question of (50). Only an expression that places the content sentence initially and marks with with the proper inflection will correctly answer (50).

Questions about content coded grammatically with Prepositions show a similar pattern:

(53) tyi kan la dyigén-dyi indi xálebi
    [to who woman-the bring boy-the]
    ‘Who did the woman bring the boy to?’

(54) dyigén-dyi indi-nə xálebi tyi dyángalēkat-bi
    [woman-the bring-3rd.sg boy-the to teacher-the]
    ‘The woman brought the boy to the teacher’

(55) tyi dyángalēkat-bi la induction xále bi
    [to teacher-the bring boy-the]
    ‘She brought the boy to the teacher’

The assertion of (55) answers (53), not the SVO pattern of (54).

Two observations are primary here. Initial position is employed both for the questioning content of a PROPOSITION and for the answering material, but position alone is not the signal of this content. When the content has the function of ‘subject’, the element mo ~ moo follows, and when the content is ‘object’ of Verb or Preposition, the content is followed by la. Note that the question forms also follow this pattern as well: kan mo ‘Who’ in (46), kan la ‘Whom?’ in (50), and tyi kan la ‘To whom?’ in (53). Subject Nouns and Pronouns share a form mo(o) when they function as FOCUS; other Nouns and Pronouns use la.15

15The paradigm of pronominal forms in this function is very similar to those in footnote 14:
(56) (a) moom moom fon xále-bi
móó fon xále-bi
‘S/hé kissed the boy’

(b) môn lə dyigén-dyi fón
[him/her woman-the kiss]‘The woman kissed him/hér’

The form lə, which appears with FOCUS, is the third person marker of Noun predicates. Cf. (4) above: gür-lə ‘He’s a man’.

5.2 **FOCUS in time and place**

Both these markers (a mo following a Subject Noun answer and a lə following a non-Subject Noun answer) indicate person and number of a Subject PARTICIPANT, but other lexical material can be placed in initial position without accompanying information of person and number:

(57) (a) lëëgi dyigén-dyi mú-ŋgi fon xálebi
[right.now woman-the 3rd.sg.- kiss boy-the]‘The woman is kissing the boy now’
[Her lips are on his cheek.]

(b) lëëgi rek dyigén-dyi fón-nə xále-bi
[right.now woman-the kiss-3rd.sg boy-the]‘The woman just now kissed the boy’
[“Just now ... really emphasizing the fact it has just happened”.]

(c) dém-bu si gúddi nelaw-ú-mə
[yesterday-night sleep-NEG-1st.sg]‘Last night I didn’t sleep’

(i) mán la dyigén-dyi fón
‘The woman kissed mé’

(ii) yáw la dyigén-dyi fón
‘The woman kissed yóu’

(iii) môn la dyigén-dyi fón
‘The woman kissed hım/hér’

(iv) nyúú la dyigén-dyi fón
‘The woman kissed ús’

(vi) yéé la dyigén-dyi fón
‘The woman kissed yóu [pl]’

(vii) nyóm la dyigén-dyi fón
‘The woman kissed thém’
The alternative position for temporal content is the final position:

(58)  nelaw-ú-mə  démb-u  si gúddi  
      [sleep-NEG-1st.sg  yesterday-    night  ]  
     ‘I didn’t sleep last night’

The difference is again one of FOCUS, with initial position being its grammatical mark. In (57c), it is precisely last night that the speaker did not sleep, implying that the speaker slept on other nights; but in (58), the speaker may have been sleepless on other nights as well.

