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## The speaker's viewpoint on events: from tense to stance

### Abstract

Based on Wolof data, this article introduces a new framework to account for the various functions of TAM makers in discourse while maintaining a unitary definition for each of them. This framework relies on a new functional definition of assertion, operationalizing the speaker's viewpoint and the time of speech as the founding parameters of the default frame of reference (or base space) for any utterance. These two parameters function as the source of the modal and temporal specifications of the utterance. Their varying salience for a same TAM marker is shaped by its context of use. Applied to the Wolof verbal system, this approach allows first to account for the various uses of the Narrative, ranging from a narrative to a subordinating mood through various figures of subjective or intersubjective modality. Applied to Perfect, Presentative and imperfective suffix, this concept also reveals regular mechanisms connecting aspect, tense, modality and stance.

### Keywords

aspect, modality, tense, stance, viewpoint, subjectivity, pragmatics, narrative, perfect, Wolof, Africa

### 1. Introduction : the Wolof verbal system as an emblematic case study

Wolof is a Niger Congo language, belonging to the Atlantic branch, mainly spoken in Senegal. When studied in discourse, the Wolof TAM markers display a baffling variety of uses that challenges a unitary analysis for most of them. Originating probably from particles and pronouns (Robert 1991; in press), the verbal system of Wolof consists of a set of eleven primary conjugations (listed in Table 1 and detailed in Appendix) in which aspect and tense are merged with other verbal specifications such as focus, polarity, modality and personal specifications. The term conjugation is used here for convenience to refer to these inflectional paradigms. The Wolof verbal constituent has actually two components: an invariant lexical stem (unless derived) and an inflectional marker conveying the verb's grammatical specifications. The inflectional marker is (mostly) preposed, postposed, or suffixed to the lexical stem; the two components are therefore formally separate but functionally linked. These conjugations are predicative markers: in a well-formed sentence, every clause has to contain one (and only one) of them<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> While in the third person most of the inflectional forms are retained in presence of a lexical subject, there are also some non-inflectional variants such as copulas or zero marking for the Zero-tense, pointing to an as yet incomplete evolution to an inflectional system. See section 2.1 and footnote 8 on the discussions about this form.

Table 1. The primary conjugations of Wolof

- Focus	Presentative <sup>2</sup> , Zero-tense a.k.a Narrative, Perfect (and Future) <sup>3</sup>
+ Focus	Verb Focus, Subject Focus, Complement Focus
+ Negation	Negative, Emphatic Negative, Prohibitive
+ Injunctive modality	Obligative, Imperative (and Prohibitive)

These inflectional paradigms are specified with regard with aspect and tense as perfectives using the speech moment as tense locus<sup>4</sup>. This aspecto-temporal specification usually results in different temporal readings depending on verb types: dynamic verbs (e.g. *lekk* ‘eat’, *daanu* ‘fall down’) refer to completed i.e. past events at the time of speech, while stative verbs (e.g. *bëgg* ‘love, want’, *tàng* ‘be warm’) refer to present states. Perfective aspect is therefore the unmarked value of this verbal system. These primary conjugations enter into secondary oppositions by means of aspectual and temporal suffixes: imperfective and past reference are derived from the bare (perfective) conjugations by suffixation (Table 2). The most obvious effect of the imperfective suffix is that it changes the temporal value of dynamic verbs from past to an ongoing present, an habitual or a proximal future. For a detailed overview on aspect and tense in Wolof, one may refer to Robert (2016).

Table 2. The Wolof verbal system: secondary markers

Primary verb forms	Secondary markers
zero suffix (perfective)	suffix <i>-y ~ di</i> (imperfective)
zero suffix (present)	suffix <i>-(w)oon</i> (past anterior); suffix <i>-(w)aa(n)</i> (remote past)
zero suffix (affirmative)	suffix <i>-ul</i> (negation of affirmative paradigms)

This verbal system raises two main types of problems justifying the choice of Wolof for exploring the correlation between the temporal and non-temporal uses of aspectual morphemes. A first challenge is to account for the absence of marking of perfective aspect in this language. How does the perfective aspect relate to the specific meaning of the various conjugations so that in each case it does not need to be marked? This point has been addressed in Robert (2016) and accounted for as follows. The perfective aspect in Wolof is analyzed as an aspectual by-product of the conjugation’s core meaning and induced by three different configurations: resulting state (for the Perfect), temporal presupposition (for the focussing conjugations), and a comprehensive view of the process (for the Zero-tense and Presentative).

<sup>2</sup> In order to avoid confusion, capitalized names are used here for language-specific morphological categories (e.g. Presentative, Perfect) but lower case for semantic concepts or functions (e.g. presentative, perfect), which may be expressed in multiple ways across languages.

<sup>3</sup> Future can be added to the list. However, strictly speaking, this conjugation is not a primary one since it is formed by combining an imperfective copula with the Perfect inflectional markers.

<sup>4</sup> For such tensed aspectual verb forms, very common in African languages, some Roberts prefer to use the term completive vs. incompletive aspect (e.g. Gasser 1988), in order to avoid confusion.

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Leaving aside the negative, focussing<sup>5</sup> and injunctive conjugations, which clearly combine aspect and tense with other categories complicating the picture for our present purpose, the second challenge, which I would like to address in this paper, is to account for the various pragmatic functions regularly taken on by most of these conjugations along with their temporal readings, be it in narration (where, for instance, the Perfect contrasts with the Zero-tense or Narrative in spite of an apparently identical aspecto-temporal sense), in dialog (e.g. Perfect used for a decisive assertion adding no new content information on the referred event) or in clause chaining (see Robert 2010a for details), and discourse structuring. The term pragmatic is used here in a broad sense to cover all the non-temporal functions of these conjugations. Remarkably these non-canonical and rarely described functions, all scope beyond the internal structure of the clausal event: they may cover inter-clausal semantics, but also subjective dimensions such as appreciative modality or surprise on the part of the speaker or even various argumentative values in dialog, reflecting stance taking and communicative force in language interaction.

How do these pragmatic functions relate to the temporal ones? What should be attributed to the core meaning of the conjugation and what to the context? How do the two interact? The aim of this chapter is twofold, both descriptive and theoretical. It aims first to investigate these non-canonical functions and values of the Wolof (non-focussing) verbal forms and describe their contexts of use; then to provide a unified analysis of the different usages of a same conjugation while accounting for their contextual diversity. The issue is to bring to light the mechanisms that regulate the contextual function and interpretation of a same TAM marker. The new concept of speaker's viewpoint, brought in for this analysis of the Wolof verbal system, should be applicable to other languages. For space reasons, the detailed case study focusses on two paradigms in the unmarked perfective form, the Zero-tense (Narrative) and the Perfect. They have been selected because both the diversity of their uses and the way they contrast with each other make them good candidates to introduce the speaker's viewpoint as an operative concept for analyzing the varying uses of TAM markers. Furthermore, the Zero-tense is in my view a crosslinguistically widespread form (though sometimes on different labels such as narrative, consecutive, sequential or bare-form), in Africa in particular but also beyond, whose various functions require a more integrative analysis. The detailed analysis of the two allows me then to quickly account for the subjective uses of two other TAM markers in Wolof.

This chapter is structured as follows. A first section (2) presents in detail the most challenging conjugation, the Narrative or Zero-tense, which can, at first, hardly be defined otherwise than a mere perfective but displays actually the most diverse uses in discourse (2.1). A unitary analysis is proposed along with its theoretical foundations based on a new functional definition of utterance and assertion, involving the speaker's viewpoint as a founding parameter (2.2). The different uses of this predicative marker are then reviewed according to the proposed definition and its various contexts of usage (2.3), which finally allows for a synthetic characterization of the two (2.4). With the Zero-tense, the cardinal role of the speaker's viewpoint is revealed *in absentia*. The next section (3) is devoted to the study of the Perfect, which clearly contrasts with the Zero-tense on this respect, as shown by their alternating uses in tales (3.1), thus confirming the importance of this component in the

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<sup>5</sup> A detailed analysis of the various functions of the focussing conjugations in discourse can be found in Robert (1991, 2000 and 2010b).

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definition of Perfect (3.2.). This renewed definition can account for the subjective uses of this aspectual marker (3.3). Drawing on these analyses, a last section (4) is devoted to a brief illustration of the role of speaker’s viewpoint in the subjective uses of two other TAM markers, the Presentative, an ongoing present (4.1), and the imperfective suffix (4.2), before concluding on the new avenues opened by this study on Wolof TAM markers and its theoretical foundations (5).

