

## **“Which language(s) are you for?” “I am for all the languages.” Reflections on breaking through the ancestral code: trials of sociolinguistic documentation**

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### **Abstract**

The Casamance, Senegal, is an area with high levels of societal and individual multilingualism. This paper reflects on methods used in a PhD project carrying out sociolinguistic language documentation of multilingual practices. It deals with the differing expectations placed on a study of multilingualism and the researcher. Looking at data from sociolinguistic interviews with participants concerning their multilingual repertoires, I present a critical look at methods used, alongside a discussion of etic and emic naming practices. The paper concludes that in order to fully understand multilingual practices in the region, researchers must reflect on their own prior assumptions whilst taking participants' descriptions of language and multilingualism into account.

**Keywords:** Multilingualism; sociolinguistics; Senegal; reflective practice; language documentation; repertoires; data triangulation

### **1. Introduction**

This paper is a reflection on my ongoing PhD research about social networks, gender, and the maintenance of multilingual repertoires in the Casamance, Senegal, West Africa with specific reference to conducting research in a multilingual setting. It is a critical look at my working practices and a description of some of the problems that I have encountered during my first fieldwork period trying to engage in what Childs et al. (2014) term sociolinguistic language documentation. They make the case for sociolinguistic documentation to be a new subdomain of linguistics, stemming from documentary linguistics. They put forward that sociolinguistic documentation entails “documenting not only lexico-grammatical codes but also the sociolinguistic contexts in which those codes are used, placing particular emphasis on the dynamics holding among multiple languages in a given environment” (Childs et al. 2014: 169). My work forms part of a larger research project entitled *Crossroads: documenting the unexplored side of multilingualism*, which investigates multilingualism and language contact between three languages spoken at the “Crossroads”, three neighbouring villages in the Casamance, Senegal.<sup>1</sup> My work falls more on the sociolinguistic side rather than the documentation side of the project, where some of the languages have previously been described (see Bassène 2006; Sagna 2008; Cobbinah 2012; Watson 2015 among others). Therefore, my focus is on the dynamics of multilingual language use in the area and the sociolinguistic contexts in which the various lexico-grammatical codes are used. The documentation of the sociolinguistics of multilingual practices runs alongside continued work on the three “Crossroads” languages, or lexico-grammatical codes: Joola Kujireray, Joola Banjal and Bāinounk Gubēeher. These three languages are perceived as distinct “ancestral codes” (Woodbury 2005), each associated with a different geographical area (see Figure 1

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<sup>1</sup> The project is led by Professor Friederike Lüpke and is funded through the Leverhulme Trust Leverhulme Research Leadership Award. More information can be found on our website: [soascrossroads.org](http://soascrossroads.org).

below). The “ancestral code” is seen as a particular lexico-grammatical code associated with a community, which previous generations are perceived to have spoken, regardless of possible multilingual language use. This code is viewed as “the language of the ancestors” and may or may not be currently spoken in any given community. Indeed in the Crossroads area, all of the above named codes are currently spoken although not by all participants. Although the previously mentioned documentation projects were carried out in this multilingual setting, the focus remained on documenting this “ancestral code” in isolation from other languages in the setting, which is common among language documentation projects (Woodbury 2011: 177). Yet the multilingual setting is acknowledged in sociolinguistic introductions and is singled out for future research.

Indeed, the field of language documentation often examines a “given language” in isolation. Furthermore, as many documentation projects are carried out by lone PhD students (as was the case with the languages documented in the Crossroads area), they do not have the time or the space (or perhaps expertise) to include more than a small section on the background to the sociolinguistics of the area, despite Himmelmann’s (1998: 166) claim that documentary linguistics should provide a “comprehensive view of linguistic practices characteristic of a speech community”. However, even in 1996, Mühlhäusler puts forward the need to study linguistic ecologies. Originally Haugen (1972: 325) defined a language ecology as “the study of interactions between any given language and its environment”. Mühlhäusler develops this idea of a language ecology to a linguistic ecology, by rejecting Haugen’s notion of a fixed or bounded language. Indeed he states that “no ecological study can afford to take languages as given” (Mühlhäusler 1996: 7). Furthermore, he does not see the point in studying languages as units in isolation from other given languages and means of communication (Mühlhäusler 1996). Despite these above calls for a more holistic look at linguistic ecologies, and some of Migge & Léglise’s (2013) recommendations to incorporate sociolinguistic methods into language documentation projects, including the need to question definitions of language, community, etc., to understand how people communicate in an area, language documentation has, until recently, continued in the same isolationist vein. Indeed it is the mismatch between these two different approaches to documentation, language documentation of separate languages and sociolinguistic documentation of linguistic practices, which will be examined in this paper. Or rather the difficulties of attempting to take a holistic view of a linguistic ecology where documentation of some of the given languages in the area has already taken place. Participants’ expectations of this changed research focus will be examined. Through presenting data on participants’ multilingual repertoires collected during an ongoing sociolinguistic study and discussing the methods used and issues arising, I demonstrate how differing expectations of documentary linguistics and sociolinguistics affect how I, as a researcher, conduct research in the field and what wider implications this research has for possible outputs of a sociolinguistic documentation project such as our team is engaging in<sup>2</sup>.

