



Article

Linguistic relativity and environmental sustainability: Lessons drawn from a double language approach to the World Water Forum 2022 in Senegal

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Abstract

Linguistic relativity, the idea that every language encodes the world differently, constitutes one of the pillars of ecolinguistics. However, the tendency for monolingual analysis and discussion in ecolinguistics leaves the key question of the interrelationship of language and ecology unanswered. This paper intervenes in this analytical gap with a double language approach to the 9th World Water Forum, which took place in Dakar, Senegal, in March 2022. It compares reporting on the World Water Forum in French, the only official language of Senegal since colonial times, with reporting in Wolof, the lingua franca of Senegal. The analysis shows that each broadcast contributes to a different discourse, makes use of slightly different ideologies, and thereby produces its audience. Since the only difference between the broadcasts is the language employed by the journalists, the analysis strengthens the assumption of linguistic relativity in regard to Wolof and French in Senegal. The article claims that only by acknowledging multiple solutions and multiple problems encoded in multiple languages, are sustainable water politics in Senegal and world-wide possible.

Keywords: eco-critical discourse analysis; Senegal; sustainability; water politics; Wolof

1. Introduction

Research in ecolinguistics explores the interrelationships and interconnections of language and ecology. Departing from linguistic relativity, the premise that language influences how humans perceive the world, scholars criticise language use that fosters ecological

destruction (Stibbe, 2015, p. 1). While language is, on the one hand, grounded in material and social realities, it, on the other hand, shapes how humans make meaning of the world. As defined by Richard Alexander and Arran Stibbe (2014, p. 105), ecolinguistics “is normatively orientated towards preserving relationships which sustain life”. I am interested in how water, commonly conceptualised as the source of life and crucial part of any ecosystem, is encoded and framed in language. Therefore, in my research, I am guided by the question: How is WATER¹ conceptualised — semantically and on the discourse level?

Hence, I am observing the slow but steady growth of a body of ecolinguistic literature tackling the topic of water. While Anzhalika Litvinovich (2022) draws attention to water in Belarusian, Charles Butar-Butar, Robert Sibarani, Edy Setia, and Dwi Widayawati (2017) explore the role of Batak Toba (Sumatra, Indonesia) folklore in lake preservation, and Nafla Kharusi and Amel Slaman (2015) discuss hydrological terms in Oman. However, one thing puzzles me: the absence of articles going beyond conceptualisation in one single language.

Since attentiveness to language diversity is key to ecolinguistics, one might expect that comparative approaches and multi-language analyses are prevalent in the field. On the contrary, there is a tendency for monolingual analyses in ecolinguistics, hereby even privileging English (Finke, 2019, pp. 13-14). In my view, monolingual analysis and discussion fail to answer key questions about the interrelationships of language and ecology. Further, the theoretical discussion on linguistic relativity, constituting one of the pillars of ecolinguistics (Mühlhäusler, 2000), would benefit in many ways from comparative and contrastive research.

My analysis intervenes in this gap with a double language approach to the 9th World Water Forum, which took place in Dakar, Senegal, in March 2022. I compare two news broadcasts of the bilingual Senegalese media outlet *Radiodiffusion Télévision Sénégalaise* (RTS). The reasons to analyse televised broadcasts range from the lack of written news reporting in Wolof to an illiteracy rate in Senegal of approximately 50% (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, n.d.) to my inability to participate in person at the World Water Forum. However, a contextualisation of television in Senegal is essential. In 2019, 81.3% of the inhabitants of the Dakar region watched TV daily, approximately four hours a day, making television the most consumed media (Mediametrie, 2020). While television was introduced in Senegal in the 1960s, Senegal’s first national television channel ORTS was created in 1972. In 1992, RTS replaced ORTS with the aim of liberalising the television sector and fighting against the decrease in “popularity and credibility” (Faye, 2019, p. 10). Nevertheless, the Senegalese state continued to control the television sector (Diakhité, 2013, p. 14). Senegal’s first private channel, 2sTV, was created in 2005 (Wittmann, 2008, p. 481). While the media landscape diversified in the past decades, Frank Wittmann (2008, p. 490) perceives “democratic deficiencies” in the Senegalese media landscape “because of the consistent violations of freedom of press and the dysfunctional separation of powers”. He here refers to the influence of clientelist networks (political, religious, and economic) on media content

¹ Here, small caps indicate reference to the conceptual domain.

(Diakhité, p. 2013) and the unprofessionalism of privately run broadcasts.

I chose to analyse broadcasts by RTS, since the channel offers news to the Senegalese public in two languages: 1) In French, the only official language of Senegal since colonisation, which is spoken by roughly 13% of the population; and 2) in Wolof, spoken by roughly 75% of the Senegalese population, making it the language of everyday communication in most of Senegal (Diouf et al., 2017, p. 201). This paper compares the respective broadcasts from Monday, March 21, 2022, covering the opening day of the 9th World Water Forum. Following Facebook statistics, the French-language edition of the broadcast was watched by almost 15,000 viewers, while the news in Wolof reached an audience of 2,000 to 5,000 viewers (RTS 1 Sénégal, n.d.).

The World Water Forum (n.d.) claims to be the “world’s largest event on water”. It is organised by the World Water Council (n.d.), a “multistakeholder platform” founded in 1996 and based in Marseille, France, in cooperation with a host country, so far, every three years. The first event took place in 1997 in Marrakech, Morocco. The 2022 event took place from March 21 to 26 in Diamniadio, Dakar, Senegal, under the heading “Water Security for Peace and Development” and further publicised as “The Forum of Responses” (World Water Forum, n.d.).

The questions I am asking in this article are: What kind of underlying ideologies are encoded and transmitted through the broadcasts in Wolof and French respectively? How do diverging ideologies hinder sustainable water politics in Senegal? How can an awareness of linguistic relativity foster mutual understanding in Senegal and, hence, environmental sustainability?

2. Method: Eco-critical discourse analysis

Arran Stibbe (2015, p. 22) provides a coherent framework of eco-critical discourse analysis and defines discourses as “standardised ways that particular groups in society use language, images and other forms of representation”. Stibbe further states that these distinct patterns of speaking and writing “define” or, in my words, create the group. In critical discourse analysis (CDA), this process is also described as “dialectical relationship between discourse and ‘the social’” or “socially *constitutive*” (Ehrlich & Romaniuk 2013, p. 477, italics in original). Following CDA, this social function creates and cements power relations, hierarchies, and inequalities.

One aim of CDA is to unravel the ideological backing of discourses. Therefore, Stibbe assumes that linguistic patterns point to an underlying ideology, which he defines in the following way: “*Ideologies* are belief systems about how the world was, is, will be or should be, which are shared by members of particular groups in society” (Stibbe, 2015, p. 23, italics in original). Thus, Stibbe differentiates between *discourses*, which are uttered in speaking, writing, or through images and therefore are overt, and *ideologies*, underlying and informing discourses, not directly accessible and thus covert. While Stibbe further introduces the notion of stories, corresponding to Norman Fairclough’s “persuasive discourse”

(Fairclough, 2015, p. 34), I propose to strengthen the term ideologies instead. Thus, in my analysis of discourses surrounding the 9th World Water Forum, I distinguish merely between overt discourses and underlying ideologies.

Ideologies do not only imply what is said, but also what is left out. Here, Stibbe introduces the term *erasure* and defines it as “a story in people’s minds that an area of life is unimportant or unworthy of consideration” (Stibbe, 2015, p. 146). He emphasises that it is important to focus on systematic linguistic erasure, which he illustrates with the erasure of plants and animals in economic textbooks and environmental reports. Linguistic devices to erase are manifold, and include the use of nominalisation, abstract nouns, jargons, and numbers and statistics. In the following, I will show how erasure and ideologies interdepend in the broadcastings of RTS.

