



The pragmatics of Wolof *daal*

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- In spoken Wolof, the particle *daal* is frequently used.
- Syntactically, it occurs at the edge of a clause, or after the first element of a clause.
- It doesn't affect the truth conditions of a sentence.
- So... What does it mean?



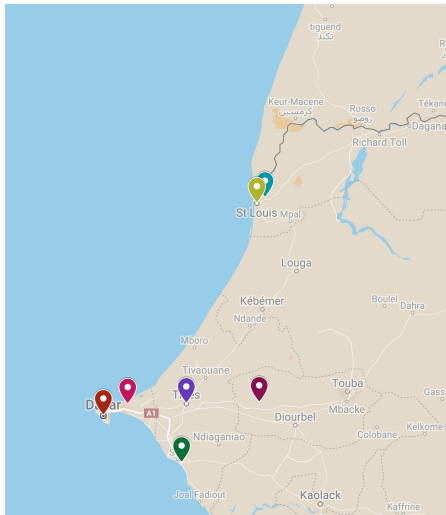
Some hints in Diouf's dictionary, where he lists the meaning of *daal* as: i) 'vraiment' ('really') and ii) 'en quelque sorte' ('in a way') (2003, p. 40)

And his grammar, where he gives the following translation to a *daal*-sentence:

- (1) Ndakaaru **daal** neex na.
 Dakar DAAL be.sweet CLFOC.3SG
 'Tout compte fait, Dakar est agréable.'
 'All in all, Dakar is very agreeable.' (Diouf 2001, p. 204)



- This talk approaches the pragmatic contribution of *daal* from a Questions under Discussion (Roberts 1996) perspective.
- *Daal* signals that the speaker wants to settle an overarching question under discussion (Jordanoska 2020).



- Fieldwork August–November 2018
- Corpus: prompted and spontaneous conversations, some texts
- Elicitation and felicity judgments
- All examples are from my dissertation (Jordanoska 2020), unless otherwise stated.



- Atlantic (Niger-Congo) language spoken mostly in Senegal and the Gambia.
- Between 5 million (Eberhard, Simons, and Fennig 2020) and 10 million (Robert 2017) speakers.
- Word order: Subject-Verb-Object.
- Noun classes marked on articles and relative pronouns.
- Focus marked morphologically on the verbal conjugations.



daal is a summarizing/concluding particle.

I make the following subcategories:

- 1 *daal* after literal repetition
- 2 concluding *daal* (not necessarily in repetition)
- 3 'in any case' *daal*
- 4 *daal* in imperatives with an advice reading

What binds these uses of *daal* together?



1. *daal* after literal repetition



The speakers in (2) and (3) are describing pictures.

- (2) a. 'I see a tree in it. I also see houses in it.'
b. Waaw, gis naa ci garab ak a-y kër
yes see CLFOC.3SG LOC tree and INDF-NC.PL house
daal.
DAAL
'Yes, I see a tree and houses in it.' Dakar
- (3) a. 'It's a bird [...]'
b. Waaw, picc b-u ndaw la **daal.**
yes bird NC.SG-REL be.small 3SG.CFOC DAAL
'Yes, it is a little bird.' Dakar
Speaker comment: 'If you say this sentence for the first time,
you cannot add *daal*.'



2.1 With a conclusion



Two speakers are talking about the 2018 elections.

- (4) a. 'The signatures pose a problem, because there are people signing left and right, in the end you don't even understand. There are those who pay money for their signatures. All those things you have around here.'
- b. Moo tax ma xam ni [**daal**, élection
 SFOC.3SG cause 1SG.S know COMP DAAL election
 y-i di ñew, bu si Yàlla def-ul
 NC.PL-DEF.PROF IPFV come if LOC God make-NEG.3SG
 sutura **daal moom**, mën na am safaan].
 respect DAAL MOOM can CLFOC.3SG have woe
 'That's why I know that, as for the coming elections, if God
 does not help us there could be problems.' Thiès



2.2 With other concluding element



Other concluding elements: *ci gàttal* 'in brief', *kon* 'thus', *seet na ba seet* 'all in all' and *en tout cas* 'in any case (French)'

(5) Ci gàttal **daal**, Ustaas Mbay Lóo sagar-u nit la
 LOC short DAAL U. M. L. rag-GEN person CFOC.3SG
 WOON.

PST

'In brief, Mbaye Lô was some sort of a human wreck.' (official English translation from Diop (2016, p. 16))

'In brief, Ustaas Mbay Loo was a rag of a man.' (literal translation) (Diop 2003, p. 9)



3. 'in any case'



Some speakers have pointed out to me that they have an extra flavor of 'at any rate' or 'in any case'.

- (6) A: 'Do you think someone else could have a different view?'
- B: Mën na nekk de. Waaye de, boo xol-ee **daal**
 can CLFOC.3SG exist DE but DE if.2SG look-PFV DAAL
 lu-m la-y njëkk-a jox **daal**, a-b
 what-3SG.S 2SG.O-IPFV be.first-VL give DAAL INDF-NC.SG
 kanaara la. Walla a-b picc.... picc walla
 duck CFOC.3SG or INDF-NC.SG bird bird or
 kanaara **daal**. Ci mala yooyu la **daal**.
 duck DAAL LOC animal those CFOC.3SG DAAL
 'Could be. But if you look, upon a first impression at least, it
 is a duck. Or a bird... a bird or a duck. In any case, it is one
 of those animals.'