## 2. The Narrative or Zero-tense: a predicative marker seeking for a frame of reference

As indicated above, in Wolof, all the primary conjugations share an unmarked present perfective value. The conjugation usually called Narrative stands out from other conjugations first because of its unique temporal behavior. The Narrative predicate may have past (1), general present or irrealis meanings (2), independently of the verb type.

- (1) Kii, dégg nga li mu la wax.  
 DEM hear PRF.2SG REL ZERO.3SG O.2SG talk  
 ‘That [girl], you heard what she said to you.’ [XSW]<sup>6</sup>

- (2) Boo<sup>7</sup> ko topp-ee, bu ëllëg-ee,  
 when:ZERO.2SG O.3SG follow-ANTER when to.morrow-ANTER  
 lu ∅<sup>8</sup> la dal, yaa ko def sa bopp han!  
 REL ZERO.3SG O.2SG reach FOC.2SG O.3SG do your head PTCL  
 ‘If you follow her, in the future, whatever happens to you will be your own fault!’ [XSW]

This specific temporal behavior concerning tense has been analyzed in Robert (1991, 2016) as the result of a lack of temporal anchoring. From an aspectual point of view, the verb is minimally specified and is simply referred to as a notion without internal structuring. In fact, this characterization corresponds to the standard definition of perfectivity, which “indicates the view of a situation as a single whole, without distinction of the various separate phases that make up that situation” (Comrie 1976: 16). Therefore the Wolof Narrative corresponds to a standard perfective marker and a tenseless conjugation whose temporal value depends on its context of use. This feature could be considered as a defining property for the Narrative inside the otherwise tensed verbal system<sup>9</sup>. However, this characterization, as such, does not

<sup>6</sup> On data references, see the section on Corpus and data references at the end of this chapter.

<sup>7</sup> In conditional and relative clauses where the Zero-tense 2SG marker fuses with the final *-u* of the subordinating morphem, an *-oo* fused form appears, probably originating from an archaic *-a* variant for 2SG (see Pozdniakov and Segerer 2004: 154). This archaic variant is still attested in some Wolof dialects but not reconstructed as such by the speakers of other variants: the *-oo* forms are interpreted as the fusion of the subordinating morpheme with the regular *nga* for 2SG. Minor discrepancies for narrative forms in subordinating uses are also reported in other languages by Carlson (1992).

<sup>8</sup> The Zero-tense has a variant in the form of a zero marking for both third singular (*mu*) and plural (*ñu*). This zero variant is used when the subject function is already conveyed by another constituent, be it lexical or pronominal. On the distribution of these two variants (zero vs. full form), see Robert (2011). This zero variant as well as the reduced morphology of the Zero-tense in general are in accordance with the postulated lack of temporal and modal specification. See 2.2 for some discussion about this morphosyntactic issue.

<sup>9</sup> According to Bisang’s typology (2001), Wolof corresponds to a finite language with a grammaticalized “minus asymmetry” represented by the Zero-tense with its reduced morphology (and zero variant for the 3d person), and dependent uses.

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make it possible to account for the puzzling diversity of its functions. The issue can also be rephrased as follows: What does a lack of temporal anchoring mean for a conjugation belonging to a tensed verbal system? What kind of reduced finiteness is at play here?

## 2.1 The Narrative (Zero-tense) puzzle

The puzzle is first a syntactic one. The Narrative has two prototypical functions which, at first glance, appear completely contradictory. On the one hand, this conjugation is the prototypical narrative mood, used in syntactically independent clauses in tales and historical narrations, as exemplified in (3), hence its usual Narrative label. On the other hand, it can be considered as the prototypical subordinating mood in Wolof since it is required with most subordinating conjunctions, as in the relative and temporal clauses of (1) and (2) above; it is also the only conjugation used to mark clause subordination without any subordinating morpheme, as in (4) or in (18) below.

- (3) Kumba Ø def ko ci biir gënn, Ø dëbb,  
 Kumba ZERO.3SG do o.3SG LOC belly mortar ZERO.3SG pound  
 gënn gi Ø fees dell  
 mortar DEF ZERO.3SG be.full IDEOPH  
 ‘Kumba put it [the grain] in the mortar, she pounded it, the mortar filled up (with  
 couscous).’ [T: 27]

- (4) Dafa ko fetal, mu dee.  
 FOCV.3SG o.3SG shoot ZERO.3SG die  
 ‘He shot him therefore he is dead.’

These well known functions of this conjugation have sometimes puzzled the linguists working on Wolof which resulted in hesitations on its labelling: Narrative (the most common label) Minimal, Amodal, or Aorist and Null tense, other labels tentatively used by myself but obviously confusing the readers. I started with its traditional label, also shared by many other languages, however to avoid confusion with or a reduction to its narrative uses, I shall call it now Zero-tense.

These were the prototypical uses of the Zero-tense. A detailed study of its uses in discourse (Robert 1991; 2010a) reveals that the puzzle is in fact even greater: this conjugation provides a large array of uses ranging from syntactically independent ones (where it is often translated as a preterit, an aorist or a simple past, depending on the language) to the most integrated ones (where it may be translated as a general present or a subjunctive), some of these uses displaying remarkable modal overtones or pragmatic functions. The various uses and functions I have found are summarized in Table 3 and will be further exemplified in section 2.3.

Table 3. The various uses of Zero-tense (a.k.a Narrative) in Wolof

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*In independent clauses*

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- as narrative aorist in tales and historical narrations
  - in procedural texts
  - in proverbs
  - for stage directions
  - in injunctive clauses
  - in echo-questions
  - in wh-questions
- 

*As a subordinating mood*

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- without a subordinating morpheme :
    - in consecutive and purpose clauses
    - in complement clauses
  - with a subordinating morpheme :
    - mandatory in relative, temporal and conditional clauses
    - precluded in complement and causal clauses
- 

## 2.2 A unitary analysis and its theoretical backgrounds

### 2.2.1 The unitary definition of Zero-tense (a.k.a Narrative)

In previous works (Robert 1991, 2010a, 2016), I have provided a unitary analysis for the Zero-tense on which I am going to elaborate to address the current issue. In general terms, the Zero-tense can be characterized as a minimally specified predicative marker, lacking some of the necessary specifications to make it a full-fledged assertion. Its various functions result from the different contextual configurations providing the missing specifications.

The precise definition of the Zero-tense unfolds in three related points leading to a defining contextual dependency:

- The Zero-tense indicates that the process is located relative to an unspecified situation. This means that, with the Zero-tense, the verb is endowed with the properties of a predicative operator (as all other conjugations are) but the predicated event is not located in time, nor is the speaker committed to it<sup>10</sup>: the Zero-tense clause lacks a viewpoint defining its temporal and assertive specifications.
- However, as all other predicates, the Zero-tense clause is expected to be endorsed and temporally located in order to constitute a speech act and a full-fledged assertion. Therefore the Zero-tense clause has to be located via an extra-clausal locator specifying in which situation the Zero-tense clause is validated (i.e. located and true), otherwise the utterance is incomplete. In itself, the Zero-tense clause is not only lacking a frame-setting, it is a pending assertion. This extra-clausal element, which I call a situational locator, functions as an anchoring point and discursive landmark for the Zero-tense clause, and supplies it with the missing specifications.
- As a corollary, there is a necessary and sufficient link between the clause containing the Zero-tense and its situational locator, together constituting a complete and valid utterance: the specification of the locator triggers the validation of the Zero-tense

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<sup>10</sup> In this view, the label Amodal for the Zero-tense is appropriately used by Diouf (2003: 36) in his chart of the Wolof conjugations.

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clause, but the truth value of the Zero-tense clause depends on its locator. This specific link between the Zero-tense clause and its locator is of a modal nature, belonging to the root modality of necessity.

This characterization of the Zero-tense as a minimally specified verbal form is first in line with its specific morphological properties. On a morphological point of view, Zero-tense markers are the most reduced forms of the Wolof verbal system with a zero variant for the third person which must be used when the subject is otherwise expressed in the same clause (Robert 2011). This unique morphosyntactic behavior suggests a purely pronominal origin for this verbal paradigm. In contemporary Wolof however, analyzing the Zero-tense phrases as mere pronominal constructions<sup>11</sup> leads to many more inconsistencies in the verbal system of this language than an inflectional approach. Moreover, the pronominal approach does not make it possible to account for the various uses of this form, their constraints and its own semantics.

My definition is also in line with the aspectual properties of this verbal paradigm (cf. section 1): the verb is minimally specified and referred to as a pure and simple notion, without internal structuring and viewing on the different phases on the process; the events referred to in the Zero-tense clauses are viewed as discrete events<sup>12</sup>. Moreover the lack of temporal anchoring can account for the unusual temporal properties of this conjugation, which depends on the contextual locator.