An overview of the highly diverse multilingual area of the villages of Brin, Djibonker and Essyl, located in the Casamance, Senegal, will be presented in §2, along with the methodology. In §3 I present data on multilingual repertoires taken from a sociolinguistic study conducted in the village of Essyl. I consider issues arising from emic and etic views on languages and language names. The differing expectations of participants and researcher will be examined at length in §4.1 where firstly I discuss what the legacy of language

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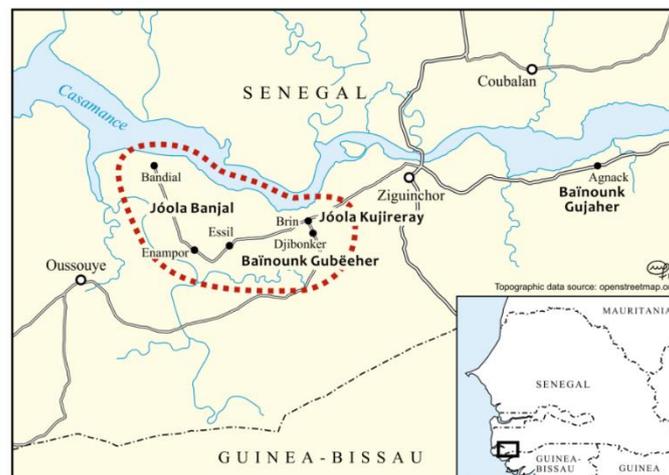
<sup>2</sup> I should make clear from this early stage that all problems, omissions, etc., are entirely my own, and although I wish to discuss others’ perceptions of my work, it is with a view to critique the communication of my research goals and practice and how this impacts the research itself.

documentation projects in the area means for how a project about multilingualism is perceived, and then in §4.2 what impact this has on how I am perceived personally and as a researcher with particular reference to my own multilingual practices. In §5 I try to find a way through the problems to future research by incorporating issues and challenges in a reflective and critical way. This is with a view to present not only a more realistic documentation and representation of multilingual repertoires and practices in the region, but also in order to reflect on how a documentation of multilingual practices may not be able to move away from concepts of bounded languages, but should include these concepts as an important aspect of the linguistic ecology, or general linguistic overview, of a given region. I conclude on a positive note, that despite issues and problems arising, it is nonetheless of paramount importance that this type of sociolinguistic documentation of varying communicative practices is undertaken by more research teams, especially in under researched areas such as sub-Saharan Africa, where high levels of multilingual language use are the norm.

## 2. Research setting and methodology

### 2.1 Multilingualism at the Crossroads

The research takes place in the Casamance, southern Senegal, see Figure 1 focusing on the villages of Brin, Djibonker and the neighbouring area called the kingdom of Mof Avvi.



**Figure 1: Map of Crossroads area**

Senegal is a highly multilingual country and the Casamance region even more so, with high levels of diverse individual multilingualism. All participants report speaking or understanding Wolof to various degrees, which is the most widely spoken language in Senegal (Mbaya 2005), and is seen to be replacing French – the official ex-colonial language – in many domains and contexts (see for example Swigart 1990; Mc Laughlin 2008). Brin and Djibonker are two villages side by side 12km on the main road from the regional capital Ziguinchor. At Brin there is a Crossroads, with the other road heading up into the kingdom of Mof Avvi. The kingdom consists of 10 villages, of which Essyl is located 6km up the road from Brin and is where the bulk of my research is based. The villages of Brin and Djibonker are each associated with a “language”, in the “territorialized” sense of Blommaert (2010: 45–46), where a language is associated with a prescribed territory or locality rather than other designations being used to define its geographical or linguistic boundaries. Blommaert

suggests that what are perceived as “L1s” (first languages)<sup>3</sup> are most commonly associated with a locality. Territorialized languages stand in contrast to “deterritorialization” where values and aspects assigned to a language “do not belong to one locality” and transcend locality especially with reference to lingua francas, essentially “a language which does not exclusively belong to one place” (Blommaert 2010: 45–46). Although these are in a way over simplistic in considering language use in the Crossroads, the idea of territorialised language is useful for considering the particular Crossroads languages. The two territorialised languages associated with Brin and Djibonker belong to different branches of the contested Atlantic group (Lüpke 2010; Cobbinah 2010): Brin with Joola Kujireray and Djibonker with Ba ñounk Gub ëher. Mof Avvi is associated with another Joola language, Joola Banjal, and has a wider associated territory. Joola Banjal is variously referred to as Joola (more on the use of the term Joola in the following sections), Gusiilay (Tendeng 2007), G újjolaay Eegimaa (Sagna 2008), J óla Banjal (Bass ène 2006), Joola Eegimaa (Bassene 2012) and Gubanjalay (Basen & Basen 2005). For the moment, along with conventions agreed by the Crossroads team, I refer to the language as Joola Banjal. However, when quoting participants I use the terms which they themselves have chosen or that authors have used when quoting their work. A further discussion of emic and etic views on languages and language names will follow in §3 and §4 below, but I use them here to provide an overview of the research setting.