Based on Stibbe’s (2015, pp. 33-34) three-step analysis, I analyse the texts on the World Water Forum in Senegal in the following way: First, I select broadcasts in French and Wolof. Second, I name and thereby uncover ideologies. Third, I analyse linguistic patterns from a comparative and contrastive perspective. As an additional step, I compare the ideologies retrieved from the broadcasts in French and Wolof to each other and to the notion of sustainable water politics. This will allow me to conclude with a critical reflection on the assumption of linguistic relativity.

3. Ideologies encoded in French-language broadcast

Roughly 34 minutes, meaning about 65% of the broadcasting time of the 50-minute evening news in French, were dedicated to the World Water Forum on March 21, 2022. Next to reports directly concerned with the World Water Forum, two contributions addressing water challenges in rural Senegal were featured. In my analysis, I will focus on the introduction by presenter Rouguiyatou Ba Ndiaye, the report on the opening ceremony of the World Water Forum by Omar Gningue, and Claire Diop’s report on water access in the Kaolack region. The choice is justified by the possibility of comparing these elements with the Wolof version since they feature in both broadcastings.

After welcoming the spectators, the presenter Rouguiyatou Ba Ndiaye introduced the World Water Forum stating²: “Le Sénégal, source de réflexion sur la problématique de l’eau. Dakar abrite le 9^e forum mondial de l’eau, une rencontre ouverte par le président Macky Sall qui prône une gestion concertée des ressources hydriques et évoque les réalisations du Sénégal pour l’accès universel à l’eau.” (00:33 – 00:50) [Senegal, source of reflection on water problems. Dakar hosts the 9th World Water Forum, a meeting opened by President Macky Sall who is advocating a concerted management of water resources and is evoking Senegal’s achievements regarding universal access to water.]

² Transcriptions and translations were done by the author. My sincere gratitude to Dr Mamour Dramé and Dr Mouhamed Abdallah Ly for their comments, corrections, and critique. I include the source texts prominently to allow readers to engage with it, since certain aspects are invisible in the translations into English. The translations are source-text oriented.

In this first paragraph, water itself is presented as “la problématique de l’eau” [a grid of water problems], and the access to water, here universal access to water, is problematised. The access to water remains one of the main topics of the whole broadcast, reiterated in the parts under consideration in phrases collected in Table 1.

Table 1: Access to water

Source text	Translation into English	Speaker
l'accès à l'eau reste un casse-tête	the access to water remains a headache	Rouguiyatou Ba Ndiaye, presenter
disponibilité de l'eau à Kaolack	availability of water in Kaolack	Rouguiyatou Ba Ndiaye, presenter
les efforts du Sénégal pour l'accès universel	the efforts of Senegal for universal access	Rouguiyatou Ba Ndiaye, presenter
faciliter l'accès à l'eau devient alors un impératif	facilitating access to water becomes therefore an imperative	Omar Gningue, reporter
l'accès universel à la ressource	the universal access to the resource	Omar Gningue, reporter
l'accès à l'eau de qualité en quantité suffisante	access to quality water in sufficient quantity	Rouguiyatou Ba Ndiaye, presenter
accès des populations à l'eau dans la région de Kaolack	people's access to water in the Kaolack region	Rouguiyatou Ba Ndiaye, presenter
l'accès à l'eau pour les populations, notamment celles dites rurales	access to water for populations, particularly those referred to as rural	Claire Diop, reporter

The interesting point about the problematisation of “access to water” is its ambiguity. Through referring to access to water, the problem itself is erased. Does access to water refer to a problem of jurisdiction? Is it a social problem, a technical problem, or maybe a natural problem (e.g. climate change)?

3.1. Water problems require technical solutions

An answer provided by the Senegalese president Macky Sall is featured twice in the broadcast and thereby given salience. The statement begins with the phrase “le Sénégal a

accentué ses efforts dans ce sens ces dernières années” (04:10 – 04:20; 08:18 – 08:28) [Senegal has stepped up its efforts in this direction in recent years], and continues by citing technical realisations, namely the construction of boreholes, water towers, a water treatment plant, the enhancement of the network of water distribution, and the ongoing construction of a desalination plant. Hence, the underlying ideology is quite evident: WATER PROBLEMS REQUIRE TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS.³

This ideology is reiterated by Claire Diop in her report on access to water in Kalkon Biran, Kaolack region. While the problem itself remains ambiguous, the reporter stresses technical innovations and solutions found. She emphasises the water coverage rate of 98% in Kaolack and only later mentions the “équation de la qualité” (21:43 – 21:45) [quality equation]. Through a local inhabitant and the regional head of hydraulic services, the audience learns that the water is so salty that it is undrinkable and useless for watering plants. This fundamental problem — how could one speak of a water coverage rate of 98% when one cannot use this water? — is erased by the reporter with the abstract language of “la qualité physico-chimique et bactériologique de l’eau distribuée” (22:08 – 22:13) [physico-chemical and bacteriological quality of the water supplied]. By using jargon and technical terms, the reporter erases the problem and does not explain what caused this problem in the first place.

The erasure of problems and concrete local realities through the focus on pre-established solutions is an issue going beyond broadcastings by RTS. Drawing on ethnographic research in Kaolack, MacAfee (2021, p. 233) speculates that the Senegalese government might be “more interested in a particular image of development than delivering services adapted to socio-economic realities”. She even demonstrates how the Senegalese government insists on the “potability” of tap water despite complaints from the population (MacAfee, 2021, p. iii). The people’s perception is disvalued by turning water quality into “a thing that can be known scientifically — and only through science” (MacAfee, 2021, p. 235), showing that the WATER PROBLEMS REQUIRE TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS ideology reaches well beyond this broadcast and influences political decisions in Senegal.

Next to the language of the reporter, the ideology WATER PROBLEMS REQUIRE TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS is stressed by the selection of interviewees. After the introduction of the problem by Claire Diop, three members of the company FlexEau, responsible for the borehole in Kalkon Biran, are interviewed. Instead of talking about the quality of water, “compteurs intelligents” [intelligent meters] are introduced, meters which send an automatic alarm in case of theft, leakage, or stoppage, according to the commercial director. By including theft, the problem itself is turned into a behavioural problem of the population. This line of argumentation is an illustration rationalisation, a sub-form of manipulation: “giving reasons for changes which are not the real reasons, or the main reasons” (Fairclough, 2015, p. 34).

³ Throughout the text, ideologies identified are highlighted using small caps.

In this context, it is important to note that Structural Adjustment Policies in the 1980s shifted the responsibility and financial burden of maintenance and administration of boreholes from the central government to local committees. These local committees must profitably sell water to pay for maintenance work. Nevertheless, the boreholes themselves remain the property of the Senegalese state. Gomez-Temesio (2016, p. 657) frames this political situation with Judith Butler's concept of "precarity", claiming that the precariousness of water access in Senegal rendered life itself "precarious". In this sense, water theft might be a means of survival made necessary by structural adjustment measures, poverty of local institutions, or aid-dependency of the Senegalese state — these problems cannot be solved through technology.