4. with an advice imperative



- (7) Elicitation context: Your friend wants to cross the street, but there is a lot of traffic. You say:
- A: Moytu-l **de/ #daal!**
be.careful-IMP.SG DE DAAL
'Be careful!' (warning)
- (8) Elicitation context: Your friend tells you a man has been following her around lately. You think he might be dangerous. You say:
- A: Moytu-l **daal/ #de!**
be.careful-IMP.SG DE DAAL
'Be careful!' (advice)



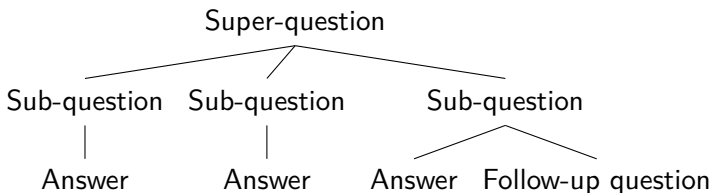
- *Daal* is a particle that occurs in summaries and conclusions. I make the following subcategories:
 - 1 *daal* after literal repetition
 - 2 concluding *daal* (not necessarily in repetition)
 - i *daal* without an additional concluding element
 - ii *daal* right-adjacent to an additional concluding element (i.e., *kon daal* 'thus DAAL')
 - 3 'in any case' *daal*
 - 4 *daal* in imperatives with an advice reading
- All of these uses are different flavours of the same general meaning: *daal* indicates a speaker wants to settle an overarching question under discussion.



- All discourse can be modelled as a hierarchy of (implicit) questions (Ginzburg 1996; Groenendijk and Stokhof 1984; Roberts 1996).
- All questions in the discourse lead back to The Big Question: 'What is the way things are?' (Roberts 1996; Stalnaker 1978).
- Since this is too big to be answered at once, discourse participants make use of strategies.
- Strategies consist of sub-questions and follow-up questions.
- These can be represented as (d)iscourse-trees.



(9)



Sub-questions are one level lower in the tree, follow-up questions are adjoined to the right of the answer (Büring 2003; Riester, Brunetti, and De Kuthy 2018).

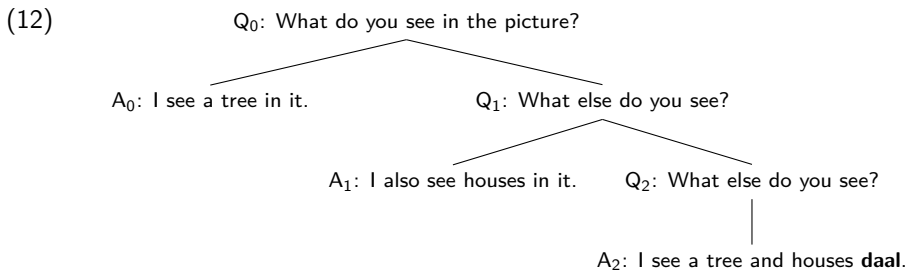


daal shapes the D-tree as follows:

- (10) $daal(p)^c \approx$ The speaker c_S considers p their final answer to a super-question that i) dominates the *daal* sentence, and ii) is the root of a strategy.



- (11) a. 'I see a tree in it. I also see houses in it.'
b. Waaw, gis naa ci garab ak a-y kër **daal**.
yes see CLFOC.3SG LOC tree and INDF-NC.PL house DAAL
'Yes, I see a tree and houses in it.'

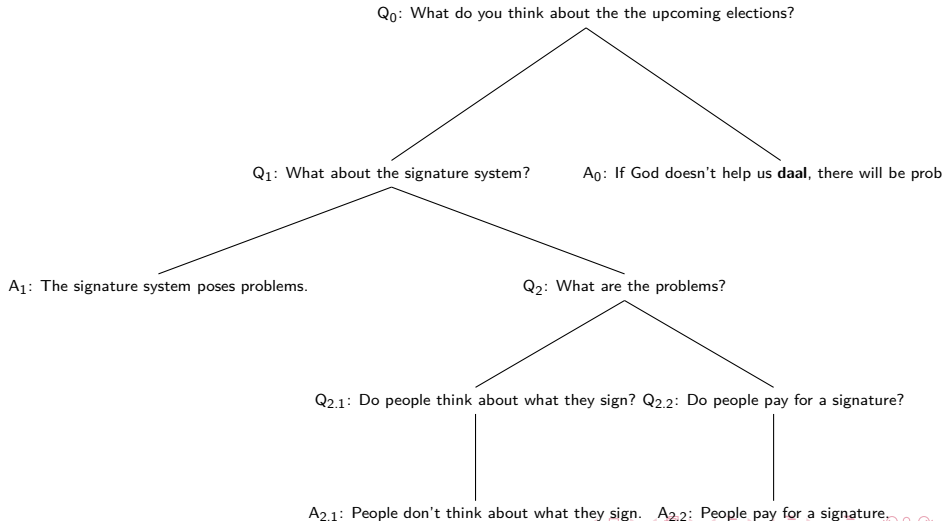




- (13) a. 'The signatures pose a problem, because there are people signing left and right, in the end you don't even understand. There are those who pay money for their signatures. All those things you have around here.'
- b. Moo tax ma xam ni [daal, élection
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 'That's why I know that, as for the coming elections, if God
 does not help us there could be problems.'