The villages in question have had a long history of contact and exchange and today throughout the Crossroads area we see extended family ties and social networks. Moreover, participants are highly mobile and regularly move between villages, regional towns, and Dakar, the capital city of Senegal, for work, education, leisure, and visiting family members for example (Foucher 2005). Individual mobility increases participants’ multilingual repertoires as people learn the languages of the people they stay with, something which Calvet & Dreyfus (1990: 43) term “*plurilinguisme de voisinage*” ‘neighbourhood multilingualism’, which they state constitutes a local tradition in the Casamance. Indeed, this also applies to people who move to the Crossroads area, who may bring along other languages in their repertoires, such as Mandinka, Bayot, Joola Buluf and Pulaar among others, whilst learning one or more of the Crossroads’ languages. Furthermore, mobility patterns and household members change frequently as various children go to school or university in different towns, and family members often return during the long break in the rainy season to spend their holidays and/or help with the annual rice planting. This highly mobile population, with diverse people and repertoires, presents an ever changing sociolinguistic setting, and thus our research can only purport to show a snapshot of linguistic practices from a given point in time, which presents a further challenge for the sociolinguistic documentation of multilingualism in the region.

## 2.2 Methodology

The research is being conducted in a qualitative framework, using various methods associated with linguistic ethnography (see for example Davies 1999; Madison 2005; Heller 2008; Dorian 2010). The research is from an interpretivist stance and aims at a deep understanding of how participants use language in their daily lives in a highly diverse setting. In addition, this paper is intended to reflect on my own practice in the field, which is in line with the qualitative aspects of sociolinguistic ethnographic research that allow for the inclusion of the researcher in the study. Although this was always my intention, it certainly has affected

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<sup>3</sup> This is a problematic concept in the Crossroads area where there are such high levels of individual multilingualism, however a fuller discussion of this issue is beyond the scope of this paper.

interpretations of the research and project in unforeseen ways, which is the key motivation of the current paper.

In line with the recommendations of Childs et al. (2014), and also following work done in a similarly diverse multilingual rural setting in Cameroon by Di Carlo (Di Carlo & Good 2014; Di Carlo Forthcoming) a sociolinguistic study of the Crossroads area was begun.<sup>4</sup> The study started out with interviews going through a series of themes that the team had prepared, based on Gulberg's 2003 multilingualism questionnaire, and Di Carlo's questionnaire, which is used in his field site in Cameroon and which he kindly shared with the Crossroads team. However I should stress that this was not conducted as a questionnaire or quantitative survey. Participants were not supplied a paper questionnaire to fill in, nor answered the same standard questions; rather the method involved conducting a semi-structured interview where the questions served as a guide for the interviewer through pertinent topics. The importance of the qualitative interviews in triangulating data obtained through observation and for acquiring further (and particularly biographical) information should not be understated (Codó 2008: 161–162). The semi-structured interview format yielded not only interesting data concerning participants' multilingual repertoires, but also some preliminary data concerning language attitudes and participants' perception of the project's and my personal PhD research. If participants were comfortable using French, then interviews were carried out in French. On a couple of occasions I attempted some Wolof, yet as will be shown this was not always very popular in Essyl, where participants express negative attitudes towards the use of Wolof in general. In addition during the interviews discussed in this paper, I was accompanied by David Sagna<sup>5</sup>, a research assistant; who I later discovered had previously been trained as a transcriber and translator by SIL. He was part of a team who translated the New Testament into Joola Banjal and attended a language documentation training course in Cameroon with SIL. He is also the principle transcriber for Joola Banjal in the Crossroads project, where he has been trained in multilingual transcription techniques. In addition to the sociolinguistic interviews, I also have conducted participant observation and have video recorded instances of natural language use in order to investigate multilingual practices in Essyl.

### **3. Which language(s) do you speak? Multilingual repertoires in Essyl.**

Firstly, in this section I will present some data collected during the sociolinguistic study, using data from Essyl, concerning participants' multilingual repertoires. I will present how some of the data was collected in interviews and the accompanying transcriptions to demonstrate a particular problem I had when asking people what languages they speak. In §0 I discuss the issue around the naming of languages, in particular Joola and the various Joola languages.