3.2. Senegal is the solution to water-related problems

The introduction of the evening news, however, also proposes a different solution to water-related problems, namely "Senegal" (00:00 – 02:00). The presenter refers to Senegal as "source de réflexion" [a source of reflection] and "réalisations" [realisations], and as taking "efforts" [efforts]. Dakar is even described as "source mondial de l'eau" [global water source]. While these "solutions" are no less ambiguous, an underlying political project conveying the ideology SENEGAL IS THE SOLUTION TO WATER-RELATED PROBLEMS is fostered.

This ideology of centering Senegal and government policies is key to contemporary broadcastings of RTS (Diakhité, 2013, p. 14). In the reporting on the World Water Forum, this is not only achieved through the wording used by journalists sketched above, but also in translation. Translating the words of an inhabitant of Kalkon Biran, Kaolack region, the translator utters "Nous rendons grâce à Dieu et remercions l'État du Sénégal pour ses performances" (21:31 – 21:39) [We are grateful to God and thank the State of Senegal for its performance]. The second half of the sentence is an addition of the translator nowhere to be found in the source text. In the Wolof broadcast, the speaker thanks God for the installation of tap water in all houses in stating "ñañ ko santee sunu Borom" (08:25 – 08:30) [We are thanking our Master (=God) for it]. Thus, the translation here is ideologically biased.

A third strategy of centering Senegal is dedicating large portions of the broadcast in French to speeches of President Macky Sall. Approximately 8 minutes of the 34-minute broadcasting on the World Water Forum ($\approx 24\%$) are devoted to direct citations of Macky Sall, most prominently snippets of his inaugural speech. Furthermore, the president is also lauded by other speakers in direct quotes, most importantly by the High Commissioner of *l'Organisation pour la mise en valeur du fleuve Sénégal* (OMVS), Hamed Semega. He is blended in twice, praising Macky Sall as "le chantre de l'hydro-diplomatie" (05:40 – 05:45; 17:52 – 17:57) [the champion of hydro-diplomacy]. Therefore, the broadcast equals "Senegal" in a metonymical relationship with the Senegalese government and the current president and presents it as a solution to water-related problems. However, while the solution is located

in the capital of Dakar, the problem is depicted as being situated in Senegal's rural areas.

3.3. Water is a rural problem

Access to water is framed as a rural problem by Claire Diop stating “l’objectif est d’améliorer l’accès à l’eau pour les populations, notamment celles dites rurales” (21:00 – 21:05) [the aim is to improve access to water for the populations, in particular those called rural]. This ideology of water being solely a rural issue is enforced through a contribution dealing with water access in the region of Matam. The reporter Papis Diedhiou begins his contribution by describing the difficult and long journey to the village Ganguel Maka Mboondi. While these two contributions make rurality an overt feature, in the speech of President Macky Sall, WATER IS A RURAL PROBLEM is an underlying ideology, for instance, when he speaks of regions where water is rare. However, why do I stress that this is an ideology? Is the imbalance between rural and urban areas not a fact?

In the context of the 9th World Water Forum, it is a political choice to focus on rural problems and thereby erase urban water problems. To back my claim, a digression into the political landscape of Senegal is necessary. During the World Water Forum, the mayor of Dakar, Barthélémy Dias, addressed the public and the media with a narrative of exclusion. He stated that even though the forum was announced as being held in Dakar, the municipality had not been included in the organisation. The municipality thus organised a counter forum from March 21 to 23 entitled “Forum de Dakar” [Forum of Dakar], bearing the subtitle “L’eau à Dakar, Dakar dans les eaux” [Water in Dakar, Dakar in the waters], which addresses the recurrent issue of flooding in the Senegalese capital. The Forum of Dakar followed the World Water Forum in its structure, thus including speeches, an exposition, cultural events, and its own video-broadcast.

In a video summarising the third day of the (counter-)event, Abbas Fall, the vice-mayor of Dakar, states: “Tout le monde connaît les difficultés que les populations dakaroises ont pour accéder à l’eau potable et tout le monde sait les conditions dans lesquelles chaque hivernage les populations sont, toujours victimes des inondations.” (Barthelemy DIAS l’Officiel, 2022, 03:15 – 03:30) [Everyone knows the difficulties that the populations of Dakar have in accessing drinking water, and everyone knows the conditions in which the populations are every rainy season, always victims of flooding.] Due to population growth, access to drinking water is indeed an issue in Senegal’s capital (Camara et al., 2019; Kamara et al., 2021, p. 42). Further, flooding is a yearly obstacle threatening human lives and means of survival, especially in Greater Dakar and its neighbourhoods Yembeul (Diongue, 2014), Keur Massar, or Parcelles Assainies (Diop, 2019). Instead of sustainable solutions regarding flooding, the government focuses on immediate relief, which intensifies the problem gradually and makes the population turn to self-help.

In his opening speech, which was widely discussed in the private media of Senegal, Barthélémy Dias raised various problems relating to water in Dakar, including lack of water, low water pressure, open sewages, and flooding. Thus, while the event organised by the

municipality of Dakar pursues first and foremost a political aim of voicing an opposition to the president, it nonetheless shows that water-related problems exist in urban areas of Senegal as well and concretely names the problem of open sewage and flooding, absent from the official narrative. This shows that WATER IS A RURAL PROBLEM is indeed an ideology underlying the French-language broadcast of RTS.

3.4. Water is a commodity

However, the most prominent ideology of the broadcasting in French is the ideology WATER IS A COMMODITY. Table 2 gives examples of formulations pointing to this ideology; thereby, terms drawn from economics, including the words “resource” and “consume”, are highlighted.

The term “resource” is defined as “stocks and funds that serve specific goals and purposes, such as the creation and provision of products and services” (Bendel, n.d., my translation). Thus, water is turned into a resource not having value in itself but merely for the potential of production. That water is the basis of all life on earth is thereby erased. That water only has a value when turned into a commodity is enforced by the term “consume” which is used instead of the word “drinking”. In the idea of domestic consumption, the household use of water is turned into something inferior to income-generating activities. Since drinking, cooking, and washing do not create a measurable value and seemingly do not contribute to the GDP, they are disregarded. I find it quite puzzling how life itself is omitted in this setting.

Table 2: Water is a commodity

Source text	Translation into English	Speaker
gestion concertée des ressources hydriques	a concerted management of hydric resources	Rouguiyatou Ba Ndiaye, presenter
l’annulation de la dette de l’eau pour les pays plus pauvre avec exigence de réinvestir dans des infrastructures	cancellation of water debt for poorer countries with a requirement to reinvest in infrastructure	Rouguiyatou Ba Ndiaye, presenter
la qualité de la ressource est à améliorer	the quality of the resource needs to be improved	Rouguiyatou Ba Ndiaye, presenter
la raréfaction des ressources hydriques	the depletion of hydric resources	Omar Gningue, reporter
2.100.000 personnes sont contraintes de consommer de l’eau polluée	2,100,000 people are obliged to consume polluted water	Macky Sall, president of Senegal

l'eau de qualité en quantité suffisante sera disponible au-delà de la consommation domestique, les populations pourront s'en donner à des activités génératrices de revenus telle le maraichage et ainsi impulser le développement local	quality water in sufficient quantity will be available beyond domestic consumption; the population will be able to dedicate to income-generating activities such as vegetable gardening and thus boost local development	Claire Diop, reporter
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President Macky Sall emphasises the need for treatment and management of water which, for me, comprises the underlying idea of a non-value of water in its natural state. Instead of problematising human pollution, the president of Senegal creates an image of water being a problem when speaking about “80% des eaux sont rejetées dans la nature sans aucun traitement, mettant en péril la santé et la vie de 4,5 milliards d’individus” (02:52 – 03:08) [80% of the waters are discharged into the environment without any treatment, endangering the health and lives of 4.5 billion people]. However, it is human and especially industrial pollution of the water that presents a health threat. To talk of “eaux usées” [used waters] in this context is a euphemism covering up the fact of pollution. If no chemical or otherwise toxic products are involved, water used for washing food items might be even rich in proteins. The Wolof language here has the concept of *sebet*, water used for washing cereals and useful for watering animals.