There are two ways of saying ‘I am in Houston’:

(59) (a)  má-ŋgi  Houston  
        [I-        Houston]  
     ‘I am in Houston’

(b) Houston-la  nékk  
       [Houston-1st.sg  be]  
     ‘I am in Houston’

If there is a contrast between ‘I am in Houston, but you are in Dakar’, it is the latter expression with the place in initial position that is more acceptable:

(60) (a)  ?má-ŋgi  Houston  wante  yaa-ŋgi  Dákar  
        [I-        Houston  but       Dakar]  

(b) Houston-la  nékk  wante  Dakar-ŋzə  nékk  
       [Houston-1st.sg  be  but       Dakar-2nd.sg  be]  
     ‘I am in Hóouston, but you are in Dákar’

The association of initial position with the focussing of place seem is confirmed by the question of (61) and its possible answer:

(61)  f-53  dem-ón  demb  
       [where-2nd.sg.  go-PST  yesterday]  
     ‘Where did you go yesterday?’
FOCUS in Wolof

(62)  dem-ôn-na dyurubel
[go-PST-1st.sg. Dyurubel]
‘I went to Dyurubel’

(63) Dyurubel-la dem-ôn
[Dyurubel-1st.sg. go-PST]
‘I went to Dyurubél’

Only (63) sensibly responds to (60).16

5.3 Degrees of FOCUS
If the grammar of FOCUS is related to the use of Subject inflection, then FOCUS has various grammars. In this section we further elucidate the grammar of FOCUS and its semantics.

5.3.1 FOCUS on EVENTS
If agreement is the mark of FOCUS (in the context of sentence initial position), we might expect that the agreement marks on EVENTS/Verbs to also signal FOCUS, even though EVENTS does not appear in initial position. What we find, however, is that sentences such as (1) and (2), and others on the S-initial model with Subject inflection on the Verb do not behave as if they contain FOCUS, at least not in the way we found it in sections 5.1 and 5.2. Let us begin by looking at how such SV and SVO utterances behave in the context of questions.

Given a question such as (64), we might expect that the SVO utterance of (65) would be an appropriate answer:

(64)  lán-lə Sadibou déf demb
[what- Sadibou do yesterday]  
‘What did Sadibou do yesterday?’

(65)  Sadibou rey-ña mbamxóóx-bi
[Sadibou kill-3rd.sg. pig-the]  
‘Sadibou killed the pig’

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16 For AD, (62) is an answer to (61); but not for SS, who asserts that “it [62] can imply that you went to other places ... It opens up other spaces”, and thus does not rightly answer (61).
But it is not. Given the question ‘What did Sadibou do yesterday?’, the expression of (65) is an insufficient answer. In response to (64), only (66) will do. SV sentences such as (67)

(67) Sadibou tɔgg-ne demb

[Sadibou cook-3rd.sg. yesterday]

‘Sadibou cooked yesterday’

may constitute answers to such rhetorical questions as

(68) ndax am-na-ku tɔgg demb

[should have-3rd.sg-3rd.sg cook yesterday]

‘Did someone cook yesterday?’

The inability of SV and SVO grammars to respond to questions suggests that FOCUS of the sort identified by that diagnostic is absent from them.

When the context requires that the EVENT in a PROPOSITION be highlighted beyond its normal condition, constructions such as the following are used:

(69) wáá-dyi rey-úl bænɔxoi-bi dé-f-ko báyi

[man-the kill-NEG-3rd.sg pig-the do-3rd.sg-it release]

‘The man didn’t kill the pig; he let it go’

The expression de-f-ko báyi is an alternative expression to bænɔ-ko ‘S/he killed it’. And it is the former that is appropriate to the contrast of (69), ‘release, not kill’ as opposed to ‘release’ alone. The grammar FOCUS in EVENTS turns upon a root de, which has this paradigm for the persons and numbers of Wolof:

(70) (a) dé-ma-ko báyi (d) dé-nyu-ko báyi

[ -1st.sg-3rd.sg release] [-1st.sg-3rd.sg release]

‘I let it go’ ‘We let it go’
FOCUS in Wolof

(b) dé-ŋa-ko báyi\textsuperscript{17} \\
[ -2nd.sg-3rd.sg release] ‘You [sg] let it go’

e) dé-ngéén-ko báyi \\
[ -2nd.pl-3rd.sg release] ‘You [pl] let it go’