#### **3.1. Singular vs. plural**

During sociolinguistic interviews, participants were asked to self-report on which languages they speak, to build up a picture of their multilingual repertoires, which were complemented by participant and participating observation and natural language use recordings. Although there are inherent problems with self-reporting (Milroy & Gordon 2003), it is nonetheless an important tool in gauging someone's perception of their repertoires, especially if their repertoires consist of languages which are not often used in the location, or which are not observed during participant observation. Indeed people may also be wary of claiming that

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<sup>4</sup> Parts of the sociolinguistic study have begun in the other villages of Brin and Djibonker with interviews and questionnaires also carried out by Chelsea Krajcik, Miriam Weidl and J'é énie Fahed Sagna.

<sup>5</sup> In preparation for this paper, David Sagna and I talked about our working practices and discussed the content of the paper. He is happy to be quoted and for our work to be discussed in a critical way.

they speak certain languages, often French in the Crossroads setting, or do not see their communicative practices as a “language” in its own right. Therefore, life histories may also uncover times when participants lived in other locations and learnt other languages. This is indeed the case for Essyl, where from participant observation thus far, participants predominantly use Joola Banjal, or another form of Joola, as an unmarked form of communication, with French and Wolof being used regularly in discourse as also found by Manga (2015) in other villages in Mof Avvi. All 20 participants interviewed thus far<sup>6</sup> in Essyl report speaking or understanding Wolof to various degrees. All also report speaking “Joola Banjal”, yet it is the nomenclature and the question asked which I wish to examine here. As mentioned above in the methodology section the interviews were carried out in French with or without interpretation by a research assistant. I learnt French at school and university, but in preparing topics for the interviews, I did not consider the ambiguity of various phrases in French. In a semi-structured interview situation I had various topics that I wished to ask people, but on reviewing the interviews and transcriptions it became apparent that in conversation, I tended to phrase the question: ‘which languages do you speak?’ in this manner “*quelles langues parlez-vous?*”. This form is homophonous with the singular form of the question “*quelle langue parlez-vous?*”, meaning ‘which language do you speak?’. Rather than using an unambiguous form, something such as “*quelles sont les langues que vous parlez?*”, where by using the 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural form of the verb ‘to be’, ‘which are the languages that you speak?’, would avoid confusion. Yet in spontaneous and fairly informal conversation I did not produce the questions like this. The result was that the interview proceeded along the veins of example (1), as transcribed by one of our team of transcribers and thus nicely highlighting the problems associated with this.<sup>7</sup> For our transcription system we use ELAN, which our team of transcribers have been trained to use. ELAN is particularly helpful for transcribing multiple participants and overlapping speech. Each line in the example below represents a tier in the transcription software. The first line, named transcription, is a representation of the actual speech, which is transcribed using the official Senegalese orthography for writing in national languages (Republique du Sénégal 1971; Republique du Sénégal 1977; see also Weidl 2012: 32-36). Then the second line gives a gloss into French. The third line indicates the language that the transcriber thinks is being spoken. The fourth line is a free translation into English, always done by the researcher, and the fifth is the time code in the recording. SG is the interviewer, TB is the participant. TC stands for the time code associated with the media file.

- |     |                         |                                     |
|-----|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| (1) | SG_Transcription-txt-fr | Et vous vous parlez quelle langue ? |
|     | SG_Translation-gls-fr   | Et vous vous parlez quelle langue ? |
|     | SG_Language-note        | French                              |
|     | SG_Translation_Eng      | and you which language do you speak |
|     | TC                      | 00:01:51.539 - 00:01:54.278         |
|     | TB_Transcription-txt-fr | Jóola !                             |
|     | TB_Translation-gls-fr   | Diola !                             |
|     | TB_Language-note        | French                              |
|     | TB_Translation_Eng      | Joola                               |

<sup>6</sup> Since writing the paper the number of participants in Essyl currently stands at 99, but at the time of writing only the first 20 participants were included in the discussion.

<sup>7</sup> Despite the fact that this section of the interview was in French, during the interview other languages were used, and thus the interview was passed to the team for transcription, rather than staying with me to transcribe.

TC 00:01:54.181 - 00:01:55.228

SG\_Transcription-txt-fr um ?  
 SG\_Translation-gls-fr hein ?  
 SG\_Language-note French  
 SG\_Translation\_Eng um  
 TC 00:01:55.251 - 00:01:55.742

TB\_Transcription-txt-fr w éy !  
 TB\_Translation-gls-fr oui !  
 TB\_Language-note French  
 TB\_Translation\_Eng yes  
 TC 00:01:56.422 - 00:01:57.026

SG\_Transcription-txt-fr ensuite ?  
 SG\_Translation-gls-fr ensuite ?  
 SG\_Language-note French  
 SG\_Translation\_Eng then?  
 TC 00:01:57.901 - 00:01:58.754

TB\_Transcription-txt-fr le fran çais, w éy !  
 TB\_Translation-gls-fr le fran çais, oui !  
 TB\_Language-note fr  
 TB\_Translation\_Eng French yes  
 TC 00:01:58.586 - 00:01:59.674

[ESS121115SG5]

Even though it was my intention to ask about the various languages that the participant spoke, they interpreted it as asking about one language and then this causes me, the interviewer, to prompt for more languages. In addition (as shown in the first transcription), the transcriber similarly perceives the question as pertaining to singular rather than multiple languages, despite being aware of the aims of the project.