While Macky Sall felicitates the commissioning of the water treatment plant Keur Momar Sarr 3 (KMS 3), supposed to provide the capital Dakar with water, this same plant may possibly create problems for the lake’s ecosystem and for the population living by Lac de Guiers. A major infrastructural project, KMS 3 draws water from the Lac de Guiers in Northern Senegal to solve drinking water shortages in the capital Dakar and newly created settlements alongside Lac Rose and in Diamniadio (Faye, 2021). The project extends infrastructure set in place since the 1970s, and the water of Lac de Guiers is envisioned to provide for 60% of the drinking water need of Greater Dakar (Kamara et al., 2021, pp. 44-45). While there are no studies yet spelling out KMS 3’s societal and environmental impacts, the predecessor infrastructure projects changed the region fundamentally. Through two anti-salt dams on the Senegal River, Diama and Mantali, 1) the lake doubled in size, and 2) the salination stabilised at a low level. Henceforth, traditional forms of agriculture were abandoned for irrigated forms of the so-called agribusiness (Niang, 2011, p. 35). The drain waters of sugar cane plantations around the lake foster the lake’s “two major water quality problems, salinity and eutrophication” (Cogels et al., 2001, p. 45). Eutrophication refers to a process in which an excess of nutrients in a body of water stimulates growth of aquatic plants and algae. An explosion of water plants leads to oxygen exhaustion in the body of water. Even before significant levels of eutrophication are reached, an increase in water plants threatens endemic vegetation, makes it difficult for the population to access the water surface, and leads to higher bacteria levels, causing health issues (Niang, 2011, pp.

35-36).

Interconnected with the expansion of the Lac de Guiers are infrastructure projects aimed at the commercial exploitation of the Senegal River region. *L'Organisation pour la mise en valeur du fleuve Sénégal* (OMVS) is included prominently in the broadcasting since it had been awarded the *Grand Prix Mondial Hassan II de l'eau*, a joint initiative by the World Water Forum and the Kingdom of Morocco (Ministère de l'Équipement et de l'Eau, n.d.). While OMVS' High-Commissioner Hamed Semega claims in the broadcast that the Senegal River was a perfect illustration of hydro-diplomacy, thus political cooperation, the main purpose of OMVS is the establishment and management of the two anti-salt dams (Kamara et al., 2021, p. 41). However, this technical solution comes with pitfalls, including negative impacts on coastal areas, groundwater quality, and soil quality (Ba, 2020). Rather than seeing value in the river itself, the name OMVS suggests that it has to be “mise en valeur” [enhanced].

In the broadcast in French, the audience encounters other players involved in water politics and infrastructure in Senegal during a tour through the exhibition taking place alongside the forum. These include ONAS, *l'office national de l'assainissement du Sénégal*, Senegal's national sanitation office; *Eranove* (n.d.), describing itself as “une plateforme industrielle panafricaine dans la gestion des services publics et la production indépendante d'eau et d'électricité” [a pan-African industrial platform in the management of public services and the production of water and electricity]; SEN'EAU, the company in charge of providing the Senegalese population with tap water; and OLAC, *Office des lacs et cours d'eau*, in charge of the administration of lakes and streams. This amalgam of political and economic players is introduced by reporter Aboubacry Kane as following: “Face à une préoccupation partagée, la rencontre de Dakar se veut à travers cette exposition un cadre d'alerte, une dynamique de concertation pour un engagement fort et des actions solidaires.” (24:47 – 25:04) [Faced with a shared concern, the Dakar meeting is intended, through this exhibition, to be a framework of alert, a dynamic of dialogue for a strong commitment and solidary actions.]

This suggests that profit-oriented corporations and democratically controlled institutions pursue common goals and will act in solidarity — disregarding that one group pursues the goal of profit maximisation and the other ought to work for the citizens of Senegal. This equalising of political and economic agents gives the impression of an exchangeability and once more reveals the ideology WATER PROBLEMS REQUIRE TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS (only). Concrete solutions proposed in the exhibition are efforts for the extension of a water treatment plant, engagements in smart energy, establishment of sensors to identify leaks, and an increase of irrigation. Since the different corporations and institutions are presented solely through their acronyms and in a similar vein, for the audience of the broadcast it might be impossible to recognise the difference at all.

Another aspect covered up is the dominance of French corporations in the water sector of Senegal and thus the continued dependency on the former colonial power. SEN'EAU, which has been distributing drinking water in urbanised areas of Senegal since 2020, is a

company under Senegalese law with the international operator SUEZ, a French water and waste management group (SEN'EAU, n.d.; SUEZ, n.d.). The French Eranove Group is specialised in the fields of electricity and drinking water with a focus on Africa. Next to Senegal, it is active in Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Gabon, Madagascar, and Togo, thus, in former colonies of France. Since Eranove and its Senegalese branch *La Sénégalaise des Eaux* (SDE) has lost the contract for public drinking water services in urban areas to SUEZ in 2020, it is currently intending to specialise in rural water services with the sub-branch *Sénégalaise des Eaux Rurales* (SDE-R) (Eranove, n.d.).

In summary, I unravelled the following ideologies in the broadcast in French: 1) WATER PROBLEMS REQUIRE TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS; 2) SENEGAL IS THE SOLUTION TO WATER-RELATED PROBLEMS; 3) WATER IS A RURAL PROBLEM; and 4) WATER IS A COMMODITY. The use of these four ideologies erases other issues as the negative consequences of extractive technologies or urban water problems. Hence, concrete problems concerning water are covered up using the ambiguous concepts of water quality and access to water, urban water problems are erased by the emphasis of rural issues, and finally the general dimension of water as life and source of life is obliterated.

4. Ideologies encoded in Wolof-language broadcast

In the Wolof edition of the evening news of March 21, 2022, 14 out of 35 minutes cover the World Water Forum, hence 40% of the broadcast, making it less prominent than in the broadcast in French. In my analysis, I will focus on the introduction by presenter Philomène Diagne Boy, Omar Gningue's introductory report on the World Water Forum, and Claire Diop's report on the Kaolack region.

In contrast to the French news, the introduction of Philomène Diagne Boye comprises the opening of a cultural centre of Francophonie. It is remarkable that the broadcasting in the lingua franca of Senegal, Wolof, stresses the significance of an institution promoting the French language. In the French news, this topic is only dealt with before sports, thus, at the end of the broadcast.

After welcoming the audience, the presenter introduces the World Water Forum as follows:

Li ci gën a fës ñu mën ka jàpp di doon ab forum mondial de l'eau, nga xamante nii tambali na fii ci Dakar ca pôle urbain bu Diamniadio tey ci suba si. Ñu nar a waxtaane nag lépp lu nga xamante nii soxal na wàllu ndox mu sell te set, naka lanuy def ba sàmm ko, naka lanuy def ba àdduna yépp jot ci. (0:15 – 0:40)⁴

[Most important is the World Water Forum, which began this morning here in Dakar at the urban pole of Diamniadio. [The participants] will discuss the topic of pure and clean water in all details, how we will protect it, how we will accomplish

⁴ To enhance readability, French loans are transcribed following French orthography.

global water access.]