Moreover, the lack of commitment from the speaker explains its various modal overtones and pragmatic functions. And finally, the need for an extra-clausal locator and its special relationship with the Zero-tense clause can explain the various functions of this conjugation, depending on the contextual locator, as I will demonstrate. These contextual conditionings and their pragmatic outcomes are presented in section 2.3. However, before starting this detailed description, a few theoretical clarifications are in order.

### **2.2.2 Theoretical foundations: the role of speaker's viewpoint in predication and assertion**

The theoretical foundations of my analysis are quite convergent with different models, grounded in cognitive linguistics that have been used to analyze similar verbal forms found in other languages. For instance, in Payne and Shirtz's (2015) volume on the role of aspect in discourse structuring (with a special focus on narratives), Fauconnier's model of Mental spaces (1994) is used by Payne (2015) to contrast the role of the Maa Zero-tense with that of Perfect

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<sup>11</sup> Due to its specific morphosyntactic properties, several Roberts exclude the Zero-tense from the verbal system and treat the Zero-tense clauses as basic unmarked SV clauses with pronominal subjects (alternating with nominal ones) or, alternatively, take the Zero-tense "pronouns" or subject indices as the underlying formants of all the other inflectional paradigms. The first approach, though coherent with the morphological properties of this form, does not account for the constraints of use of this form nor for its various specific functions; the second one generates numerous irregularities in the verbal morphology; finally, this supposedly pronominal paradigm does not exist elsewhere in the Wolof verbal system. None of these approaches fits perfectly the entire Wolof verbal system for the diachronic reasons evoked in section 1 and footnote 1.

<sup>12</sup> In narrative contexts where all Zero-tense events follow one another in a temporal sequence, a stative verb is naturally reinterpreted as an event (and therefore as a dynamic verb) triggered by the preceding event. As indicated by Chung and Timberlake (2005: 217–8), "applied to states, closure (or completion) implies a complete change of state, specifically inception then cessation", hence the inchoative meaning of the Wolof stative verbs in the Zero-tense clauses in this narrative context (see *fees* in example (3)).



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in discourse structuring, and by Paterson (2015) to analyze the narrative uses of the Bare Verb in Ut-Ma'in; Crane (2015) makes use of Botne and Kerschner (2008) to account for the distinctive uses of the Bare form and the various inflected forms in Totela; Dinsmore (1991) provides Seidel (2015) with an effective analytical framework to explain the contrasting uses of the narrative forms and various other past forms in Nalu and Yeyi. For a synthetic presentation of these frameworks and their relevance for these analyses, see Payne (2015: 16-17). Based on these various models, the Wolof Zero-tense can be viewed as a predicative form devoid of the function of space builder (Fauconnier 1985) or requiring a previous frame-setting form, according to Dinsmore's (1991) 'construct and contextualize pattern' for narratives. However, these descriptions, focussing on the use of these forms in narratives, fail to provide a unified account to all the functions of the Wolof Zero-tense, as presented in Table 3 above.

The main theoretical contribution underlying my unifying analysis lies in a new functional definition of utterance and assertion including the speaker's viewpoint as a founding parameter in language use. This systematization is again consistent with some central tenets of cognitive linguistics (in particular those put forth by Croft 2007; Langacker 2000; Talmy 2000) but the speaker's viewpoint is not defined as a key operative concept for all linguistic utterances in the cognitive models I am aware of. However they are substantiated by the works on language in interaction, in particular by Du Bois (2007).

This innovative contribution draws on Culioli's theory of enunciation, a.k.a utterer-centered approach (e.g. Culioli 1990, 1995; Bouscaren et al. 1992; Groussier 2000). My presentation of this very elaborate model will be limited to the key points that are relevant for the purpose of my study. These are occasionally reformulated in terms that allow them to be linked to more familiar models. Culioli, as Du Bois (2007: 145-6), defines the utterance (*énoncé* in French) as the situated realization of language in use, in contrast to the sentence which is an abstract linguistic structure detached from any anchoring in a specific context of use. In this framework, the term utterance is endowed with a technical sense that broadens its scope: it does not refer the mere uttering of a sentence in a dialog but to the minimal unit of discourse, be it in dialog or narration, in written or in oral texts. In addition, a cardinal role is attributed to the situation of speech or uttering situation (*situation d'énonciation*) for situating (locating in Culioli's terms) the utterance, that is to say for providing the sentence with the reference frame that makes it an utterance.

On this point, Culioli brings a groundbreaking contribution through what I shall call an extended conception of deixis including the speaker's viewpoint in the deictic coordinates, more or less in the same vein as Bühler (1934) but with a systematization of its grounding or framing role in utterances and predication. The situation of speech is not only conceived as the reference frame for the time and space of the utterance (*hic et nunc*), as assumed by most models mentioned above, but also as the space of the speech acts where the speaker (*ego*) expresses a viewpoint and take a stance through his commitment to the predicated event. As for utterance, the term speaker or utterer (actually *énonciateur*) should not be understood as referring to a physical entity but as an abstract reference point encoded as a linguistic device,

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that of a point of view on what is being said<sup>13</sup>. This viewpoint functions as the source of the endorsement of utterance. Both the spatio-temporal and subjective parameters of the situation of speech function as the origin out of which the absolute or relative coordinate systems of tense and modality<sup>14</sup> are specified so that the sentence is situated in its specific context. As abstract reference points, both are detachable from the real situation and the speaker/writer can play with this inherent property of language. For instance, in specific narrations, future markers can be used to refer to past events, as it is the case for historical futures. In the same way, the speaker may also make it clear that his utterance does not reflect his point of view, using either an ironical intonation or dedicated TAM markers, such as conditionals (at least in French) used by TV speakers for reported news they cannot endorse.

In this approach, the situation of speech ( $Sit_0$ ), with its spatio-temporal ( $T_0$ ) and subjective ( $S_0$ ) parameters provides the cardinal reference frame for a sentence in context, that is the absolute framing origin out of which the referred event and the situation in which it happens ( $Sit_x$  and its time  $T_x$  and subject  $S_x$ ) can be situated. In this model, the situation of speech is also the default reference frame of any utterance (the base space in Fauconnier's (1985) approach). More generally, the specification of the speaker's viewpoint with respect to what he is saying constitutes the endorsement of an utterance by the speaker. This operation of endorsement is called assertion. That is why I shall refer to the speech act situation (or situation of speech) as the assertive space. According to this model again, a sentence lacking endorsement is not a complete and well-formed unit of discourse. One of the main function of the TAM markers is to encode the point of view of the speaker, along with the time of speech as the absolute origin of the temporal specifications, so as to make the predication a full-fledged utterance, a complete and valid assertion.

This framework allows for a more precise definition of the Zero-tense and his general characterization as indicating that the process is located with respect to an unspecified situation. The missing specifications are those of the cardinal situation of speech defined by the time of speech and speaker's endorsement. With the Zero-tense, they can be viewed as a vacant slot. This property corresponds to a situational indexical function involving dependency. This brief overview on the theoretical foundations of my definition of the Zero-tense was necessary to support the detailed account of its different functions, depending on its contextual locator.

## **2.3 Integrating the various functions of Zero-tense and their contextual conditionings**

The next presentation follows the gradient of integration between the Zero-tense clause and its contextual locator, going from a minimal integration to a maximal one.

### **2.3.1 Independent uses and situational dependency**

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<sup>13</sup> The *énonciateur* can be understood as the immediate conceptualizer of the event in Langacker's terms (2000) but the deictic anchoring of the conceptualizer and its role in predication are more widely operationalized in Culioli's framework.

<sup>14</sup> In this perspective, the speaker-oriented modality can be understood as an absolute modality, in contrast to the so called root-modality (pertaining to the participants of the referred event) which would be a relative modality, paralleling the relative vs. absolute tenses.

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A key finding for my analysis of the Zero-tense clause as lacking temporal and assertive specifications lies in the constraints attested for the syntactically independent uses. In narratives, the Zero-tense clause never appears first: there must be a previous clause with a tensed conjugation defining the situational context of the narration. At the beginning of folktales, for instance, there is always an introductory (often impersonal) sentence using another conjugation (often a Verb focus) bearing a past suffix (-oon) and used to define the spatio-temporal frame of the narration, locating it in a time prior to and more precisely, disconnected from the speech situation as in (5)a. This sentence is the beginning of the tale *The two Kumba* from which example (3) above was taken.