(c) dé-f-ko báyi \\
[ -3rd.sg-3rd.sg release] ‘S/he let it go’

(f) dé-nyu-ko báyi \\
[ -3rd.pl-3rd.sg release] ‘They let it go’

Speakers comment on these forms as follows “‘We do not know what he [the man in (69)] would do if he didn’t kill it ... sell it? ... uncertainty ... a lot of possibilities ... Expecting the pig to be killed ... After you give information first, then (\textit{deŋ ko báyi}).’” An alternative to (69) with \textit{bayí-na-ko} exists:

(71) waa-dyi rey-ú-l bamxóóx-bi bayí-na-ko \\
[man-the kill-NEG-3rd.sg pig-the release-3rd.sg-it] ‘The man didn’t kill the pig; he let it go’

and speakers are “More concerned with giving information than responding to expectations ...” The extraordinary combining of FOCUS with EVENT is frequently heard as offering explanations so that

(72) dé-fɔ i-táw \\
[ -3rd.sg IMPF-rain] ‘It’s raining’

is used “when you’re trying to explain a cause ... you’re supposed to be here and you say \textit{defɔ itaw}” as a reason for not being there. And

(73) dé-fɔ i-féébar \\
[ -3rd.sg IMPF-sick] ‘S/he gets sick very often’/‘Sometimes s/he gets sick’

is more than ‘S/he is sick’; it asserts a frequent occurrence or a characteristic of the person. To express just the observation that ‘It’s raining’ or ‘S/he’s sick’, the forms of (74) are used:

\textsuperscript{17} A contraction \textit{dé-ŋ-ko báyi} exists.
5.3.2 Degrees of Focus: Absence of S inflection

The previous section raises the question of “degrees” of focus. Run-of-the-mill SV and SVO grammars seem not to signal focus in that such sentences are not adequate answers to wh-questions. While not containing a degree of the concentrated focus needed to respond to a pointed question, they are suitable responses to more general inquiries such as:

(75) lú xâw
[what happen]
‘What’s going on?’

In answer to a query such as (75), that does not single out a particular component of content, the SVO grammar of (76) is suitable:

(76) lu xéw, Sadibóó-ŋi lékk ginár
[what happen Sadibou.3rd.sg-NGI cook chicken]
‘What’s happening is Sadibou’s cooking a chicken’

The grammar of SV and SVO with the inflections of (3), (4), and (5) contrast with certain alternatives which amplifies the presence of “degrees” of focus. Compare these:

(77) (a) door-na wáádyi, wáá-dyi dóór dyigén-dyi
[hit-1st.sg man-the man-the hit woman-the] ‘I hit the man; the man hit the woman’

(b) door-na wáádyi, wáá-dyi dóór-na dyigén-dyi
[hit-1st.sg man-the man-the hit-3rd.sg woman-the] ‘I hit the man; the man hit the woman’

18 Compare (76) with sentence (44) above. *Sadibóó-ŋi* is a morphophonemic variant of *Sadibou mu-ŋi*.
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(78) (a) téy si súbar sàngu-náá, sólù, ndéki
[his morning shower-1st.sg dress eat.breakfast]
‘This morning I took a shower, dressed, and ate breakfast’

(b) bí ma-yéwow sàngu-naa, sólù-ná,
[when 1st.sg.-get.up shower-1st.sg dress-1st.sg
déki-ná
eat.breakfast-1st.sg]

The sentences of (77) contrast grammatically in that the (a)-version lacks the inflection present in the (b)-version. The semantic difference is that in the (a)-sentence, the man hitting the woman is somehow a consequence of ‘I hit the man’. In the (b)-version, the two actions are disconnected: “It could be the other way around. You don’t know what came first.” But in the first expression, it is an “action following an action.” Similarly, in (78), the showering, dressing, and eating unfolded in that order, but in (78b), it is “some actions you did ... not in a linear progression. I did these acts, I don’t care how they happened.” Because the missing inflection implies a necessary sequence, the expression of (79a)