The second sentence introduces the topic of the World Water Forum as “*ndox mu sell te set*” [pure and clean water]. In contrast to English and French, there are no adjectives in Wolof, but the stative verbs “sell” and “set” are used in a relative construction. Two questions arise out of the depiction “*ndox mu sell te set*” [pure and clean water]: Why must water be pure *and* clean? And why must it be qualified at all?

The common concept of “*ndox mu sell te set*” [pure and clean water] is familiar to me from focus group discussions I conducted with Wolof speakers in 2021. Semantically, *sell* points to the spiritual function of water, only *ndox mu sell* can be used for ritual washings. *Ndox mu set* is “clean water”, thus fit for drinking. While *ndox mu sell te set* is mostly translated in French as “eau potable” [drinking water], the concept points to the spiritual significance of water in Wolof-speaking Senegal. Using the concept *ndox mu sell te set* frames the debate specifically. Thus, the subtitle of the forum, “Water Security for Peace and Development”, can only be understood as access to sufficient water of the best quality (*sell te set*) and rather not in the sense of security from water (as in floodings), or security of bodies of water (as in the work of OMVS).

Only the presenter uses the full form “*ndox mu sell te set*” [pure and clean water]. The other reporters prefer “*ndox mu sell*” [pure water]. For me, the choice of terminology emphasises a Wolof conception of water against an international discourse that prioritises the idea of drinking water.

4.1. Senegalese water problems require technical solutions from abroad

Similar to the French version, one can identify the ideology WATER PROBLEMS REQUIRE TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS and examples of rationalisation in the Wolof-language reporting on Kaolack. Numbers are used by the regional head of hydraulic services to erase problems and turn quantity into a solution itself. He stresses the large number of boreholes (“*Forage yi ay 40, 80, 60 nga fiy am*” [You have here 40, 80, 60 boreholes]) and their huge capacity of “200,000 m³/hour”, before stating the aim of “*dépasser*” [surpassing] these numbers in the future. Thus, quantity seems to be again a solution to the qualitative problem of non-potable water.

In line with the French version, the same three members of the company FlexEau are interviewed. The problems solved by “*compteur yi*” [the meters] and “*alarme bi*” [the alarm] include “*vol*” [theft], “*fraude*” [fraud], and “*fuite*” [leakage]. Hence, again, the problem is presented as being caused by the population. By adding the concept of fraud, absent from the French-language edition, the accusation against the population is even strengthened. Curiously, the commercial director uses exclusively French loans; thus she may not be used to explaining the procedures in Wolof. This could point to possible miscommunications between the inhabitants and the company. Further, I argue that this points to an underlying ideology, namely, SENEGALESE WATER PROBLEMS REQUIRE

TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS FROM ABROAD.

The RTS journalists use a number of French loans. These include titles and names (“prix Hassan II de l’eau” [water prize Hassan II], “Haute-Commissaire” [High Commissioner], “forum mondial de l’eau” [World Water Forum]), conjunctions (“parce que” [because]), numbers (“quinzaine” [about fifteen], “quatre-vingt dix-huit” [ninety-eight]), and special terminology (“communauté internationale” [international community], “G20” [G20], “qualité” [quality], “(taux de) couverture” [coverage (rate)], “forage” [borehole], “projet” [project], “solutions” [solutions], “nappe” [groundwater], “maraîchage” [commercial vegetable gardening], ...).

From a critical discourse perspective, I see two fundamental problems with the last category of words: erasure and coloniality. First, the use of French terms in the Wolof news erases concrete problems and, at some points, introduces ambiguity. For instance, in Wolof, one would distinguish *baaxaay b-* [good quality] from *baaxaay xunj* or *njoogan* [bad quality] and further from *jikko j-* [character, nature] (Diouf, 2003). For a Wolof speaker, the sentence “qualité bi moo desandi” [quality is not yet attained] might be ambiguous in comparison to the formulation *baaxaay bi moo desandi* [goodness/good quality is not yet attained]. While I criticised above that in the report on water access in Kaolack in French, the problem remains ambiguous and is erased by reporter Claire Diop using jargon, in the Wolof broadcast, the use of French language is another factor erasing the problem.

Thus, Claire Diop states, “Ci atum 2012 ba tey forage yi nekk fale ci région bu Kaolack yokku lool mu dem ba nga xamante ne taux de couverture bi 98% la” (07:40 – 07:50) [From 2012 to today, the borehole of the Kaolack region improved the coverage rate up to 98%]. To refer to borehole, region, coverage rate, and numbers⁵, French is used. Without knowledge of French, this introduction is incomprehensible. For me, the overt use of French terms such as “forage” [borehole], “robinet” [tap], “solutions” [solutions], and “maraîchage” [commercial vegetable gardening] points to a covert ideology of France as bringing solutions, or more generally solutions as coming from outside, abroad.

Throughout the reporting on water access in Kaolack, boreholes are presented as a solution, even though the non-functioning of the boreholes seems to be part of the problem. While in dictionaries one finds up to nine Wolof terms distinguishing types of “wells”, these are all abandoned for the imported borehole or deep well technology. The first boreholes in contemporary Senegal were built by the French colonial administration in the 1930s to develop infrastructure projects. Only after independence, the population gained access to borehole water for individual use (Gomez-Temesio, 2016, p. 656). While the 1980s, as mentioned earlier, saw a localisation of the financial burden of borehole maintenance, it was the French Development Agency (FDA) that developed a capitalist approach to borehole management requiring the local communities to sell water profitably (Gomez-Temesio, 2016, p. 657). Thus, the word “forage” [borehole] points to a colonial

⁵ While Philomène Constance Diagne Boye in her introduction of Diop’s report tries to use the Wolof number for 98, she uses “témeér ak juróom-ñeent fukki ak juróom-ñett” meaning 198.

and post-colonial history of the commodification of water through French policies.

A second colonial concept is introduced with the word “maraîchage”, which refers to growing vegetables to sell them. In the French language and culture, the growing of vegetables for profit is distinguished from other types of gardening (*jardinage*) and from agriculture. In Wolof, *bey* or *bay* [to cultivate] and the noun *mbey m-* [agriculture] hold a temporal aspect which becomes visible in comparison to the assimilates *ji* [to sow], or *déqi* [to harvest]. The concept of “maraîchage” is indeed foreign to the Wolof language, but the idea might also not be well adapted to local circumstances since it is a water-intensive form of cultivation. In 2000, of the 1.591 million m³ of water drawn for human use in Senegal, 93% were used for agriculture — versus 4% for communities and 3% for industrial usage (Faye et al., 2019, p. 7). Furthermore, Faye, Gomis and Dieye (2019, p. 12) say that due to “inefficient farming methods and leaky irrigation systems” about 60% of the freshwater used in agriculture is “wasted”.

An inhabitant of the Kaolack region lists the activities he wishes to engage in with better-quality water as “di sangu, di togg, di root à meme temps, di bey” (08:35 – 08:45) [washing oneself, cooking, drawing water, and at the same time cultivating]. In the French news, this is translated as “comme ça on pourra faire le maraîchage” (21:46 – 21:54) [Like this we could do commercial vegetable gardening]. On the one hand, the immediate human use of washing one’s body or cooking is disregarded in the translation — one could speak of a violence of translation erasing human needs in favour of commercial activities. On the other hand, the broad indigenous term for cultivation is translated by a very narrow colonial concept.

From the reporting, one could gain the impression that it is impossible to translate certain concepts into the Wolof language. From an ecolinguistic perspective, Wilhelm Trampe (1996, p. 71) argues that the loss of creativity and diversity in language can be hostile to nature and to life. In my impression, a distinct journalistic variety of Wolof is produced through the broadcasts that might be understood as a non-natural language. Here, research on this Wolof variety and audience perception is required to learn more about its distinct way of presenting the news.