### 3.2. Which Joola?

In addition to the issue addressed above, example (1) also seems to provide an instance of current emic practices of naming languages. Many participants when asked which language(s) they speak, whether or not interpreting it as a question regarding one or more languages, answered with “Joola”. Joola was a term given by the French to speakers of seemingly related languages, yet pre-colonisation these speakers had no overarching identity (Mark 1976; Baum 1986). The term Joola designates a loose family of languages mostly belonging to the Bak group of Atlantic languages and also an ethnic grouping (Watson 2015: 41). Many Joola languages are mutually intelligible. Some are used as regional lingua francas, such as Joola Fogny, whereas others are associated with certain territories such as Joola Banjal and Joola Kujireray. In another interview, example (2), the transcriber recognises that I was intending

to ask about the plurality of languages, yet the question is interpreted in the same manner, where “Joola” is offered as a response, to which I ask a following up question. SG is the interviewer; AMT is the participant:

(2) SG\_Transcription-txt-fr Um ! Et ...vous parlez quelles langues ?  
 SG\_Translation-gls-fr Euh...et ....vous parlez quelles langues?  
 SG\_Language-note French  
 SG\_Translation\_eng uh and which languages do you speak?  
 TC 00:02:23.753 - 00:02:32.218

AMT\_Transcription-txt-fr J óla !  
 AMT\_Translation-gls-fr Diola !  
 AMT\_Language-note French  
 AMT\_translation\_eng Joola  
 TC 00:02:32.278 - 00:02:34.064

SG\_Transcription-txt-fr J óla !  
 SG\_Translation-gls-fr Diola !  
 SG\_Language-note French  
 SG\_Translation\_eng Joola  
 TC 00:02:33.939 - 00:02:35.610

SG\_Transcription-txt-fr c'est le j óla d'ici ?  
 SG\_Translation-gls-fr C'est le Diola d'ici ?  
 SG\_Language-note French  
 SG\_Translation\_eng is it the Joola of here?  
 TC 00:02:36.491 - 00:02:37.888

AMT\_Transcription-txt-fr W éy !  
 AMT\_Translation-gls-fr oui !  
 AMT\_Language-note French  
 AMT\_translation\_eng yes  
 TC 00:02:37.882 - 00:02:38.596

SG\_Transcription-txt-fr um !  
 SG\_Translation-gls-fr ok  
 SG\_Language-note French  
 SG\_Translation\_eng um  
 TC 00:02:38.539 - 00:02:39.141

SG\_Transcription-txt-fr les autres j óola ?  
 SG\_Translation-gls-fr Et les autres Diolas , ( tu en parles aussi )  
 SG\_Language-note French  
 SG\_Translation\_eng any other joolas?  
 TC 00:02:41.732 - 00:02:44.559

AMT\_Transcription-txt-fr w éy !  
 AMT\_Translation-gls-fr oui !  
 AMT\_Language-note French  
 AMT\_translation\_eng yes  
 TC 00:02:44.607 - 00:02:46.006

SG\_Transcription-txt-fr lesquels ?  
 SG\_Translation-gls-fr Lesquels ?  
 SG\_Language-note French  
 SG\_Translation\_eng which ones?  
 TC 00:02:45.850 - 00:02:47.064

AMT\_Transcription-txt-fr toi tu comprends un j óola ?  
 AMT\_Translation-gls-fr Toi tu comprends un Diola ?  
 AMT\_Language-note French  
 AMT\_translation\_eng you do you understand a joola?  
 TC 00:02:47.151 - 00:02:52.926

SG\_Transcription-txt-fr um ?  
 SG\_Translation-gls-fr hein ?  
 SG\_Language-note French  
 SG\_Translation\_eng um?  
 TC 00:02:52.919 - 00:02:53.779

AMT\_Transcription-txt-fr non ?  
 AMT\_Translation-gls-fr non ?  
 AMT\_Language-note French  
 AMT\_translation\_eng no  
 TC 00:02:53.784 - 00:02:54.340

SG\_Transcription-txt-fr um ?  
 SG\_Translation-gls-fr oui ?  
 SG\_Language-note French  
 SG\_Translation\_eng um

TC 00:02:54.150 - 00:02:54.899

AMT\_Transcription-txt-fr tu comprends ?  
 AMT\_Translation-gls-fr tu comprends ?  
 AMT\_Language-note French  
 AMT\_translation\_eng do you understand?  
 TC 00:02:54.970 - 00:02:55.781

SG\_Transcription-txt-fr Non, pas encore. je vais apprendre  
 SG\_Translation-gls-fr non, pas encore. je vais apprendre  
 SG\_Language-note French  
 SG\_Translation\_eng no not yet I will learn  
 TC 00:02:55.669 - 00:03:02.236