(79) (a) ?bí ma-yéwow ndéki-ná, sólù, sàngu
[when 1st.sg.-get.up eat.breakfast-1st.sg. dress shower]

(b) bí ma-yéwow ndéki-ná, sólù-na,
[when 1st.sg.-get.up eat.breakfast-1st.sg. dress-1st.sg.
sàngu-na
shower-1st.sg]

strikes the Wolof ear as distinctly odd. One just does not get up, eat breakfast, dress, and then shower in that order. Sentence (79b) is better since it is more of a recitation of what I do when I arise in the morning, among which are ... “It just lists things that the person did without specifying the order.” Confirming this are sentences such as (80a):

(80) (a) Awa sáty teere-bi
[Awa steal book-the]
‘Awa stole the book’
Sow remarks that (80a) is “like you’re telling a story”, and Deme says that “There is always something before or after.”

The sentences of (81) continue the semantic contrast of inflection and its absence:

(81) (a) xam-naa dyigén-dyi gis xâle-bi
         [know-1st.sg woman-the see boy-the]
       ‘I know the woman who saw the boy’
     *‘I know that the woman saw the boy’

(81) (b) xam-naa (ne) dyigén-dyi gis-na xâle-bi
         [know-1st.sg woman-the see-3rd.sg boy-the]
       ‘I know the fact that the woman saw the boy’
     *‘I know the woman who saw the boy’

The inflectionless EVENT in (81a) must necessarily follow and be linked to what precedes. What precedes is dyigén-di ‘the woman’, and the result is the equivalent of a relative clause. In (81b), the inflection lends greater separation: ‘I know (something) ... the woman hit the boy’. And the English equivalent is ‘I know that the woman hit the boy’. Comparing the grammar of dyigen-dyi gis xâle-bi in (81) with Awa saty teere-bi in (80a), we may conclude that Wolof does not have a syntax dedicated solely to expressing the sense of ‘relative clause’; it simply allows the close semantic connection associated with the lack of Subject inflection. Thus in (82)

(82) gis-na xady-bi mátt xâle-bi
         [see-1st.sg. dog-the bite child-the]
       ‘I saw the dog that bit the child’
     ‘I saw the dog bite the child’

I can have seen the dog and it bit the child, or I can have seen the dog biting the child. I certainly saw the dog, but what else I personally saw is vague. How that vagueness is resolved in real life gives one or the other English
glosses. 19 The EVENT xam ‘know’ in (81a) is not one that supports a gloss like the second one in (82), so there is the single ‘relative clause’ gloss. 20

5.3.3 Degrees of FOCUS: Prefixed S inflection

When the propositional content of a clause is mated with a preceding clause that contains a PARTICIPANT that would be the same PARTICIPANT as the Subject of the following clause, Subject inflection can be absent from the second clause, e.g. matt xâle-bi ‘(it) bite the child’ in (82). That is, the O of gîs-na is the S of matt xâle-bi. Null S inflection requires that the S be present nearby, e.g. in the preceding clause or elsewhere in the close context. That proximity is necessary but not sufficient for null inflection because prefixed S inflection can also appear when the condition of an immediately present S is satisfied. We will see below that the three grammatical patterns contrast: null S inflection, prefixed S inflection, and suffixed S inflection.

When the condition necessary for null S inflection is not satisfied, then overt S inflection must occur, but the inflection is not always the suffixed kind from (3). It can be prefixed, and any pronominal O will be prefixed as well: 21

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19 The potential vagueness is also present in (i):

(i) dé-fə bigg-ôn dyigén-dyi fon xâle-bi
[be-3rd.sg. want/love-PSI woman-the kiss boy-the]
‘S/he loved the woman who kissed the boy’
‘S/he wanted the woman to kiss the boy’

20 Such inflectionless utterances as (80a) are then undetermined out of context, e.g. the expression of (i):

(i) dyigéndyi nélaw
[woman-the sleep]
has the potential to mean either ‘the woman who is sleeping’ or ‘The woman slept’.