- (5) a Dafa am-oon kenn nit ku Ø am-oon ñaari jabar.  
 FOCV.3SG have-PST one person REL ZERO.3SG have-PST two:CONN spouse  
 ‘(Once upon a time) there was a man who had two wives’.
- b Ku Ø nekk ci ñoom Ø am jenn doom ju jigéen.  
 REL ZERO.3SG be.located LOC PRO.3PL ZERO.3PL have one child REL woman  
 ‘Each of them had a daughter’.
- c Yàlla Ø def mu am jenn jabar ju Ø dee Ø  
 God ZERO.3SG do ZERO.3SG have one spouse REL ZERO.3SG die ZERO.3SG  
 bàyyi fi doom-am.  
 leave here child-POSS.3SG  
 ‘Allah caused one of the women to die and leave her daughter.’ [T: 25]

As visible from this example, after the introductory sentence, the narration proceeds with the Zero-tense, not only for subordinate clauses (e.g. the subject relative clause in (b) and the object complement clause in (c)) but also in the independent clauses of the ‘main event line’ (Labov and Waletzky 1967), that is the temporally sequenced clauses describing the story events. In Wolof, clause chaining in the main event line is governed by the following mechanism<sup>15</sup>. The first Zero-tense main clause refers anaphorically to the situational context specified in the introductory sentence, just as a relative pronoun refers to its antecedent, except that the dependency between the two clauses is not a syntactic one but a situational or frame-setting one. That is what I have called situational anaphora (Robert 2010a). Situational anaphora is a specific type of discursive dependency corresponding to both a temporal anaphora and an assertive dependency of a syntactically independent clause vis-à-vis a preceding one. It typically appears in tales and historical narrations whose truth value does not depend on the speaker.

In tales, this situational anaphora goes on through the narration out of the initial anchoring by the tensed conjugation. The temporal anchoring point is here preconstructed in the discourse. In this case, events are not only temporally chained and happening independently from the speaker. Due to the necessary and sufficient link between the clause containing the Zero-tense and its locator, and to the lack of commitment on the part of the speaker, all the Zero-tense events follow one another as a set of inescapable chain of events, typical of

<sup>15</sup> This definition can be viewed as a characterization, for Wolof narratives, of the temporal juncture defined by Labov and Waletzky (ibid.).

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historical narration. This particular presentation of event chaining can be called a reconstructed consecution of history, which corresponds to the root modality of necessity.

Another figure of the same modality is visible in the next independent uses of the Zero-tense where it takes on different functions through a different contextual conditioning. In the next examples, the predicated event is situated in an irrealis situation through various means. In these cases, the Zero-tense appears again in a syntactically independent (or main) clause but after a contextual locator in the form of a preceding irrealis clause. This irrealis anchoring point can be a conditional (6), a future (7) or a generic clause as in (9) and (10) below, or even a mere obstacle in the situation of speech that the speaker wants to clear up (8). In this interactional contexts, the modality of **nessecity** takes on a deontic or injunctive function.

(6) Su ñu bañ-ee, yow, nga def ko!  
if ZERO.3PL refuse-ANTER PRO.2SG ZERO.2SG do O.3SG  
'If they refuse to do it, you, just do it (yourself)!'

(7) Context: A marabout gives instructions to his client in order to get a child  
Supp-al ganaar. Boo toggee ba suuf sedd,  
make.soup-IMP chicken when: ZERO.2SG cook: ANTER until sand be.cool  
nga jox sa jëkkër mu jëkkër ci ba suur...  
ZERO.2SG give POSS.2SG husband ZERO.3SG husband LOC.PART until be.satiated  
'Prepare some chicken soup. When you have finished cooking and the sand has cooled down, take your husband and have him fill himself with it ... [XCL]

(8) Context : on a bus (this needs not be said if the exit is clear)  
Ma wàcc fi!  
ZERO.1SG get.off here  
'Let me through so I can get off here!' [SP]

The use of Zero-tense in procedural texts relies on the same initial frame-setting and results in a comparable modal value. In the procedural genre, however, the instructions are generally given in the second person and the instructions take on a gnomic value along with the deontic one, out of the initial anchoring by a generic temporal clause<sup>16</sup> and an imperfective Verb Focus in the main clause. This frame setting is comparable with that of narration, excepted that it is not a past one but a generic one, that is an irrealis one again, thanks to the imperfective suffix in both the temporal clause and the main verb. Such texts can be paraphrased as follows: 'if/when ever you want to get this (frame-setting), you have to do that (imperfective Verb focus); then do this (Zero-tense), do that. When it is ready, do that, etc'. Here again, the Zero-tense is used for chaining events but the generic framing and the second person produce this procedural version of necessity in their chaining. This is illustrated in the beginning of the *domodaa*<sup>17</sup> receipt in (9).

(9) Boo-y togg sa domodaa, danga-y saaf sa jén

<sup>16</sup> On temporal and conditional clauses, see Robert (2016) for more details and references.

<sup>17</sup> *Domodaa* is a thick tomato sauce that is eaten with white rice. My special thanks go to Jean-Léopold Diouf and his wife for giving me this recipe.

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when:ZERO.2SG-IPFV cook POSS. 2SG sauce.SP FOCV. 2SG-IPFV fry POSS. 2SG fish  
 ba mu baax, nga teg ; nga rósi sa géjj...  
 until ZERO.3SG be.good ZERO.2SG put ZERO.2SG brown POSS. 2SG dry.fish  
 ‘When you prepare *domodaa*, you fry your fish properly, you put aside; then you  
 brown your dry fish...’

As for the other syntactically independent uses, the Zero-tense is found in discourse in specific utterances such as proverbs or stage directions. These sentences can be described as general or a priori statements. In this case, the locator is defined by the context of use. More specifically, proverbs (10) are gnomic statements used by the speaker in order to illustrate a particular situation evoked in a preceding statement. By backing up the referred situation on a general rule (conveyed by the proverb and its gnomic meaning), the speaker reinforce the previous assertion and strengthen its illocutionary force. In contrast, in stage directions (11), the Zero-tense clause depends entirely on the performance for receiving spatio-temporal specifications. In both case, a deontic component of the Zero-tense is visible, for the proverbs in their gnomic value, for the stage directions in their prescriptive aspect indicating what must be performed.

(10) Ku Ø muñ, Ø muuñ.  
 REL ZERO.3SG be.patient ZERO.3SG smile  
 ‘The one who is patient will smile.’ (Patience is rewarded) [XCL: 2]

(11) *Stage direction:* (Nu dégg ku-Ø-y fëgg)  
 ZERO.1PL hear REL- ZERO.3SG- IPFV knock  
 (someone is heard knocking)

*Móodu:* Yegsil !  
 arrive:VEN:IMP  
*Moodu (a character):* ‘Come in!’ [XCL: 25]

### 2.3.2 Interrogation and assertive dependency

The use of the Zero-tense in interrogative function represents an intermediary type of dependency between the independent and the subordinated uses of this conjugation, with a salient modal and interactional component. Two cases can be distinguished, echo-questions and *wh*-questions.

The lack of commitment from the speaker stands out very clearly in the use of the Zero-tense in echo-questions. In this specific discursive chaining, the locator is a previous statement (explicitly or indirectly) made by the interlocutor and the function of the Zero-tense is to question the validation of this assertion and its consequences, by cancelling the speaker’s commitment in the addressee turn-taking: the clause is dis-asserted and the previous assertion is suspended. The pragmatic function of the Zero-tense clause is then a request for confirmation by which the speaker expresses a disbelief or disagreeing, as in (12).

(12) Kon ma delloo la xalis bi?  
 so ZERO.1SG give.back o.2SG money DEF  
 ‘(half-heartedly) Must I really give you the money back?’ [XCL: 29]

In the same way, in *wh*-questions the Zero-tense takes on an interrogative function which is the ultimate manifestation of the speaker's lack of commitment in syntactically independent clauses. Thanks to the interrogative marker, the speaker calls on the interlocutor for further specifications on the predicated event in order to establish a valid statement and a complete utterance. I call this suspensive value an assertive dependency. This is the case in the *wh*-questions where the Zero-tense is obligatory with the question markers of the *-u* series (*ku* 'who', *lu* 'what', *fu* 'where', *nu* 'how'), as exemplified in (13) and (14). The lack of spatial location conveyed by the *-u* suffix<sup>18</sup> aligns here with the lack of situational anchoring of the Zero-tense and contrasts with the other possible strategy for content questions, using focussing conjugations with another set of interrogative pronouns<sup>19</sup>.

(13) Nu        mu        sant?  
      how        ZERO.3SG be.named  
      'What's his name?'