4.2. The Senegalese state is distinct from its population, ... but women are political agents

The French version enforced the ideology SENEGAL IS THE SOLUTION TO WATER PROBLEMS by postulating a metonymical relation of “Senegal” and the current president and by featuring prominently the president’s speech during the inaugural ceremony. In the Wolof version, the general concerns of this speech are summarised by the reporter Omar Gningue without making specific references (01:55 – 03:45). To stress the importance of the topic and event, Gningue repeatedly uses “solo” [to be important/importance]: “ndaje bu am solo” [the reunion is important], “lu am solo [...] àdduna bi jot ci ndox bu sell” [important is that the world obtains pure water], and “réew mi ay jéego yu am solo” [the

important steps of the country]⁶. While the last examples point to a similar metonymical relationship as identified (see Section 3.2), the aspect of *who* is protecting water or not is crucial.

Let me turn again to the opening statement of the evening news: “naka lanuy def ba sàmm ko” [how we will protect it] (see Section 4). The use of the first-person plural “lanuy” (object focus first person plural incomplete) addresses the Senegalese public and can be read as a call for action. This idea is picked up leading up to the first contribution by stating that President Macky Sall talked about “lépp lu nga xamante ne rekk askan yi nuŋ kay def ngir sàmm ndox” (01:25 – 01:40) [everything the population is doing to protect water]. Thus, instead of using nominalisation and abstract words, here agency is clearly attributed to “the population”.

In addition to the inhabitants, the second agent is Senegal in “Senegaal def na ko, jëmale ko ci kaaraange ndox ci àdduna bi yépp rawatina fii ci Senegaal” (01:44 – 01:50) [Senegal did it, working towards the protection of water in the whole world and especially here in Senegal]. On the one hand, the state or political entity of Senegal is separated from the Senegalese people.⁷ Papa Faye points to the dangers for democracy when describing how an international discourse concerned with climate change and the Anthropocene is instrumentalised to exclude local institutions and inhabitants from decision-making (Faye 2017, p. 415). Hence, while the ideology THE SENEGALESE STATE IS DISTINCT FROM ITS POPULATION may be convenient to the ruling elite to foster their wealth, it is neither contributing to sustainability nor is it in coherence with democratic values.

On the other hand, it is curious that the political entity of Senegal has already accomplished its task, while the population still needs to do it. This contrast is achieved by using the complete and incomplete aspects. While in “askan yi nuŋ kay def” the marker *-y* signifies that the population is in the process of taking steps towards the protection of water, in “Senegaal def na ko” the action of protecting water is already completed by Senegal. Thus, there is an overt ideology of state or government action versus the population’s need to act, comprising a covert ideology of the distinct bodies of state and population.

In a similar vein, reporter Omar Gningue not only reiterates the ideology SENEGAL IS THE SOLUTION TO WATER-RELATED PROBLEMS identified in the French-language broadcast, but further strengthens the ideology that THE SENEGALESE STATE IS DISTINCT FROM ITS POPULATION. He constructs an image of “Senegal” reaching out to the “population” in saying: “Senegaal nag def ci ay jéego yu am solo ndax li nga xamante nii liggéey la bu jëm ci askan wi” (02:27 – 02:48) [Senegal took important steps in order to sensitise the population]. Indeed, in the past decade, awareness campaigns to inform the

⁶ The repetitive use of language might be another feature of the aforementioned journalistic variety of Wolof. As I learned during a training offered to journalists by colleagues from the *Institut fondamental d’Afrique noire* (IFAN), journalists in Senegal are trained only in French, and it is simply assumed that they possess sufficient knowledge of Wolof to present the news.

⁷ That is why I use “population” or “inhabitants” instead of “citizens”, thus political agents.

Senegalese population about climate change played an important role in government actions (Faye et al., 2021, p. 269). Thus, is the Wolof broadcast depicting the population as the source of water-related problems? Not quite.

The reporting by Mama Moussa Niange on civil society organisations (11:25 – 14:35) opposes the view of a passive Senegalese population and emphasises the role of women and women’s associations in the World Water Forum of Dakar. Not only this report, but this perspective is absent from the broadcast in French. Whenever the French-language broadcast features the Senegalese population, persons are presented as “bénéficiaires” [beneficiaries] and “habitant/e” [inhabitant], thus passive recipients or inhabitants waiting for government aid. In contrast, Niange emphasises the advocacy work of Rose Sarr in representing rural areas of Senegal in the forum. The activist is introduced with the words: “Moom nag mu ngi woote nigr ñu jàppalee jigéen ñi ci kaw gi, jàppale leen bu baax a baax ci ndox mu sell.” (12:15 – 12:25) [She herself advocates to support women of rural areas, to support them explicitly in obtaining pure water.] Rose Sarr then openly criticises the lighthouse project of Macky Sall’s presidency, *le Plan Sénégal Emergent*, the Plan for an Emerging Senegal, by stating: “Président moo wax ne émergent, ñun moom ba ñu émergent dafa yàgg te boobu sax émergence ñëwul” (12:30 – 12:40) [The president, he speaks of emerging, we have already been emerging for a long time and up to this moment emergence has not come.] Thus, the active population is tired of the president’s empty promises.

While Sarr merely points out the prominence of water, Fatou Ndiaye, president of the network of female professionals of water and sanitation, highlights the daily struggles for women in fetching water in rural Senegal with the words “[...] jigéen ñi ñoo ko war a wuti, mën nga dëkk fii ndox mi am ay kilomètres donc jigéen ñi mooy dem jëli ndox mi [...] Yaakaar naa ne réponses yooyu ñuy xaar mu mën nañu ci jóge condition jigéen ñi gën a améiorewu daal.” (13:05 – 13:20) [...] the women must search it, one lives here and the water is kilometres away, so it is the women who are the ones fetching the water [...] I hope that those responses that we expect will consider the condition of women and finally improve it.] In emphasising the chore of fetching water here, Ndiaye does not merely pity the women, but also highlights their strength. The reporting thus shows that water for drinking, showering, or cooking is indeed provided by women. And Diange gives voice to these women, not as passive victims, but as advocates for change, as political agents in the World Water Forum. As he concludes: “les femmes professionnelles de l’eau war nañu des benn yoon: ginnaw” (14:25 – 14:35) [for the female professionals of water, only one way remains: forward].

4.3. Water is a health problem

In Section 3, I claimed that water problems remain ambiguous in the broadcast in French, hidden behind the general claim of “access to water”. In contrast, the regional head of hydraulic services utters a thought in Wolof that is absent from the broadcast in French

when he says:

Xam naa ne ku dem Kaolack moom boo ko ne ndox mu xorom, ndox mu fu am fluor, moon xam na ko parce que dangay wax dântite Kaolack. Bëñ yi toujours dañuy kadam. Loolu mooy lii nuy gis mais am na loo xam ne doo ko gaaw a gis. Dangay gis xale boo xam ne dafa juddu tànk bi lemu walla boog nga màgg say tànk di ruux yooyu yépp problèmu ndox la. (08:45 – 09:10)

[Whoever goes to Kaolack speaks of salty water, water there has fluor because one speaks of the ‘dântite Kaolack’ [Kaolack teeth]. The teeth are brown. This is what we see, but there are also things you don’t see quickly. You will see children being born with crooked legs or adults with rheumatic feet; all these are problems of water.]