[ESS121115SG2]

In the example above as a researcher I was curious to know which “Joola” the participant referred to, and therefore follow up with asking if it is the Joola of this area. However, having reviewed the transcripts and my practice, now I question why I was so quick to reject the emic view on language naming, with regards to participants’ repertoires and force a linguistic classification on linguistic practices that possibly do not adhere to bounded languages. Despite the fact that the term Joola was imposed by the colonists and can be seen as an etic designation, it is currently used by many participants as an emic naming practice. Despite a focus on multilingual repertoires and fluid linguistic practice it is impossible to ignore the impact that colonialism and Western/Northern academic traditions have had on the perception of language in the area. One of the goals of the Crossroads project is to investigate linguistic converges and divergences between the named Crossroads languages, and therefore the team members investigating this will be associating different parts of speech with different languages. However, as I am conducting a sociolinguistic study, I believe it is important to represent participants’ views and choices accurately. This could be important data for both the sides of the research project, especially as many participants report being able to understand “other Joolas” or that they speak “their Joola” to other Joola people who understand them. This exemplifies one of the main issues for sociolinguists, and other researchers, in that participants may not always refer to their language in the detailed way that researchers do, and may not recognise mixed codes, dialects, registers, etc., so the challenge for our team is in reconciling the two sets of data and approaches: the sociolinguistic alongside documentary linguistics.

#### **4. Legacy of language documentation**

The Crossroads project is attempting to document multilingual practices, against a background of research on individual languages, by many of the same researchers. In the following sections I discuss the expectations of the project, in §4.1, and researcher, in §4.2, and the influences these have on the research itself.

##### **4.1. The prevalence of ancestral codes: expectations of the project**

Before beginning the Crossroads project, various project members conducted language documentation projects in the area and wrote theses on different aspects of the grammar of Crossroads languages. Rachel Watson (2015) wrote on verbal nouns in Joola Kujireray,

whilst also engaging in a wider documentation of the language. Alexander Cobbinah (2012) also wrote on verbal nouns and nominal classifications in Ba ñouk Gub ëher. Both continue their work as postdoctoral fellows in the Crossroads project. During their theses they both produced sketch grammars, and dictionaries, in line with the traditional outputs of a language documentation project (Himmelmann 2006). In Mof Avvi, involvement of documentary linguists has been greater still as linguists have been actively carrying out research on Joola Banjal for over 30 years, beginning with Odile Tendeng, who bases her 2007 study on recordings made between 1983-1993. Other works based on studies carried out in Mof Avvi are Bass ène (2006); Sagna (2008); and Bassene (2012).

Furthermore SIL has been active in Mof Avvi for many years and a number of literacy documents and texts have been produced, which have been used for literacy classes, including in Essyl<sup>8</sup>. Brin, Djibonker and especially Essyl are small communities with tight-knit structures, where the researchers are well-known and respected, and moreover their original research aims were well known. Indeed many people would have participated in elicitation sessions or recordings. Many participants, and those who did not participate, knew of the goals to document one defined language, Joola Banjal, and not any other language or linguistic practices. The current project's stance is to look at multilingual language use in as natural as possible settings, without necessarily focussing on bounded languages (which is also a very specific ideological stance), yet the two standpoints cannot be separated when engaging in sociolinguistic documentation.

The above studies on bounded languages reinforce participants' meta-awareness of languages as separate bounded systems. The aims of language documentation and people's meta-awareness of languages are complementary, and do not pose problems for the work of the language documenter, and even reinforce the perception of this language existing as a bounded code. The challenge is for the sociolinguist to accept these bounded systems as existing in people's perceptions, whilst simultaneously studying actual multilingual practices where these boundaries may not necessarily be evident, and furthermore to problematise language as a system or construct. During the interviews I asked what languages are spoken at home, and participants invariably responded with "Joola Banjal" or "Joola". When comparing with participant observation, Joola Banjal does indeed seem to be the dominant language in many homes, yet as expected multilingual practices including French and Wolof are common. Despite David's assurances that his presence did not influence answers, he does state that the general awareness of linguistic work on Joola Banjal influences how participants see the Crossroads project, as supporting the maintenance of Joola Banjal. Furthermore, although SIL refer to Joola Banjal as "increasing" in its number of speakers (see footnote 8), it is widely perceived by participants as an endangered language, which both Sagna (2008; 2016: 5–6) and Bass ène (2006: 6) concur with, although mainly due to decreased intergenerational transmission in the diaspora. Although the Crossroads project does not directly aim at supporting the maintenance of Joola Banjal, it is nonetheless expected by participants that a linguistics research project should make some contribution. A sociolinguistic documentation then must include the "ancestral code" and the expectations of research on this as an important part of the changing linguistic practices to be documented. However, the expectations of the overall project, of my individual PhD research and myself as a researcher are difficult to separate, and are all equally pertinent, and in the next section I will discuss how expectations of me influence my practice in the field.