(14) Wóy,        man        fu        ma        jëm ?  
      ITJ        PRO.1SG where    ZERO.1SG head.for  
      'Good God ! Whatever is happening to me?' (lit.: where I am bound for?) [XCL: 72]

This use of the Zero-tense for interrogation illustrates the framing role of the situation of speech in discourse in an inter-subjective version.

### 2.3.3 Subordination: the syntactic integration of the locator and its semantics

Finally, the proposed analysis of the Zero-tense provides a straightforward rationale for its prototypical function as a subordinating mood considering its lack of assertive specifications generating a dependency on an extra-clausal locator. The specificity of these subordinate uses lies in the tighter integration of the Zero-tense clause and its locator in one and the same sentence. In these cases, the Zero-tense clause is embedded in a main clause using a tensed conjugation. The link between the Zero-tense clause and its locator takes the form of a syntactic dependency. The semantics of the inter-clausal link is specified by the subordinating morpheme when present. However the semantics of the Zero-tense is still at work, visible in both the restrictions of use for this subordinating function and the specific semantics of the paratactic subordination.

The Zero-tense is the only conjugation used to mark clause subordination without any subordinating morpheme. Depending on the temporal and epistemic status of the main clause

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<sup>18</sup> Wolof has a set of three spatial deictic suffixes mainly used in noun determiners and modifiers for specifying the location of an entity in the speaker's frame of reference: a proximal (*-i*), a distal (*-a*), and a remarkable (*-u*) indicating that the designated entity is unsituated in the speaker's space. This lack of location in the speaker's frame of reference also generates a syntactic dependency visible in the use of (*-u*) to form relative pronouns (Robert 2006).

<sup>19</sup> For content questions, Wolof displays two different communicational strategies based on different morphosyntactic patterns (i.e different sets of interrogative morphemes and different conjugations): one (with the *-u* set) based on indefiniteness and using a similar pattern to that of indefinite relative clauses (with the Zero-tense construction), the other one (with the *-an* set) using strong interrogative pronouns in focussing constructions. See Robert (2011) for details.

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event, this particular relation between the Zero-tense clause and its locator results in a purposive or in a consecutive clause: when the locator, i.e. the main clause event, is completed, the clause linking value of the Zero-tense is that of a consecutive clause as in (15) or (4) above, whereas when the first event is irrealis, the Zero-tense clause takes on the meaning of a purposive clause, as in (16). However, in both cases, the relation between the protasis and the Zero-tense clause expresses again consecution and necessity: as soon as the first clause is asserted, the validation of the second clause is triggered.

(15) Dafa      sàcc,      ñu      kaaf      ko.  
 FOCV.3SG steal      ZERO.3PL imprison      O.3SG  
 ‘He stole therefore he was put in jail.’

(16) Jox      ma      ko,      ma      seet.  
 give      O.1SG      O.3SG      ZERO.1SG look.at  
 ‘Give it to me so that I can have a look.’ [SP]

If the locator is not a clause but a previous verb, the Zero-tense clause is embedded in a complex sentence as a complement clause. This configuration represents the tightest integration of the Zero-tense clause and its locator. In this case, the Zero-tense clause occupies a nominal position with the syntactic role of an object (18) or, more rarely, a subject (17). This nominal functioning is made possible by the lack of assertive specifications of the Zero-tense.

(17) Mu      takk      jabar      demaale-wul      ci      xel      mi.  
 ZERO.3SG marry      spouse      cooccur-NEG.3SG      LOC      mind      DEF  
 ‘To take a wife does not cross his mind’ (lit. ‘he takes a wife does not cross his mind’)

(18) Dama      bëgg-oon      ngeen      ànd-al      maak      sama      doom.  
 FOCV.1SG like-PST      ZERO.2PL accompany-APPL1      O.1SG:with      POSS.1SG      child  
 ‘I would like you to accompany my daughter for me.’ [T: 169]

With a subordinating morpheme, the use of the Zero-tense is mandatory in relative clauses (as in (7) above) as well as in adverbial clauses, such as temporal and conditional clauses as in (6) and (7) above. However, the Zero-tense is precluded in causal and complement clauses. This distribution is semantically motivated. Relative clauses add specifications on a participant of the main clause event, and adverbial clauses on its circumstances. Both therefore elaborate on some components of the main clause event which is already temporally located and assertively specified through its finite verb form. Thanks to this Zero-tense form, there is a remarkable economy of situational framing in Wolof complex clauses. This point is first illustrated by the contrast between the two possible constructions for complement clauses in Wolof, with or without subordinating morpheme. One has to remember that situational framing covers both the temporal anchoring and the speaker’s commitment to the utterance.

By contrast with the paratactic complement clauses using Zero-tense, the complement clause introduced by the complementizer *ne* are always in object position (after the main verb) and, more crucially, can not be used with a Zero-tense: they must be formed with a tensed and fully assertive conjugation. This constraint is in all probability to be related to the etymology of the Wolof complementizer, clearly resulting from the grammaticalization of the

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homophonic quotative verb, *ne* ‘to say’. However, opposite specifications for completive clauses (i.e. hypotactic construction using tensed conjugations vs. paratactic construction using Zero-tense) are possible and result in a nice contrast between the two constructions, as illustrated in the next paired examples (19).

- (19) a Yaakaar naa ne tane nga  
hope PRF. 1SG COMP be.better PRF.2SG  
‘I hope (that) you are better’
- b Yaakaar naa nga tane  
hope PRF. 1SG ZERO.2SG be.better  
‘I hope you will be better’

With the *ne* completive clause and its Perfect conjugation in (a), the recovery of the ill person is presented as an already established fact (see 3.2 on Perfect) that the speaker hopes to be confirmed, whereas with the paratactic Zero-tense clause and its lack of situational anchoring (b), the recovery exists only in the speaker’s view and hope expressed by the main verb.

The lack of commitment on the part of the speaker also explains why Zero-tense is precluded in causal clauses: causal clauses express explanations endorsed by the speaker - at least in Wolof - and therefore requires a tensed and assertive conjugation: any conjugation but Zero-tense can be used, however Verb focus is the most common one<sup>20</sup> as in (20). On this point, the most common causal morpheme *ndax* (but this holds true also for *ngir*) displays two contrasting uses depending on the conjugation, as illustrated below in (20) and (21).

- (20) Dafa-y jooy ndax dafa mer.  
FOCV.3SG-IPFV cry because FOCV.3SG be.angry  
‘she is crying because she is angry.’ [Sall 2005: 272, glosses are mines]
- (21) Dinaa ko neex-al ndax mu ñëw.  
FUT.1SG O.3SG be.agreeable-APPL1 because ZERO.3SG come  
‘I will please her so that she comes.’ [Sall 2005: 278, glosses are mines]

## 2.4 Synthesis : The various outcomes of a particular reduced finiteness

The various functions and uses of the Zero-tense rely on a common semantic configuration (detailed in 2.2.1). The Zero-tense is a predicative marker indicating that an event, viewed as a single whole, is validated provided that an extra-clausal locator specifies its temporal and assertive frame. The inherent dependency of the Zero-tense on a contextual locator can be conceived as a pragmatic dependency (cf. François 2010 on Oceanic languages). However, the analysis proposed here allows for a more precise description, both of the missing specifications and on the various types of dependency produced in context. The nature of the locator and its degree of integration in the utterance is the variable determining the various types of dependency and the different functions displayed by the Zero-tense clauses in context. These various configurations and their modal outcomes are schematized in Table 4.

<sup>20</sup> For an account of the very frequent explanatory meaning taken on by Verb Focus in discourse, see also Robert (1991, 2000, 2010a).



Table 4. Zero-tense-clauses and the syntactic integration of their locator

<i>Syntactic integration</i>	<i>Nature of the locator</i>	<i>Nature of dependency and functions</i>
∅	zero	<b>assertive dependency</b> (interrogation to addressee)
↓	addressee's assertion	dis-assertion (echo-question)
	contextual performance	illustrative proverb or stage directions
	different sentence	<b>situational anaphora</b>
	- past	- reconstructed consecution of history (narration)
	- irrealis	- injunction, deontic modality
↓	- generic	- procedural discourse
	different clause	<b>subordination</b> (purposive or consecutive clause)
Max.	different verb	embedding (complement clause)

In a pioneer work, Carlson (1992) has shown that verbal forms with the same paradoxal set of uses as the Zero-tense can be found in many African languages (often called narrative, sequential or consecutive, which display subordinating uses that are, most of the time, not related to the **other** ones) and provided a groundbreaking analysis for them. Carlson (1992: 83) is absolutely right when he first states that what a narrative (or sequential) tense signals is essentially: continue to assume the previous set of TAM values; and then that this function is best filled by a non-finite or not-fully-finite form, which in turn signals thematic dependence and continuity. However, as it stands, this definition does not account for the various uses of this verbal form because it does not define precisely in which way the narrative forms are not fully finite. What is not explicitly formulated in his analysis is the primary role of the speaker's viewpoint in the semantics of the TAM markers, defining not only an aspectual viewing and a temporal frame-setting but also the **assertive** force of utterances. Including the lack of this feature (along with the lack of temporal anchoring) in the reduced finiteness of narrative forms is the only way to account for the various figures of dependency displayed by narrative tenses as described by Carlson.