Here, water is sketched as a health issue. The concept of the Kaolack teeth, referring to the brownish teeth colour of the inhabitants of Kaolack region, was raised in a group discussion I conducted in 2021. Similarly to the above citation, this does not only present a health, but also an aesthetic problem for the speakers. In the Wolof society, as in most human societies, aesthetics are crucial. For instance, my discussion partners always stressed that salty water is not suitable for washing clothes. The fabrics age and the colours fade while washing with salty water. I often experienced in Senegal the importance of dressing, which defines and symbolises the position in society, and thus, a fabric that looks worn or which is unintentionally bleached by salty water is unacceptable.

The additional problems raised, rheumatism and crooked legs, were not familiar to me in this context. However, as Vasak, Griffioen, and Feenstra (2010, pp. 153-154) show, high fluoride quantities in groundwater can indeed not only lead to dental fluorosis, but also to (crippling) skeletal fluorosis and even death. Not only is Kaolack affected by high fluoride quantities, but possibly all of western Senegal (Vasak et al., 2010, pp. 156-161). Up to 400,000 inhabitants of central Senegal are drinking water from boreholes with excess levels of fluoride (Faye et al., 2019, p. 11). As “fluoride in water is tasteless, odourless and colourless” (Vasak et al., 2010, p. 155), that means the groundwater must have at least two problems: high amounts of salt and fluoride. Problems of water quality may be caused by an increase in water pumping, leading to a decline in the groundwater table and higher quantities of certain minerals (Alemaw & Chaoka, 2010, pp. 178, 181).

4.4. Water is a political problem

The idea WATER IS A COMMODITY found in the broadcast in French is nearly absent in the analysed Wolof broadcast. While, for instance, the idea of water debt is left out completely, other ideas are framed with terms not necessarily belonging to the economic realm. For example, the concluding phrase of Claire Diop’s reporting on Kaolack states: “Dina am ndox mu sell te dooy lu ni mel di tax njaboot yi mën a jotandi ci ndox waaye itam ñu mën a

def ay activités yu si mel ni maraîchage lu ni mel di tax ñu gën a mën a suqali seeni gox.” (11:10 – 11:25) [One will have pure and sufficient water; once the families will receive water, they thus will be able to engage in their activities as commercial vegetable gardening, thereby invigorating their towns.] Whereas in the French version, Claire Diop speaks of water being available “au-delà de la consommation domestique, les populations pourront s’en donner à des activités génératrices de revenus telle le maraichage et ainsi impulser le développement local” (24:00 – 24:20) [beyond domestic consumption, the population will be able to dedicate to income-generating activities such as vegetable gardening and thus propel local development], in Wolof she uses “sqali” [to invigorate, to revive] alongside the possessive pronoun “seeni” to indicate their towns and the very general notion of “activités” [activities]. For me, “invigorating their towns” is more concrete than “local development” and thus attributes agency to the inhabitants, framing water as a political issue. Furthermore, instead of vocabulary and metaphors drawn from the economic realm, the political aspect of water is emphasised when instead of income-generating activities, all activities are included.

This difference in lexical choice is observable throughout. In the Wolof-language broadcast, the political aspects of the World Water Forum are emphasised by describing the forum as an important “ndaje” [reunion], which gives room for “waxtaan” [discussion] and “kàddu” [propositions]. Discussing and holding the reunion are seen as actions in the broadcast in Wolof. Even “nar a waxtaane” [to have the intention to discuss] is evaluated positively and “fàtteli nag ne [...] gëm-gëm la” [reminding of [...] the reality] (02:14 – 02:20) of the importance of water is a success in itself. “Jumtuwaay yu am solo” [Important tools] are political tools, especially the adherence of the African Union to the G20, which is put as the “G20 war nañ ko ubbil buntu” [G20 must open it [the African Union] the door]. Thus, instead of WATER IS A COMMODITY, the emphasis on politics in the Wolof broadcast encodes the ideology of WATER IS A POLITICAL PROBLEM.

In summary, while the ideology of WATER PROBLEMS REQUIRE TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS is present in the Wolof version of the news, it is extended by adding the element of foreign or French solutions, thus arriving at SENEGALESE WATER PROBLEMS REQUIRE TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS FROM ABROAD. Generally, the Wolof broadcast depicts water, first and foremost, as a socio-political problem. A prominent ideology thereby is THE SENEGALESE STATE IS DISTINCT FROM ITS POPULATION. However, female agency is highlighted in the report on the exposition taking place alongside the World Water Forum. Finally, by concretely stating that WATER IS A HEALTH PROBLEM, the severity of issues erased by the concept of water quality becomes tangible. Throughout the broadcast, the question of French loans arose, which might be seen as a tool of erasure in the Wolof news.

5. Diverging ideologies hindering sustainable water politics

At the beginning of this paper, I raised the question: How do diverging ideologies hinder sustainable water politics in Senegal? To answer this question, I will summarise the

differences between the broadcasts in Wolof and in French by highlighting two aspects: 1) the purpose of water spelt out, and 2) the solutions to water-related problems favoured, including the actors being presented as capable of implementing these solutions. But how do I define sustainable?

Francophone scholars critical of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) tend to supplement the adjective “durable” [lasting, long-term, sustainable] used by UN bodies with “soutenable” [bearable, sustainable] (Ba, 2020). This opposes the positivist primacy of economic development encoded in the SDGs which negate possibilities for political debate (Egil, 2015, p. 99). In my definition of sustainability, I am following Alexander and Stibbe (2014, p. 105), who define the normative aim of ecolinguistics to “preserve relationships which sustain life”, wherein they include “relationships among humans, other organisms and the physical environment”. Thus, sustainable water politics enable humans and non-humans to live well in the present and future. Therefore, awareness of environmental limits as well as global (financial) injustices are necessary prerequisites (Stibbe, 2015, pp. 14-15).

5.1. Diverging purposes: The life-sustaining function of water

A fundamental difference between the broadcasts in Wolof and in French are the purposes of water spelt out. While the broadcast in Wolof emphasises the life-sustaining function of water and refers to daily activities, the broadcast in French operates on the level of commodification.

First, in the reporting on the Kaolack region by Claire Diop, a translator erases the daily function of water for corporal hygiene and household needs when he replaces a local resident’s statement that he would want to use better quality water for washing himself, cooking, and cultivating by the sole purpose of “maraîchage” [commercial vegetable gardening]. Through the erasure, immediate human needs are disvalued in favour of commercial purposes of water. Further, the statement “ndox a ci jütu” [water leads], here meaning water is of basic need in all household activities, is turned into “manque d’eau” [lack of water] in the French version. Explicitly, reporter Claire Diop uses this ideology when speaking of water being available “au-delà de la consommation domestique” (24:00 – 24:05) [beyond domestic consumption] in the French version. Thus, not only the basic human needs are erased but also the fundamental and leading role of water in these. However, only by addressing the “needs as expressed by the population” can Senegal develop sustainable freshwater strategies and policies (Faye et al., 2021, p. 274).

Second, when reporter Papa Biram Bigué Ndiaye speaks about the presence of international guests at the World Water Forum in the Wolof broadcast, he utters “kenn mënul dund sans ndox” (06:25 – 06:30) [no one can live without water]. This thought is not only absent from his reporting in French on the same topic, but the word *vie* [life] does not appear at all in a fundamental or philosophical sense in the French text. Thus, the same reporter draws on the life-sustaining and life-giving aspect of water in his reporting only in

the Wolof broadcast, not in the French version. However, water policies can only be sustainable when taking life into account (Alexander & Stibbe, 2014, p. 105) instead of erasing life from political discussion.