21 Although both the S-inflection and the O-inflection seem to be prefixed in (83), if they occur together, the O-inflection continues in its position as a suffix:

(i) door-na-1ə baparé nga-door-ko
[hit-1st.sg-2nd.sg. 2nd.sg.-hit-3rd.sg.]
‘I hit you and you hit him/her’

(ii) *door-na-1ə baparé nga-ko-door
[hit-1st.sg-2nd.sg. 2nd.sg.-3rd.sg.-hit]

(iii) *door-na-1ə baparé door-ngə-ko
[hit-1st.sg-2nd.sg. hit-2nd.sg.-3rd.sg.]

Sentence (i) “insist[s] on the succession” and baparé is used when “Something is already
Keeping in mind the necessary requirement that the PARTICIPANT which is the S of the second clause must be immediately present elsewhere if null S inflection is to occur, compare these four sentences:

| (83) (a) | wáá-dyi ma-gís | wáá-dyi ma-gís |
| 'The man who I saw' | 'The man who saw me' |
| (b) | wáá-dyi ngo-gís | wáá-dyi la-gís |
| 'The man who you saw' | 'The man who saw you' |
| (c) | wáá-dyi mu-gís | wáá-dyi ko-gís |
| 'The man who s/he saw' | 'The man who saw him/her' |
| (d) | wáá-dyi nyu-gís | wáá-dyi nyu-gís |
| 'The man who we saw' | 'The man who saw us' |
| (e) | wáá-dyi ngen-gís | wáá-dyi leen-gís |
| 'The man who you all saw' | 'The man who saw you all' |
| (f) | wáá-dyi nyu-gís | wáá-dyi leen-gís |
| 'The man who they saw' | 'The man who saw them' |

done.” Placing both the S- and the O-inflection before the verb is unacceptable.
The semantic conjoining of (i) requires the prefixed Subject inflection, but in (iv)

| (iv) | doer-na-la | wante | fon nga-ko |
| [hit-1st.sg-2nd.sg. but hit-2nd.sg.-3rd.sg.] | 'I hit you, but you kissed him/her [anyway]' |

the two propositions are opposed and the suffixed Subject inflection is appropriate, and the prefix is not:

| (v) | *doer-na-la | wante | nga fon-ko |
| [hit-1st.sg-2nd.sg. but 2nd.sg.-hit-3rd.sg.] |
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(b) big-naa  nga-dem
   [want-1st.sg.  2nd.sg.-go]
'I want you to go'

but not

(c) *big-naa  ma-dem
   [want-1st.sg.  1st.sg.-go]

(d) *big-naa  dem-na
   [want-1st.sg.  go-1st.sg.]

Sentences “(c) and (d) are completely wrong.” In (84c), S of ma-dem is present in the preceding clause, but because the connection between the two is of the tighter sort, the S prefixed inflection of (84c) will not pass, nor will the suffixed S inflection of (84d). Where the S of dem ‘go’ is not present in the preceding clause, the necessary condition for null inflection is missing, and the prefixed inflection occurs, e.g. (84b).

In PROPOSITIONS bound in a looser semantic fashion, S-inflection is necessarily present, and it is prefixed. The “tightness” is found when there is a Subject present and when there is a sense of ‘not-one-without-the-other’ between the PROPOSITIONS. Sentences (77a), (78a), (79a), (80a), (81a), (82), (83), and (84a) are examples of this as are the expressions of concentrated FOCUS in (48), (49), (66), (70), etc. These are all examples of the most tightly bound connection between PROPOSITIONS, and complementarily, examples of the least presence of FOCUS. Sentence (84b) illustrates the lesser degree of “tightness” prompted by an independent Subject, but the looseness can nevertheless be present when there are PARTICIPANTS in common:

(85) (a) dyox-naa  Sadibou  teere-bi  nga-
   [give-1st.sg  Sadibou  book-the  in.order.to
    mu-dyox-ko  [Deme]
    3rd.sg.-give-3rd.sg.  [Deme]]
'I gave Sadibou the book to give [to Deme]'
Sadibou is present in ‘I gave Sadibou the book’ and again in ‘He gave it to Deme’, yet unlike earlier examples where such a common PARTICIPANT elicited null S inflection, here prefixed S inflection is present. And that is because the connection between the two PROPOSITIONS is a looser ‘in order to’, which is equivalent in its ‘looseness’ to a non-shared PARTICIPANT across PROPOSITIONS (as in [84b]). The ‘in order to’ relation facilitates the looser relation between the clauses.

The form *ndax occurs in sentences with the meaning ‘because’, ‘so’, or ‘in order to’:

\[(86) \text{(a)} \quad \text{mundu maá génn ndax taw-bi} \]
\[\text{[Aux-NEG 1sg.sg. go.out because rain-the]} \]
\[\text{‘I can’t go out because of the rain’} \]

\[(86) \text{(b)} \quad \text{door-ko ndax mu-dyáng} \]
\[\text{[hit-3rd.sg so 3rd.sg.-study]} \]
\[\text{‘Hit him/her so s/he’ll study!’} \]

When *ndax mediates the relation between two PROPOSITIONS, as in (86b), the prefixal version of S inflection is present. The other two inflectional choices do not work:

\[(86) \text{(c)} \quad *\text{door-ko ndax dyáng-na} \]
\[\text{[hit-3rd.sg so study-3rd.sg.]} \]

\[(86) \text{(d)} \quad *\text{door-ko ndax dyáng} \]
\[\text{[hit-3rd.sg so study]} \]

The sense of consequence imparted by *ndax is also present in its absence, but with prefixed S inflection:

\[(86) \text{(e)} \quad \text{door-na-ko mu-dyáng} \]
\[\text{[hit-3rd.sg.-3rd.sg. 3rd.sg.-study]} \]
\[\text{‘S/he hit him/her so that s/he’ll study’} \]

\[(87) \text{(a)} \quad \text{door-na-ko mu-dyox-la téeére-bi} \]
\[\text{[hit-3rd.sg.-3rd.sg. 3rd.sg.-give-2nd.sg. book-the]} \]
\[\text{‘S/he hit him/her so that s/he would give you the book’} \]
FOCUS in Wolof

(b) samə-yaay dyox-na-mə xalis
    [my-mother give-3rd.sg.-1st.sg money
     mu-dyænd dall
     1st.sg.-buy]
    ‘My mother gave me money for him/her to buy ...

The temporal joining of propositional content also employs prefixed S inflection:

(88) dá-ŋga nyów rek ma-wə́ń-ko
    [be-you.sg come time I-call-3rd.sg.]
    ‘When you arrived, I called him/her’

But when ‘when’ is intended as a consequence, and not a time, then the absence of S inflection is invoked to signal the meaning:

(89) də-mə bigg-ón dyigén-dyi fon-ón xále-bi
    [do-1st.sg want/love-PST woman-the kiss-PST boy-the]
    ‘I loved the woman when/after she kissed the boy’

When the prefixed forms occur independently of a preceding utterance, they impart an uncertain assertion, a conjecture that is perceived as a question:

(90) (a) ma-wə́ń-ko
    [1st.sg-call-3rd.sg.]
    ‘Shall I call him?’

(b) ma-leb-əl-leen
    [1st.sg-tell.story-AL-2nd.pl.]
    ‘Can I tell you a story?’

(c) məw-wax
    [3rd.sg.-speak]
    ‘Should s/he speak?’