The analysis proposed here allows for a more precise definition of the reduced finiteness of the Zero-tense verb phrase. Zero-tense is neither a mere relative or neutral tense, nor a converb, nor a nominalization. In contrast to non-finite forms such as converbs or participles – at least in their prototypical uses – the Zero-tense can be used in a syntactically independent or main clause because this verbal form is a true predicative marker whose function is to predicate events and not to specify the circumstances of another event. As such, the Zero-tense profiles a situation in which the predicated event happened or should happen but this situation needs to be specified by an extra-clausal locator to define its frame of reference and to make it a speech act. As long as this locator is not specified, the Zero-tense clause remains a pending assertion. The specificity of its reduced finiteness lies in this combined features: the Zero-tense lacks temporal and assertive anchoring but it is a predicative marker, only waiting for these specifications in order to form a full-fledged assertion. Its various functions as well as its subjective or inter-subjective modal values represent the various contextual figures of the necessary and sufficient link between the Zero-tense clause and its locator in context; these range from consecution in complex clauses to reconstructed necessity in narration,

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through gnomic modality in proverbs, disbelief and request for confirmation in echo-questions, and deontic or injunctive function in main clauses after an irrealis locator.

The thematic continuity produced by the Zero-tense in narratives is the result of its dependency towards an initial framing and anchoring in the speech acts space. Its lack of endorsement by the speaker produces a specific type of link between the narrated events and its modal component. With these specific properties, the Zero-tense illustrates the role of a mere perfective aspect in an overall tensed verbal system. Although specific, a comprehensive view of a process - which defines perfectivity - is also a type of viewing. In a language where aspect and tense are fused, the lack of temporal specifications goes along with a need for further specification of a viewpoint in discourse.

The cardinal role of the speaker’s viewpoint in framing utterances and regulating the uses of aspectual markers was revealed *in absentia* through the various pragmatic effects of the Zero-tense discourse. The presence of this viewpoint in other TAM markers produces other modal outcomes, as it will be shown in the next sections.

### 3. Perfect and the modal outcomes of an aspectual viewpoint

The study of the alternating uses of the Perfect and the Zero-tense in narratives and tales will set the stage for a definition of this conjugation and substantiate my general claim about the speaker’s point of view being involved in all tensed conjugations

#### 3.1 Perfect and the metadiscursive role of the speaker in narratives

In folktales, after the initial frame setting, the Zero-tense is used to present the unfolding events with the specific modal effect described above (2.3.1). Other conjugations may appear. The Perfect is used when the narrator needs to step out of the inside perspective of the narration (illustrated in (a) in the next examples), either to take a broader temporal view for summarizing the next events or indicating how long they lasted (as in (22)b) or to express a personal judgment on the narrated events, which is often found at the end of the tale as in (23)b.

(22) a Kumba Ø aw ci yoon wi di jooy, di dem.  
 Kumba ZERO.3SG go.through LOC way DEF IPFV.COP cry IPFV.COP go  
 ‘Kumba set off, in tears.’

b Dox na ñaari bëccëg ag ñaari guddi.  
 walk PRF.3SG two: GEN day with two: GEN night  
 ‘She walked for two days and two nights.’ [T: 25]

(23) a Baay bi Ø né doom ji : « ... »  
 father DEF ZERO.3SG tell child DEF  
 ‘The father said to his son: « .... »’

b Góór gi wax na dëgg, ci àddina, ñaar yi ñoo fi am:  
 man DEF tell PRF.3SG truth LOC world two DEF FOCV.3PL here have  
 dangay jéém mbaa nga ba.

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FOCV.2SG-IPFV try otherwise ZERO.2SG leave

‘The old man said the truth, in the world there is only this alternative: either you try or you give up.’ [T : 41]

Focussing conjugations are also tensed predicative forms conveying a commitment on the part of the speaker. They can also be found in narratives. In accordance with their function in discourse (Robert 2010a), their metadiscursive function in tales is to introduce the speaker’s perspective on a salient role played by a character in the narrated events, such as the responsibility of an agent, through the use of the Subject focus, or the explanation of a situation by another event or by an inherent property of a character, through the use of Verb focus as in (24).

- (24) Boroom kër gi nag dafa ragal jabar ji lool ba...  
 owner house DEF PTCL FOCV.3SG fear wife DEF much until  
 ‘The father of the family was so afraid of his wife that...’ [T : 22]

A comprehensive review of the various metadiscursive functions of the tensed conjugations in narratives is beyond the scope of this chapter. However the metadiscursive role of the tensed conjugations in tales and the specific role of the Perfect for summarizing events or expressing a personal judgment are supported by the study made by Seck (2009) on the structure of Wolof oral narratives. His goal and focus are different from mine, however all together his analyses clearly confirm my point: for the main event line (the foreground of the narrative), the Zero-tense conjugation (in my terms) is used; whereas for the background sections, all other verb forms may appear, depending on the narrator’s needs<sup>21</sup>.

Thus, in narratives, the narrator switches from Zero-tense to Perfect (or to other tensed conjugations) for metadiscursive purposes. This alternation can be described as a going back and forth between two discursive levels corresponding to two different spaces: the narrative level and events’ space (where the events are located in a different time and situation) and the metadiscursive level anchored in the space defined by the situation of speech. This pattern of alternation is schematized in Figure 1.

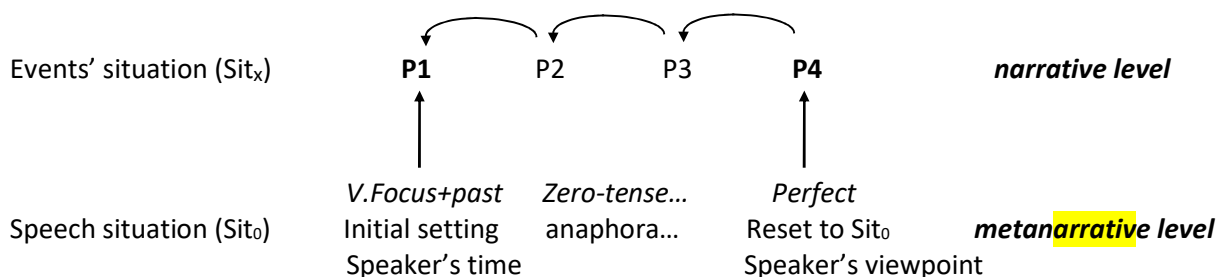


Figure 1. The role of conjugation switch in tales (P refers to predicates)

These metadiscursive functions of the Perfect confirm that this form conveys both (i) a temporal anchoring in the time of speech and (ii) a speaker’s evaluation and stance on the

<sup>21</sup> « In the background the narrator either provides the audience the supportive information they need to understand the story or gives his personal assessment of that story. The background sections include the pre-story, abstract, orientation, and evaluation. » (Seck 2009: 74).

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predicated events (the speaker uses the Perfect for expressing judgement and personal evaluation on these). This comparison between Perfect and Zero-tense gives its first foundations to the definition of the Perfect proposed in the next section (3.1). The subjective outcomes of the aspectual viewing implied in this definition will be illustrated by its uses in dialog in 3.3.

### 3.2 Definition of the Wolof Perfect

In Wolof, Perfect contrasts with Zero-tense first as a tensed form using the speech moment as tense locus, as all other conjugations but Zero-tense do. But a Perfect is more than a tensed perfective, in as far as, by definition, it involves two temporal phases and a resultative meaning. My previous studies of its usage (Robert 1991, 2010b, 2016) have led me to propose the following definition for the Wolof (present) perfect. The Perfect indicates that a process already known to be ongoing has henceforth reached its expected end-point (or term) so that there is nothing to add, no further variation: a stable resulting state has been reached at the time of speech.

My definition elaborates on Maslov's characterization of the perfect (1988: 64)<sup>22</sup> in terms of two temporal phases related as cause and effect by including a previously expected end-point in the definition. This was necessary to account for some discursive constraints on its use. For instance, in order to inform an interlocutor that a woman has given birth, for instance as an explanation of why she looks tired, the Verb focus conjugation is used, as in (25)a, rather than the Perfect. Perfect in (25)b can only be used in order to announce that the expected event has now happened.

