Wolof (non) polarity sensitive item *dara* **Frank Staniszewski (MIT)**

Introduction. I present new data from original fieldwork on Wolof (Atlantic sub-branch of the Niger-Congo family), and examine the puzzling behavior of the QP *dara*, which is an NPI in some dialects, but not in others. This work focuses on a non-NPI dialect, where *dara* can be used in positive sentences as a regular indefinite (meaning *'something'*), but surprisingly, is also used in fragment answers to express the meaning *'nothing,'* a well-known characteristic of negative concord items (NCIs) (Zeijlstra (2004), a.o.). I argue against the possibility that *dara* is ambiguous between a NCI and a regular indefinite, and propose an analysis that builds on Fălăuş & Nicolae (2016)'s analysis of NCIs as indefinite NPIs that can license covert negation.

Background. (1)-(2) from Tamba et al. (2012) show that in the St. Louis dialect of Wolof, *dara* is an NPI, but in the Thieès dialect, it can appear in positive environments as a regular indefinite.

(1) Lekk-u-ñu dara
eat-NEG-3PL dara
'They did not eat anything'
(✓Thieès, ✓St. Louis)

(2) %Lekk-na-ñuu dara
eat-FIN-3PL dara
'They ate something'
(✓Thieès, *St. Louis)

New data. My informants from the Dakar region speak a dialect that patterns identically to Thieès Wolof with respect to (1)-(2), where *dara* is grammatical in (2) as a regular indefinite. Additional data, however, show that *dara* retains some polarity-sensitive properties. Surprisingly, the dialogue in (3) shows that it can be used in fragment answers to mean *'nothing'*.

(3) Lan l-a Xadi lekk? Dara
what EXPL-COP Xadi eat dara
'What did Xadi eat?' 'Nothing'

Obligatory scope under negation. I take the meaning in (2) to represent *dara's* basic meaning as an indefinite QP. Unlike other indefinites in Wolof, however, *dara* must scope under negation in negative sentences. The infelicitous continuations in (4a-b) show that *dara* scopes under negation in subject and object position. (5) shows that it must reconstruct under negation in clefts. (6) shows that it must scope under the negative predicate *bañ* (*refuse*).

(4) a. Roxaya lekk-ul dara, (#wante xaw-ma lan l-a)
R eat-NEG dara but know-NEG what EXPL-COP
'Roxaya didn't eat anything, (but I don't know what it is)'
(intended: R didn't eat something, but I don't know what it is)

b. Dara dox-ul ci oto bi, (#wante xaw-ma lan l-a)
Dara work-NEG on car the but know-NEG what EXPL-COP
'Nothing is working on the car (but I don't know what it is)'
(intended: Something isn't working on the car, but I don't know what it is)

(5) Dara l-a Xadi jël-ul (#wante xaw-ma lan l-a)
dara EXPL-COP Xadi take-NEG but know-NEG what EXPL-COP
'It was nothing that Xadi took (but I don't know what it is)'
(intended: It was something that Xadi didn't take, but I don't know what it is)

(6) Xadi bañ na jël dara
Xadi refuse 3rd take dara
'Xadi refused to take anything' (* In a context where Xadi took 1 out of 3 things)

Argument against ambiguity. Sentence (2) is unambiguous, i.e. it cannot mean *'they ate nothing'*. This shows that *dara* is not ambiguous between an indefinite and a semantically negative DP. Also, the restricted scopal possibilities described for (4)-(6) show that *dara* is not ambiguous between a NCI and a regular indefinite QP, as if it were, readings where *dara* outscopes negation should be available, as it is for the indefinite *lenn* (*something*) in (7).

(7) Lenn dox-ul ci oto bi, wante xaw-ma lan l-a
Something work-NEG on car the but know-NEG what EXPL-COP
'Something isn't working on the car but I don't know what it is'

Polarity sensitivity. I propose that the scopal restrictions in (4)-(6) show that *dara* acts as an NPI when negation/negative predicates are present. But first I rule out the possibility that *dara* is simply syntactically restricted to take narrow scope in general. (8), for example, shows that *dara* can QR and take intermediate scope when an additional higher negation is present.

(8) Xadi bañ-ul jël dara
Xadi refuse-NEG take dara
'Xadi didn't refuse to take anything'
✓NEG > DARA > BAÑ
(There does not exist anything *x* such that Xadi refused to take *x*.)

Additionally, *dara* can scope out of antecedents of conditionals, as in (9), where the continuation would be bad if *dara* took narrow scope.

(9) Xadi bu lekke dara di-naa feeba, waye bu lekke yaasa bi bax-na
Xadi if eat dara FUT.3rd sick but if eat yaasa the good-3rd
'If Xadi eats something, she'll get sick, but if she eats the yaasa, she'll be fine'

(8)-(9) suggest that *dara* is not syntactically restricted to have narrow scope, but is restricted to downward entailing (DE) environments in the presence of negation/negative predicates.

Analysis. I propose that *dara* is an indefinite QP that is restricted to DE environments, but only when focused. And, that it has the ability to license covert negation (CN) in elliptical contexts.

Assumptions. I adopt Fălăuş & Nicolae (2016)'s (F&N) implementation of Chierchia (2013)'s account of NCIs. Under this account, NCIs are existential quantifiers that trigger subdomain alternatives which must be exhaustified. These alternatives consist of existentially quantifying over all subsets of the original domain, and are thus stronger than the assertion in positive environments. Under Chierchia/F&N's account, NCIs carry a syntactic feature that must agree with a c-commanding exhaust (*exh*) operator, which takes as arguments a sentence (the prejacent) and its alternatives, and returns the prejacent and the negation of all of the alternatives that are stronger than the prejacent. In positive sentences, the subdomain alternatives will be stronger, and must be negated, which derives a contradiction with the assertion. In DE environments, the alternatives are entailed, *exh* is vacuous, and the sentence is grammatical. **Modification to F&N.** I assume that in the non-NPI dialects of Wolof, that *dara* lacks the feature that must agree with *exh*, and thus the presence of *exh* is not obligatory, but instead only appears under focus. This means that in positive sentences like (2), there is no *exh* present, and no contradiction is derived. I then assume that negation and negative predicates induce obligatory focus. In the presence of negation, then, *dara* must remain in a DE environment, where *exh* is vacuous, which derives the scopal restrictions in (4)-(8). **Fragment answers.** Following F&N, I assume that NCIs license covert negation (CN), and that there is a condition on CN which states that CN can only surface if the vP is not spelled-out. Assuming that fragment answers are focused and moved constituents with the remnant vP elided, this condition, along with the above assumptions about *exh* under focus derives the puzzling data in (1)-(3). **Outlook.** This study presents new data concerning a novel type of NCI, and an initial step towards an analysis. In future work, *dara's* unique cluster of properties in various dialects can provide a potentially fertile testing ground for the syntactic and semantic processes that derive polarity sensitivity.

Selected References: Chierchia, Gennaro (2013). Logic in grammar: Polarity, free choice, and intervention, vol.2. Oxford University Press. Fălăuş, Anamaria & Andreea Nicolae (2016). Fragment answers and double negation in strict negative concord languages. Semantics and Linguistic Theory, vol.26, 584-600. Tamba, Khady, Harold Torrence & Malte Zimmermann (2012). Wolof quantifiers. Handbook of quantifiers in natural language, Springer, 891-939.