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<sup>8</sup> More information on this and links to the documents can be found here: [http://silsenegal.org/en/Bandial\\_Literacy\\_And\\_Literature\\_Resources](http://silsenegal.org/en/Bandial_Literacy_And_Literature_Resources) (accessed 04/08/2016)

#### 4.2. “What language(s) are you for?” “I am for all the languages.” Expectations about the researcher

As mentioned in the previous section the expectations of the current project, which investigates language contact and multilingualism, have been influenced by the experience of people with previous linguistic projects in the area. I have perceived a certain expectation that me and the other PhD researchers will be devoted to a particular language. Indeed upon meeting people in Brin and Djibonker for the first time I have been asked “which language(s) are you for?”, to which I responded “I am for all the language(s)”, as I am aiming to study multilingual practices. However, as part of the Crossroads project the PhD students and postdoctoral researchers have been divided into teams to carry out a social network study in the three villages of Brin, Djibonker, and Essyl. This further serves to reinforce the idea that we are there to work on one particular language, namely the one associated with the location, so in my case Joola Banjal.

In Mc Laughlin & Sall’s (2001) paper they discuss their own experiences of conducting research in Senegal, both from the perspective of the researcher, Mc Laughlin, and Sall, the research assistant. One point Mc Laughlin discusses is the fact that as a linguist one does not necessarily need to be a fluent or competent speaker of a language to conduct linguistic research on it, something which non-linguists may not realise. And whilst fieldworkers generally make an effort to learn to speak a language it is often difficult during a relatively short field stay. This is indeed the case for carrying out a sociolinguistic study on multilingualism and multilingual language use. Before arriving in the field I took a Wolof course as Wolof is the most widely spoken language in Senegal and in a pilot study carried out in Brin and Djibonker<sup>9</sup> many people professed some insecurity with speaking French and I, therefore, considered it important to at least engage in informal conversations, with an aim to improve my Wolof in the field. Yet, in Essyl, through the sociolinguistic interviews that I have conducted many people have expressed negative attitudes towards Wolof, as in example (3):

- |     |                           |  |
|-----|---------------------------|--|
| (3) | MDD_Transcription-txt-ban | ínje guolofay imañut go, imañut go yo<br>etege juut go !   |
|     | MDD_Translation-gls-en    | me I don't like Wolof, I don't like it, that's<br>why I can't speak it                               |
|     | MDD_Translation-gls-fr    | moi je n'aime pas la langue wolof, je ne<br>l'aime pas, c'est pourquoi je ne peux pas la<br>parler ! |
|     | MDD_Language-note         | Joola Banjal   |
|     | TC                        | 00:07:08.940 – 00:07:14.347  |

[ESS121115SG]

People express similar thoughts about Wolof, as they perceive an increasing Wolofisation of language use in their area, although this is not necessarily the case as through participant observation in Essyl one observes that Wolof is spoken less frequently than for example the other villages in the project. Another reason behind this is the perception of Joola Banjal as an endangered language (as discussed above), which has been reinforced through SIL and their work and these attitudes and opinions are echoed in interviews, particularly when David

<sup>9</sup> Funded as part of the Crossroads project in December 2014-January 2015. Myfyr Prys also found similar attitudes during a study in Djibonker in January 2013 as part of the AHRC funded Multilingualism skills development scheme.

was present. My attempts at Wolof are more generally welcomed in Brin and Djibonker, although there I also do try to learn some Joola Kujireray and Ba ñounk Gubëher. At the same time, in Essyl, I am staying with a host family, the husband of whom speaks Joola Banjal and French, and claims only to understand some Wolof, and the wife of whom originally said she only speaks Joola Banjal. She claimed not to understand Wolof or French, however through observations and repeated conversations about her life history and getting to know her better, it emerged that she does speak some French, Wolof, Mandinka and also understands some Kriolu, all learnt informally as she has not attended formal education (until the SIL adult literacy classes). This example further highlights the need to triangulate data with both interviews and observations. Therefore, I am attempting to learn one particular bounded code, Joola Banjal, whilst trying to observe and learn how to engage in multilingual practices in the region. One point which comes up in interviews and general conversations with participants in Essyl is the ability of speakers of “Joola” to communicate with other speakers of “Joola” from another region, despite the fact that many participants report speaking other Joolas associated with a particular territory, for example CB1 reports speaking “Joola Kaasa of Oussouye”, Oussouye being a large town about 30km from the Crossroads; illustrating the above points nicely JS4 refers to this as “Joola Oussouye”. For example, people who claim to speak Joola Banjal will communicate in “their Joola” with people from Brin. Yet if I use a form that is deemed to be emblematic of Joola Banjal when in Brin, for example “*kasumaay*” ‘peace’ is used in Brin in greetings and in Mof Avvi they use “*gëssumay*” ‘peace’, then I am corrected to the Joola Kujireray form, despite the fact that this is indeed how people communicate in everyday conversation. I have perceived an expectation that one should master one bounded language first, before being able to engage in multilingual practices similar to those that one is attempting to document.<sup>10</sup> All mismatches in expectations of the project and myself as a researcher probably have the same root, which is the difficulty in adequately communicating changed research aims and the possible usefulness of such a study to participants and the different people living in the villages in general.