- (25) a Dafa wasin  
FOCV.3SG give.birth  
'she gave birth (that's why she's tired)'
- b Wasin na  
give.birth PRF.3SG  
'(there) she has given birth'

The core information conveyed by the Perfect lies in the reaching of an expected endpoint at the time of speech. That is why Perfect may be considered as an aspectual focus. However, by contrast with the other focussing constructions (Robert 2000, 2010b), here the presupposition (which I rather call a preconstruction) is not a predicative relation but a previous ongoing phase of the same process and its expected endpoint<sup>23</sup>. This previous phase of the process and its expected endpoint function as the background of the predication. Using Talmy's (2000)

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<sup>22</sup> "The term 'perfect' may only be applied to those verb forms (or verb-phrases) whose meanings, to one degree or another, include two temporal phases: that of precedence, and that of sequence. The situations corresponding to these planes are in one way or another related, as cause and effect. Usually, one of the two situations seems to be semantically more important, while the other serves, as it were, as a background, often barely suggested." (Maslov, 1988: 64).

<sup>23</sup> The preconstruction involved in the Perfect is obviously reflected in the morphology of this tense: unlike other affirmative conjugations, the inflectional markers are here postposed to the verbal lexeme.

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and Langacker's (2000) terminology, they are the ground or base on which the resulting state is profiled at the time of speech, as the figure. This configuration is schematized in Figure 2.

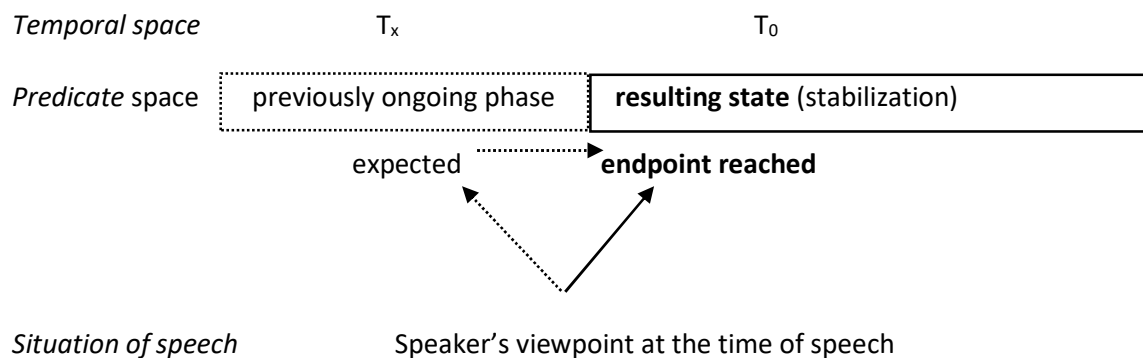


Figure 2. The Perfect's construal: aspectual phases, viewpoint and temporal anchoring

Depending on the framing context, emphasis can be laid on one or another components of Perfect. The discursive chaining defines the windowing of attention (Talmy 2000: 257 sqq) and shapes the active zone (Langacker 2000: 62 sqq) of the Perfect's semantic schema in context. Emphasis can be laid on the endpoint finally reached at the speech time, as in (25), or on the completion of a durative process (the action is finished), on the quality of the resulting state or on an aspecto-modal type of outcome of the completion, as exemplified in (29) below: the action does not need to be done anymore because since it has already been done (see Robert 1991 for more detailed examples, these are summarized in Robert 2016). Therefore, the informational content of the Perfect clause seems to lie in the various aspecto-temporal components of the process. However, in discourse, the Perfect may also take on purely modal values and inter-subjective functions.

### 3.3 Perfect's subjective uses: from aspect to modality and stance

Various Roberts have shown that aspectual or tense markers may acquire a modal value. This semantic shift is often attributed to a diachronic process driven by subjectification (Traugott 1995). However the shared semantic features allowing this shift from temporal to modal readings are seldom precisely described, and even sometimes denied. For instance, Wright (1994) assumes that the modal progressives are non-aspectual. Based on the Wolof case, my claim is again that the various readings (temporal vs. modal or subjective) of the Perfect clauses emerge from the different contextual conditioning of a same semantic schema.

For the Wolof Perfect, the main conditioning factor for a subjective vs. temporal reading is the verb type or Aktionsart. Dynamic verbs take place over time and have a temporal term, which may be intrinsic (as for accomplishments) or externally specified (activities)<sup>24</sup>. Due to this property, when used with dynamic process, the Perfect indicates that any temporal variation or instability is now eliminated. It provides the classical attributes of perfect verb forms described above (3.2). However, in contrast to dynamic verbs, stative verbs do not unfold over time and cannot be segmented in temporal phases (they are compact), which means that,

<sup>24</sup> For more details on verb types and on the role of complementation in aspectual reading, see Robert (2016).

temporally speaking, they can only be located (or situated) at some moment, no temporal quantification is possible. This is why with Perfect, as with all unmarked conjugations, a stative verb located at the time of speech has a present reading. According to the speaker's viewpoint, the property expressed by the stative verb can or cannot be predicated on the syntactic subject at a given time ('this man is/is not bad')<sup>25</sup>. With this type of verbs, various qualitative degrees may be distinguished for the process ('he is really/very/not very bad'), epistemic variations are also possible ('I have heard/am certain... that he is bad'), but it is impossible to split the stative process into different temporal phases. Therefore, for stative verbs, distinguishing between different temporal phases is equivalent to distinguishing between different moments of assertion. Due to the properties of these Aktionsarten, in Perfect, the elimination of variation or instability corresponds to the elimination of the epistemic variation surrounding the predicate at the previous time (for more details see Robert 1991: 52-67 and Robert 1994). Taking this semantic conditioning into account, the conceptualization of Perfect shown in Figure 2 can be reframed according to Figure 3 for stative verbs.

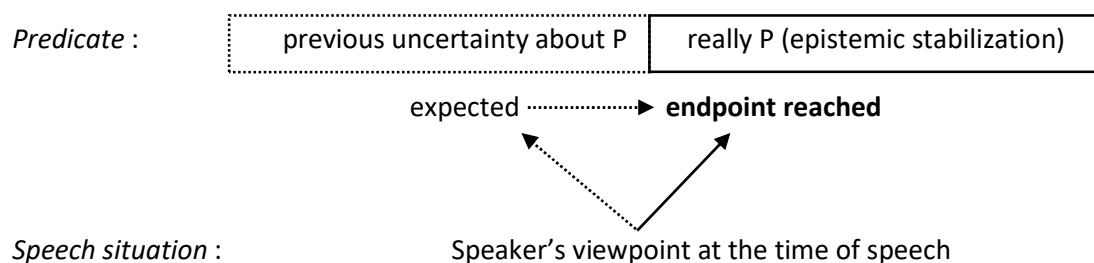


Figure 3. The Perfect's reading with stative verbs (*P* refers to the predicate)

Considering the expected endpoint in the background, with stative verbs the Perfect indicates that, after a moment of uncertainty, there is now no more doubt over the assertion. This commitment on the part of the speaker can take on several contextual meanings: expected conformity and relief (26), agreement of the speaker (27), polemic or decisive assertion (28).

(26) [a person who was looking for a rope of some length]

Buum    bii    gudd    na.  
 rope    DEM   be.long   PRF.3SG

'It's all right, this rope is long (enough).' [gloss: here we are! at long last]

It is important to point out that, in Wolof, verbs expressing a quality are true stative verbs (see footnote 25), not states resulting from the completion of a dynamic process, as visible in (26): clearly, the rope is not long now because it has been lengthened, the rope is simply long enough for the intended purpose; the comparison is not between two phases of an unfolding process of lengthening, but between the previous need for a long rope and the confirmation that the present rope meets the expectations. The previous need functions here as the expected end-point that was in the background and is reached now at the time of speech.

<sup>25</sup> Wolof has no adjectives (McLaughlin, 2004): qualification is expressed by stative verbs, e.g. *baax* 'to be good', *gumba* 'to be blind', *xonq* 'to be red' etc. These are true stative verbs : the verb *gumba* 'to be blind' can be used to designate a person who is blind from birth, *ñuul* 'to be black' for a black hen, etc. This semantic argument can be added to the necessary use of a causative suffix for a dynamic interpretation of stative verbs (cf Robert 1991 and 2016).

(27) [two people looking at a boubou (robe)]

A - Mbubb    bii,    dafa    rafet.  
boubou    DEM    FOCV.3SG    be.beautiful  
'This boubou is beautiful.'