Third, the aspect of health is discussed differently in both broadcasts. In the Wolof broadcast, health arises in the reporting on the Kaolack region, where high fluoride quantities in groundwater lead to dental and skeletal fluorosis (Vasak et al., 2010, pp. 153-154). While the head of hydraulic services of Kaolack explains the issues extensively in the Wolof version, in the French version, he is cited merely stating that “il y a beaucoup de problèmes à ce niveau” (22:02 – 22:03) [there are many problems at this level]. Thus, the concrete health issues of the Senegalese population are disregarded in the French edition. While health itself is of course a matter of life-sustaining relationships, it also raises questions about the origin of health issues and water-related problems.

That problems of water quality may be caused by overexploitation or pollution of groundwater sources is absent from the reporting concerning the Kaolack region in both languages (Alemaw & Chaoka, 2010, pp. 178, 181; Faye et al., 2021, p. 274; Kamara et al., 2021, p. 42). In the Wolof-language broadcast, this might relate to the narrow framing of the World Water Forum as dealing with “ndox mu sell te set” [pure and clean water], which possibly excludes topics of used water such as greywater or wastewater. However, it might also point to an underlying conceptualisation in which the very idea of wastewater does not make sense, as pointed to by the example of *sebet*, water used for washing cereals, consequently used for watering animals. As this example shows, the analyst faces a complex interplay of semantic and grammatical features, lexical choices, discursive erasure, and their cultural embeddedness (Polzenhagen, 2007, p. 11).

5.2. Diverging solutions: Who is supposed to solve water problems?

Through the double language approach, it becomes evident that the diverging water problems defined not only impact solutions proposed, but the two broadcasts also differ in the actors defined as capable of solving water-related problems. This unravels underlying political ideologies of who is generally deemed capable of political engagement.

As explained above, the broadcast in French presents the state of Senegal, metonymically one with the current president Macky Sall, as the primary solution to water-related problems. In the reporting on the World Water Forum, this is achieved through vocabulary choices, additions in translations, and the comparatively long snippets of speech included in the broadcast (24% of broadcast). Senegal is also presented as a solution in the Wolof broadcast, primarily by emphasising its realisations in the water sector and therefore presenting a role-model for the international community. However, President Macky Sall is merely paraphrased, and only once is the success of the World Water Forum directly linked to the person of Macky Sall (03:40 – 03:45).

Next to the president, the broadcast in French gives prominence to various international actors, especially through the reporting by Papa Biram Bigué Ndiaye. Next to

African presidents as political actors, the presidents of two international bodies (World Water Council and World Bank) are featured prominently. The set-up of the report wrongly suggests the equivalence of these different speakers. For me, it is problematic to assume equivalence between nation-states, the World Water Council as a democratically organised, France-based non-profit organisation with 400 member organisations, representing 60 countries (World Water Council, n.d.), and the World Bank group, an international organisation with 189 member states (The World Bank, 2021, p. 105), in which the twenty largest donor-countries are defining the policies and leadership of the group.

In the Wolof broadcast, international actors are introduced as “gan yi” [guest], “kilifa yu mag a mag” [very important guides], and “experts” [experts] (04:35 – 04:55). Interestingly, only two political leaders are explicitly mentioned by Ndiaye: the emperor of Japan and Denis Sassou-Nguesso, the president of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

While Ndiaye stresses the internationality of the forum in both languages, in Wolof he prominently refers to the African continent. In Wolof, the video-message of the emperor of Japan is summarised in the idea of “jàppale Afrig [...] moo aju ci wàllu ndox mi” (05:44 – 05:50) [assisting Africa in the question of water], whereas in French the reporter states very generally that he “réaffirme son engagement à oeuvrer pour la survie des ressources hydriques qui commencent à se rarifier” (14:07 – 14:17) [reaffirms his commitment to work towards the preservation of water resources which begin to become scarce]. While Ndiaye claims in Wolof that Sassou-Nguesso sees in “xëcc a ndox” [irrigation] or “irrigation” [irrigation] in the realm of agriculture the “ëllëgu Afrig” [the future of Africa] (06:00 – 06:10), in the French version the agricultural sector is evoked generally by the reporter and in a direct citation the Congolese president speaks of the security threats, conflicts, and terrorism due to water scarcity without referring to any specific location (14:20 – 15:03). Thus, the same reporter shows diverging aspects of the World Water Forum by including different people and institutions, by drawing attention to diverging aspects of the opening ceremony, and emphasising “Africa” in the Wolof, but not in the French broadcast.

Finally, the above discussion leads me to the more general question about the role attributed to the Senegalese population. In the broadcast in French, the focus is on institutionalised players offering technical solutions, while the citizens of Senegal are reduced to “habitant/e” [inhabitant] or “bénéficiaire” [beneficiary], thus passively receiving aid or benefitting from the progress in the water sector. The term “citoyens” [citizens] is only used by the president of the World Bank, David Malpasse, and the reporter introducing him.

In parts of the Wolof broadcast, the Senegalese population is also portrayed as passive, especially by opening up a dichotomy between the population and the state or political entity of Senegal through the ideology THE SENEGALESE STATE IS DISTINCT FROM ITS POPULATION. This separation of the political entity of Senegal from its population is non-sustainable and non-democratic (Faye, 2017, p. 415). However, the reporting in Wolof also attributes agency to the population by the use of first-person plural and reporting on civil

society organisations which emphasises the role of women and women's associations in the World Water Forum of Dakar. While women provide their families with water daily, they are also political agents in the World Water Forum who advocate for better water policies and visibility of women's work. This visibility of women in the political sphere is crucial, because women hold knowledge about the challenges and needs Senegalese families face in relation to water. Only by including this local knowledge can one develop sustainable water politics for Senegal and its regions. This is convincingly demonstrated by Anne MacAfee (2021, p. 230) with regard to drinking water in Kaolack, as well as by Cheikh Ba (2020) concerning the disastrous consequences of emergency flooding measures excluding local knowledge and actors. What is true for Senegal also applies at an international level — only by listening to everyday struggles for survival can one draft sustainable policies enabling life.

The analysis shows that from a CDA perspective, each broadcast contributes to a different discourse, makes use of slightly different ideologies, and thereby produces its audience. Hence, diverging world views are created, reinforced, or reiterated. Since the only difference between the broadcasts is the language employed by the journalists, my analysis strengthens the assumption of linguistic relativity, that each language encodes a different world view, for the case of Wolof and French in Senegal.

However, in the case of the RTS broadcasts on the World Water Forum, instead of mutual enrichment of conceptualisations, lexicon, and ideas, there is a tendency for a mono-directional introduction of French terms and concepts into the Wolof broadcast. This happens in a post-colonial context marked by a continuous power hierarchy between the former colonial power, France, represented through multilateral corporations, international NGOs, globalised ideas and the French language, and Senegal, legally independent of France since 1960. While the use of French terms and concepts could be pointed out at several stages of the broadcast, the broadcast in French does not seem to involve or acknowledge Wolof conceptualisations. Thus, the power-relation between the two languages in and beyond Senegal hinders the exploration of the creative potential of Wolof speakers and Wolof solutions. To highlight the importance of Wolof discourses for implementing sustainable water policies means not only to advocate the inclusion of the Wolof language in political debates in Senegal, but to include Wolof-speakers in political debates. We urgently need a creative exchange on equal footing that finds new solutions for the multiplicity of problems we currently refer to as climate change. The more speakers and voices that are excluded from the discussion, the less likely it is we will find solutions.

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