### **5. Being one for all and all for one of the language(s)**

After having considered some of the problems with methods that I have encountered during the first stage of my research, and the expectations of the project and me as a researcher, I will now briefly consider what uses the research could indeed have for participants, whether or not these fit into their expectations of the project and how researchers might be able to integrate more traditional aspects of language documentation with a sociolinguistic documentation of a given language ecology (Haugen 1972; Mühlhäusler 1996).

When engaging in a sociolinguistic documentation of a given multilingual language ecology, researchers should reflect critically on what assumptions about language and language use they bring to the field (Migge & Léglise 2013), whether the researchers have been trained in either formal linguistics or, for example, language documentation. These assumptions may influence and manifest during interviews, as discussed in §3 上方, or a later stage in the research process, during analyses for example where the researcher may associate a particular form with a particular language, although it is used flexibly between languages. Of course, researchers should not start from a blank slate, yet it is nevertheless important to represent emic views on language, which may or may not conform to essentialist or indexical ideas

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<sup>10</sup> Note that Alexander Cobbinah who has spent many years working in Djibonker, is perceived as having an excellent level of Ba ñounk Gubëher and has also acquired the ability to engage in multilingual practices, having some knowledge of Joola Kujireray, Wolof and Creole. This is accepted as he has “mastered” Baïnounk Gubëher.

about language and identity. During the interviews, I often wrote “Joola Banjal” in my notes even when the participant responded with “Joola”. Even after reviewing interviews and transcripts once, this was the designation that ended up on my metadata spreadsheet on participants’ repertoires. Yet on going through interviews and transcripts a second time, I realised that I was erasing an important aspect of participants’ voice and denying them a possibility to name their linguistic practices in the way that they see fit. Therefore, a careful and continuous reflection of methods and practice is important and may include something as simple as adding an extra column to metadata to reflect participants’ language designation and the linguists’ likely designation.

In addition to all of the above, a look at multilingual practices in an area such as Essyl, where expectations of research on Joola Banjal are geared towards maintaining the language, may not at first have useful outcomes for the maintenance of the language, but rather could have uses in other areas, such as education. One of the teachers at the primary school in Essyl explained how he had come to Essyl with no knowledge of the local language situation and he quickly found that children had little French competence before starting school. He informally learnt Joola Banjal and now uses this language to explain French content in lessons. However, with a thorough look at actual multilingual language use, this could have a further positive effect on how to use translanguaging practices (a pedagogical technique developed in bilingual education in Wales) more effectively in the classroom, see for example Garc á (2009), Blackledge & Creese (2010), Garc á & Li Wei (2014) among others. This could be particularly useful in the other Crossroads villages of Brin and Djibonker where anecdotal reports are that “none” of the teachers are able to speak either Joola Kujireray and/or Ba ñounk Gub ëher. David Sagna, however, views our work as useful for maintaining Joola Banjal, as people will be able to see where they make mistakes, or mix languages, and if they want to they can correct themselves, so they will be able see how to “better” speak their ancestral code. This certainly wasn’t my intention when beginning the study, but if that can be used in conjunction with translanguaging educational practice; there may be tangible benefits for everyone involved.

## **6. Conclusion**

This paper has reflected on my own practices as a second year PhD student engaging in sociolinguistics trying to document multilingual repertoires in a highly diverse multilingual setting in the Casamance, Senegal. Having encountered problems with my own methods during a sociolinguistic study, I have revised my methods, and despite the importance of using a sociolinguistic study as a guide to individual multilingualism which may not be immediately visible through everyday language use, the data gained from such a survey do obviously require triangulation from natural data collection and participant observation. The paper has reflected on expectations of linguistic research from a documentary and sociolinguistic perspective and how these strands of research are perceived by participants. Language naming practices that interviews reveal are crucial for engaging in a deep ethnographic understanding of linguistic practices in the region. I also reflected on expectations of my own multilingual practice, observing that the “mastering” of one language is expected before engaging in wider multilingual practices, such as are observed during the research. Highly diverse settings such as the Casamance and sub-Saharan Africa more generally remain understudied. More sociolinguistic documentation is needed, but it should be one that reflects local concerns, even if this means studying multilingual language use in a manner that may ultimately reinforce the separation of bounded “ancestral code” languages.

## Sources

The examples presented in this article are taken from my corpus collected during fieldwork in Senegal from October 2015-March 2016. The source codes given at the end of each example in square brackets refer to a file name and concomitant bundle, which includes transcriptions, deposited in the SOAS Language Archive. Access to the files may be requested through the SOAS Language Archive at <https://lat1.lis.soas.ac.uk/>. The files are stored within the Crossroads corpus.

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