D-tree for conclusion





- (14) A-b kanaara la walla... ab picc-picc
 INDF-NC.SG duck CFOC.3SG or INDF-NC.SG bird
 walla kanaara **daal**. Ci mala yooyu la **daal**.
 or duck DAAL LOC animal NC.PL.DEM CFOC.3SG DAAL
 'it is a duck or... a bird or a duck. In any case it is one of those
 animals.' Dakar



Q₀: What do you see in the picture?

A₀: I see a duck.

Q₁: Could it be something else?

A₁: It could be a duck, but... it could also be a chick. Q₂: So what is it?

A₂: A duck or a chick **daal**. It is one of those animals **daal**.



The 'in any case' reading is an implicature that arises whenever the final answer to the super-question is not the complete, or most detailed answer.

- Interlocutor challenges initial answer.
- Speaker now cannot settle the super-question anymore, as there are two possible answers.
- Adhering to the Maxim of Quality (Grice 1975) 'it is one of those animals, either a chick or a duck' is all that the speaker can truthfully say when giving the final answer.



An additional effect of marking that a super-question is answered, is that *daal* usually occurs at the end of a turn. It is itself not an end of turn marker, however, as it can occur multiple times within an utterance:

- (15) Mën na nekk de. Waaye de, boo xol-ee **daal**
 can CLFOC.3SG exist DE but DE if.2SG look-PFV DAAL
 lu-m la-y njëkk-a jox **daal**, a-b
 what-3SG.S 2SG.O-IPFV be.first-VL give DAAL INDF-NC.SG
 kanaara la. Walla a-b picc.... picc walla
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 'Could be. But if you look, upon a first impression at least, it is a
 duck. Or a bird... a bird or a duck. In any case, it is one of those
 animals.'



From my analysis follows that *daal* should be infelicitous **i)** in an answer that directly settles the super-question with no intermediate questions and **ii)** out of the blue (cf. German *überhaupt* Rojas-Esponda (2014)).

- I have no out of the blue *daal* sentences
- Speaker commented that she wouldn't use *daal* when she first said that she saw a bird
- Imperatives!



- (16) Elicited context: Your friend wants to cross the street, but there is a lot of traffic. You say:
- A: Moytu-l #daal!
 be.careful-IMP DAAL
 'Be careful!' (warning)

In (16) there is no previous discourse addressing a super-question 'Should you cross the street now?'. There is urgency and the listener needs to act now.



Only when there is previous discourse prior to an imperative, *daal* can be used:

(17) Elicited context: Your friend tells you a man has been following her around lately. You think he might be dangerous. You say:

A: Moytu-l **daal!**

be.careful-IMP.SG DAAL

'Be careful!'

(advice)

What does this say about the different flavours of imperatives cross-linguistically?



Additional puzzle: The use of *daal*

- *Daal* is a particle that is frequent in colloquial speech.
- However, some speakers have reported considering it informal or related youth/urban language, or even rude or 'not proper Wolof', or that it 'used to be used differently'.
- *Daal* is the most frequent particle in my corpus.
- Most of my *daals* in my dataset are from Dakar, St. Louis and Thiès.

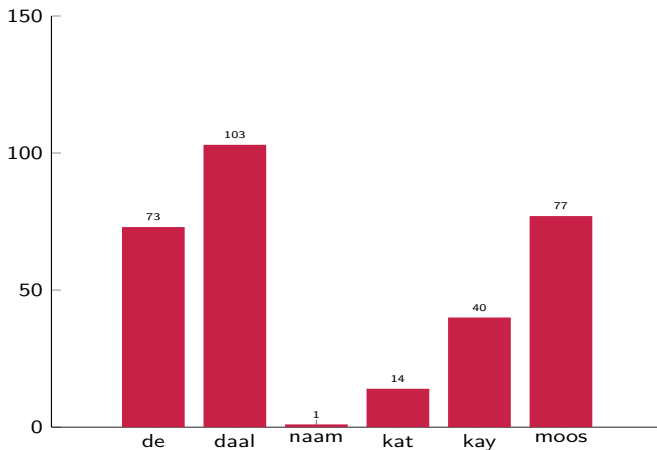


Figure: Number of tokens per particle in recordings.



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 - ii *daal* right-adjacent to an additional concluding element (i.e., *kon daal* 'thus DAAL')
 - 3 'in any case' *daal*
 - 4 *daal* in imperatives with an advice reading
- Furthermore, *daal* is considered colloquial/informal/urban.
- Using a QUD framework, I propose that *daal* signals that the speaker wants to settle an overarching question that is the root of a strategy.



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