The sense of ‘when’ is also conveyed by the form bi, which is followed by Verbs with prefixed S inflection:

(i) gis-naa Michael Jordan bi ma-dem-ée Chicago
    [see-1st.sg. Michael Jordan when 1st.sg.-go-EE Chicago]
    ‘I saw Michel Jordan when I was in Chicago’
There are uncertainties that are felt as wonder. In (91),

(91)  nga-door-ko
[2nd.sg.-beat-3rd.sg.]
‘You dare beat him!?!’

the sense is both a question and a challenge to the fact: incredulity, but not assertion. These contrast with the given, unasserted free standing utterances with null S inflection, and the free statements with suffixed S inflection.

The Verb *báyi* ‘release/let go’ occurs both with following EVENTS that are null S inflected and prefixed inflected:

(92) (a) bayi-l Philip mu-dem
[release/let.go-IMPERATIVE Philip 3rd.sg.go]
‘Let Philip go!’

(b) bayi-l Philip dem
[release/let.go-IMPERATIVE Philip go]
‘Let Philip go!’

Sentence (92a) “implies that you are preventing ...” Philip from going and a greater oomph is required to get him released, while (92b) “Just means I’m suggesting somebody else ... suppose I want you to go somewhere and you think I’m not the best person ... suggest somebody else”. This seems to be close to ‘Let P. be the one to go!’.

6. **Conclusion**

Wolof employs a grammar that scales the sense of contingency from lesser to greater, paralleled by a sense of lesser assertion to greater. The grammar which signals the scale exploits Subject inflection in various ways. Cf. Figure 4. In (a), one’s purview is distributed across content that exceeds a single
FOCUS in Wolof

PROPOSITION. FOCUS is maximally diluted in (a), but as one moves from (a)

Lesser contingency and assertion

(a) No inflection on the Verb  \textit{dyang}
(b) Prefixed inflection on the Verb  \textit{mu-dyang}
(c) Suffixed inflection on the Verb  \textit{dyang-uə}
(d) Inflection elsewhere  \textit{de-fə dyang}

Greater contingency and assertion

Figure 4: The scale of FOCUS in Wolof.

to (d), one’s field of view becomes progressively narrowed, and FOCUS is more concentrated and more defined. As the FOCUS is compressed, the degree of assertion becomes increasingly intense. One moves from referencing propositional content in (a), to uncertain conjecture in (b), to statement in (c), and finally to pointed assertion in (d). As one moves from (a) to (d), the semantics of FOCUS is more and more formed and centered until in (d), it is so compacted that it selects a minimal component of the PROPOSITION. FOCUS in Wolof is then not one thing. It is a principle that comes in four degrees.

We noted in the discussion of Kinyarwanda especially, and elsewhere, that the semantics of FOCUS, across languages, avoids association with the equivalent of the AGENT ROLE. This disassociation is one of the empirically abiding properties of FOCUS. Its semantics may gravitate to EVENT (as in Bella Coola, Yogad, and West Greenlandic Eskimo), the less motile ROLE of PATIENT (or the equivalent, as in Kinyarwanda), but it never settles on the AGENT. Wolof then poses an interesting potential conflict. Looking at sentences such as (1) above, we found that sentence initial word order was one

\footnote{This interpretation generally conforms with a received analysis of Wolof that finds five “sous-modes” in the “indicatif affirmatif” forms of the verb (N’Diaye Corréard 1989.179). Our (a) is there labelled “le narratif”; our (b) is “l’énonciatif”; our (c) appears to be the “le présentatif”; and our (d) is “l’emphatique du verbe”. Our FOCUS on the S and other PARTICIPANTS is apportioned between “l’emphatique du sujet” and the “l’emphatique du complément”. It is not completely clear that the form in (c) is correctly equated with N’Diaye Corréard’s “présentatif” since that sub-mode is illustrated with forms we have introduced in (5) above.

