Verum Particles in Wolof

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Issue. Four Sentence Final Particles (SFPs) are involved in the marking of `verum` in Wolof (Atlantic, Niger-Congo): *de, kay* (or *kañ*), *kat* and *gaa*.[1] In this research I tease apart their exact semantic and pragmatic contribution, claiming that they are a hybrid of verum and `response particles` and that their distribution depends on two factors: i) addressee-agreement and ii) the polarity of the utterance. The use of the particles is also constrained on a sociolinguistic level, with *de* and *kay* being used by all Wolof speakers, while *gaa* and *kat* seem restricted to native Wolof speakers outside of Dakar. To the best of my knowledge, neither a detailed study of SFPs nor of verum marking in Wolof has preceded this work. Indications of the meaning of some of the particles, however, can be found in Munro & Gaye (1997), Diouf (2009), Faye (2012) and Torrence (2013).

Methodology. This research was conducted in Dakar, Thies, Sanar Wolof, Ndem (Diourbel area) and Mbour over a period of 9 weeks. To get a general overview of which SFPs are used in the language, consultants were recorded speaking to each other about various topics. In addition, they were presented with a questionnaire in French which targets specific verum contexts, based on Gutzmann et al. (2017).

Data. The distribution of the four particles is illustrated in (1) and (2).

(1)　Today Fatou looked pretty.

    a.　Déédéét, rafet-u:l　　　　de/ kat/ *kay/ *gaa.
    　　no　　be.pretty-NEG:3SG DE KAT KAY GAA
    　　'No, she didn't.'　　　　　　　　　negative + disagreement

    b.　Waaw, rafet　　na　　?de/ *kat/ kay/ gaa.
    　　yes　be.pretty 3SG.PFV DE KAT KAY GAA
    　　'Yes, she did.'　　　　　　　　　positive + agreement

(2)　Today Fatou didn't look pretty.

    a.　Waaw, rafet-u:l　　　?de/ *kat/ kay/ gaa.
    　　yes　pretty-NEG:3SG DE KAT KAY GAA
    　　'Indeed, she didn't.'　　　　　　negative + agreement

    b.　Rafet na　　de/ kat/ kay/ *gaa!
    　　pretty 3SG.PFV DE KAT KAY GAA
    　　'Yes she did!'　　　　　　　　　positive + disagreement

First, none of these particles are compatible with questions, they are assertive particles. Secondly, since verum is emphasis on the truth of the propositional content of a sentence (Höhle 1992, as cited in Gutzmann et al. 2017:4), in a neutral polar question-answer sequence, there should be no verum-marking. This is borne out, as shown in (3), where there is no need to use any SFP.

(3)　a.　Ndax danga-y　　wëy?
    　　Q　vFOC.2SG-IPFV sing
    　　'Do you sing?'

    b.　Waaw, dama-y　　wëy.
    　　yes　vFOC.1SG-IPFV sing

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[1]These sentence final particles can also appear as topic markers, but this use is outside the scope of this abstract.

'Yes, I sing.'

Adding a SFP in (3-b) would add the flavor of the speaker thinking the person asking the question doubts that the answer will be positive. Thus, (3) confirms that the particles in (1) and (2) are indeed verum particles. What (1) and (2) illustrate is that these particles come with their own antecedent-related restrictions, based on addressee agreement and polarity, which make them behave similarly to response particles, despite that fact that, aside from *gaa*, they cannot appear on their own. The particle *gaa* is only felicitous in contexts in which the speaker agrees with their interlocutor, while *kat* is only felicitous with disagreement. *De* is felicitous in the same contexts as *kat*, but for reasons yet unknown, it is not as bad as *kat* in the agreement contexts. For now, I will treat *de* and *kat* in the same way, as disagreement particles. In this way, they are similar to the Bambara SFP *dɛ́*, which is also an assertive particle that reverses the polarity of a previous utterance (Prokhorov 2014).

Lastly, *kay* is only infelicitous in contexts in which the speaker **both** disagrees with their interlocutor and their utterance is negative.

Analysis. The generalizations drawn from (1) and (2) are summarized in Table 1.

	agreement	**disagreement**
positive	kay, gaa	kay, de, kat
negative	kay, gaa	de, kat

Table 1: Verum particles in Wolof.

Following the analyses in Farkas & Roelofsen (2012) and Krifka (2013) for response particles in English and German, I propose that *kay* and *gaa* are agreement particles which keep the polarity of an utterance the *same* and *kat* and *de* are disagreement particles which *reverse* the polarity of an utterance. The disagreeing particles always pick up the assertion, which is the highest element in the clause (introduced by the propositional discourse referent $d_{\text{speech act}}$ in (4)).

(4) $[_{\text{ActP}}$ ASSERT $[_{\text{NegP}}$ Fatou didn't $[_{\text{TP}}$ look pretty]]] (based on Krifka 2013:5)
         $\hookrightarrow d_{\text{speech act}}$ $\hookrightarrow d'_{\text{prop}}$ $\hookrightarrow d''_{\text{event}}$

The difference in the behaviour of *gaa* and *kay* stems from the fact that while *gaa* pick up the assertion, *kay* can also pick up the embedded proposition (introduced by the propositional discourse referent d''_{event} in (4)). When *kay* has a negative antecedent, it has a choice between picking up the assertion or the embedded proposition. In the latter case it appears to behave like a disagreeing particle. In (1-a) *kay* is out, because the only possible antecedent is a non-negated proposition, so it can't express agreement with it in a negative sentence.

Conclusion: i) Wolof realizes verum with the SFPs *de*, *kay*, *kat* and *gaa*, ii) the distribution of these particles can be analysed in a similar way to what has been done for response particles in English and German. I show that i) *de* and *kat* are disagreement particles, while ii) *kay* and *gaa* are agreement particles and iii) only *kay* can target the propositional antecedent.

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