Of the presentative, N’Qiaye Corréard (1989.180) writes approvingly, “Quant à la forme Pr[présentatif], elle [Robert 1984] lui attribue une fonction toute différente: celle de situer l’agent du procès dans l’espace du sujet énonciateur.” While the terms labelling these sub-modes are suggestive of our interpretation, e.g. “narratif” for (a) and “présentatif”, there seems to be no integration of the variation in inflectional choices of the sort proposed here.}
of grammatical marks of the Wolof AGENT, and the “normal” order seemed to be SVO. The conflict may seem to arise when we add the observation that sentence initial position is also the mark of the most intense degree of FOCUS. These two observations do not, however, result in the association of FOCUS with AGENT ... for several reasons. The SVO order we observed in (1) exists in those expressions in which FOCUS has less than its maximum degree. There is no FOCUS concentrated on any one component of those sentences, and FOCUS seems to be distributed equally throughout. It is a semantics of the clause as a whole. FOCUS is not sentence initial when the AGENT is sentence initial in these sentences. Second, when FOCUS is sentence initial and associated with some PARTICIPANT, the expression actually consists of two grammatical clauses. The first clause, which signals the FOCUS, consists of the FOCUSED content in combination with the appropriate inflection, e.g. dyigén-dyi móó. ‘It’s the woman’. This may be followed by a second clause, with null inflection, e.g. fon xále-bu-góór-bi ‘kissed the young man’:

(93)  dyigén-dyi móó fon xále-bu-góór-bi
     [woman-the kiss young-MODIFY-man-the]
     ‘It’s the woman who kissed the young man’
     ‘The woman kissed the young man’

It is true that FOCUS is sentence initial in (93), and it is also true that the FOCUSED person who performs the act of kissing is also sentence initial, but FOCUS and AGENT (S) do not merge because they are in separate clauses. The FOCUSED dyigén-dyi is, in its clause, not AGENT because there is no AGENT relation in dyigén-dyi móó. The FOCUSED content ‘woman’ is linguistically coreferential with and is, in the real world, the same person as the unmentioned AGENT in fon xále-bu-góór-bi. But there is no initial AGENT in (93).

Unlike some of the languages we have examined to this point, Wolof does not preferentially associate FOCUS with any one particular component of a PROPOSITION. Wolof is like Haida in not selecting some one propositional component as the favorite son of FOCUS. But Haida did not otherwise employ position (initial or otherwise) as a consistent mark of AGENT (S) as Wolof does. Haida was more sensitive to the balance between the semantics of the

24 N’Diaye Corréard (1989.180) and others see these as “des énoncés complexes composés d’une proposition nominale suivie d’une proposition verbale ...”

25 See the paradigm in footnote 14.
PARTICIPANTS and the functions to which they were put. When the combinations were not “normal” for Haida, initial position was invoked as a mark of that unusual circumstance.\textsuperscript{26} Haida and Wolof are also similar in ranking the presence of FOCUS so that it comes in degrees, yet Wolof differs from Haida in merging the semantics of FOCUS with the semantics of ASSERTION so that the answers to \textit{wh}-questions (our first diagnostic of FOCUS) is just the extreme of a scale of ASSERTION. The association of FOCUS with ASSERTION in Wolof further enriches our general concept of FOCUS by adding to the (dis)associations between FOCUS and other semantics observed in Haida, Kinyarwanda, etc.

\[\text{Version: February 19, 2006}\]

\textsuperscript{26} Recall that Haida employs \textit{euu} following sentence initial content to signal the maximum presence of FOCUS. Otherwise, Haida places content in sentence initial position without \textit{euu}, following a principle that recognizes the greater “surprise” in the packaging of certain content with certain functions, for example, combining a less ‘potent’ PARTICIPANT acting with the function of AGENT to affect a more ‘potent’ PARTICIPANT acting as OBJECT. In Haida, one expects the reverse, and when the unexpected happens, the language signals it with a FOCUS lesser than that conveyed by \textit{euu}, i.e., simply initial position for the less ‘potent’ PARTICIPANT.