B - Rafet        na        (de)!  
be.beautiful    PRF.3SG    PRF

'This boubou is beautiful indeed' ~ 'it is definitely a beautiful one' [SP]

In **this example**, Perfect contrasts again with Verb focus as in (25) but in a dialog this time. As usual with a stative predicates, the Verb focus clause can appear on its own, and corresponds to a mere statement (Robert 2010b). This use was already illustrated in (5), at the beginning of a tale. Perfect is then used here to confirm the previous statement made by the interlocutor, using the Verb Focus. This previous assertion functions as the preceding phase of the same process (P here), again confirming the aspectual preconstruction in the semantics of Perfect. Since the points of view of the two interlocutors are identical, the Perfect is used by the speaker to confirm that his point of view (validation of P) definitely confirms that of his interlocutor (previous phase P). The next example (28) provides a significant contrast to (27), which can be explained in pragmatic terms.

(28) [At the end of a discussion where the speakers disagree]

Tàng    na        (de) !  
be.hot    PRF.3SG    PTCL

'I'm telling you, it is hot!' [gloss: it is certain, there is no more discussion, there is nothing to be added, no comment, period].

In contrast to (27), the preceding context for (28) was that of a disagreement between the two interlocutors about the same process. So the previous phase of instability (not P) corresponds here to the point of view of the interlocutor. Therefore, the conclusive affirmation of the speaker's point of view (P is validated) contradicting that of his interlocutor (not P) results in a polemic or decisive assertion. The translation and the gloss provided by the consultant give a very explicit account of the shift from temporal to subjective reading with this stative verb. It is worth noting that in both cases, the aspectual preconstruction involved in the use of Perfect corresponds to the previously expressed point of view or position of the interlocutor on the process. Due to the dialogic context, the Perfect also takes on inter-subjective values here.

The contrast between (27) and (28) can be easily described using the stance triangle developed by Du Bois (2007). His model of stance encompasses three components in the same act of stance taking in a dialog: (a) an object evaluated by two different subjects (i.e two interlocutors), (b) a positioning of each subject regarding this object, and (c) the alignment of the two speakers, that is the varying degrees to which their positions converge (or diverge). In (27) and (28), the two different phases of the same process are associated each with a position of one of the two interlocutors regarding the same evaluated object. I shall extend here Du Bois's definition of the stance object to the whole predicate or, more precisely, the whole predication. In (27), the stancetaker using the Perfect definitely aligns with his interlocutor (he agrees), whereas in (28), he definitely does not align, and ends the discussion

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by re-asserting his point of view as the expected endpoint that has been reached now. This remarkable correlation between stances and aspectual phases is schematized in Figure 4.

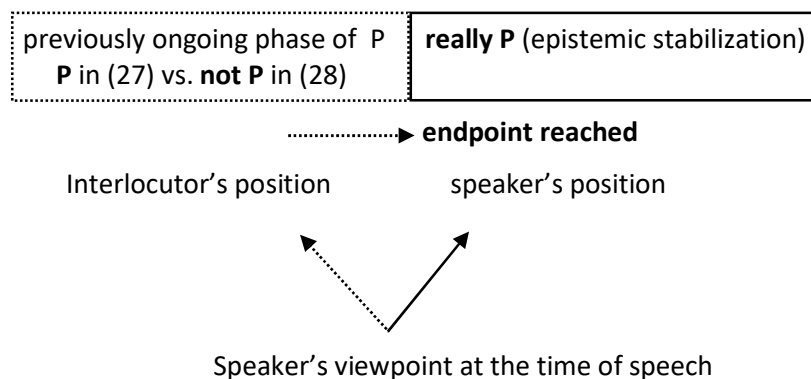


Figure 4: Perfect and stance taking in discourse (*P* refers to the predicated state)

This study has shown how the specific aspectual phasing of the perfect correlates with epistemic modality. When it is redeployed in turn taking in dialog, Perfect takes on pragmatic functions associated with an argumentative strategy. This modal reading and inter-subjective function is particularly salient with the stative verbs whose actional properties inhibit a temporal reading of the aspectual phases: these aspectual phases are necessarily transferred to the assertive domain. However, the subjective component producing these intersubjective values in language interaction is involved in the core semantics of the Perfect and also at work in its temporal readings with the dynamic verbs. This subjective component lies (i) in the specific viewpoint of the speaker spanning two different phases and moments of the same process at the speech moment, and (ii) in the previous expectation of an endpoint that is now evaluated as been reached. These subjective components are more salient with the stative verbs because of their actional compacity. However, they are also present with dynamic verbs, as visible in particular in their 'already' meaning exemplified in (29). This sentence, often heard in Senegal, is a polite way for declining an alms request. The politeness of this formula lies in the fact that the person, having already given alms, no longer has to do so. By exonerating the speaker of renewing his duty, this argument softens his refusal. It is an indirect way to align with the addressee.

- (29) Sarax bi àgg na.  
 alms DEF arrive PRF.3SG  
 lit. 'The alms have (already) arrived'  
 That is 'I have already given (meaning: I won't give any more, I do not have to).' [SP]

Conversely, due to the context (a quarrel between a wife and her husband), the repeated use of the Perfect with a dynamic verb takes a brutal turn in (30): the speaker wants to end the discussion by presenting the mistake of her husband as a definitely established fact. This use of the Perfect echoes the one exemplified with a stative verb in (28).

- (30) Juum nga ha ! juum nga dëgg-dëgg.  
 make.mistake PRF.2SG PTCL make.mistake PRF.2SG truly  
 'You made a mistake! You really made a mistake.' [XSW]



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So, the various uses of the Perfect confirm the presence of a subjective component in the definition of this conjugation.

#### 4. Other figures of speaker's viewpoint in aspectual morphemes

This last section features other figures of the speaker's viewpoint in two other TAM markers of this tensed verbal system, the Presentative and the imperfective suffix.

##### 4.1 Presentative and the modal outcomes of a strictly temporal viewing

The Presentative shares the aspectual properties of the Zero-tense but differs from it in its temporal anchoring in the time of speech, which produces a present reading for all verb types. The Presentative is thus the true tensed perfective of the Wolof verbal system. This apparent simplicity is in fact deceptive. The combination of the global viewing with the strict temporal anchoring in the situation of speech has remarkable modal outcomes which are easily accounted for with the proposed model of predication, including the speaker's point of view as a cardinal parameter of utterance.

The Presentative is used to indicate that the predicate comprehensively defines the current state of affairs at the time of speech. In the speaker's viewpoint, the boundaries of the event's situation ( $Sit_x$ ) coincide with that the situation of speech ( $Sit_0$ ). Hence its meaning of a current present, or, alternatively, of an imminent event for instantaneous processes (as in (33) below) or a recent one which has been updated, by being just witnessed by the speaker<sup>26</sup>. This deictic component is confirmed by the presence of a spatial deictic in this form, specifying whether the process is happening now in a place close vs. remote to the speaker's space: *-i* for proximal, *-a* for distal. This definition explains why the Presentative is typically used by reporters for live events such as comments on soccer games. Unlike the Perfect or the focussing conjugations but as for the Zero-tense, there is no presupposition here, no previous ongoing of the process in the background, and also no previous foresight or expectation: the process occurs at the time of speech and strictly defines the discourse situation<sup>27</sup>. In other words, the speaker only reports what is going on at the time of speech in his (narrow or broad) deictic space. Regarding information structure, the Presentative clause is athetic sentence, i.e. a topicless and all-new sentence. This strictly spatio-temporal commitment to the predicate represents a very specific point of view on the events, that of a mere witness resulting in remarkable modal outcomes.

The Presentative is commonly used as an answer to a question about where a person is or what he is doing. In this case, the context specifies the spatio-temporal component of this

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<sup>26</sup> For more details on the constraints and conditioning operated by the different verb types and complements in the various uses of Presentative, see Robert (1991; 2016).

<sup>27</sup> This analysis also suggests a semantic explanation for the morphological irregularities of the Presentative inflection: the first and second persons are formed using the Subject Focus personal markers whereas the third ones use that of Zero-tense. If we consider that, with the Presentative, the process is viewed as defining the situation of speech, it is natural to have a focus on its two protagonists, the speaker (first person) and the addressee(s) (second person), and not on the third person who is excluded from the situation of speech. The use of Zero-tense inflection is then natural to refer to someone disconnected from the speech acts situation. His anchoring in the space and time of speech is, nevertheless, conveyed by the spatial deictic present in the second segment of this discontinuous morphem.

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conjugation as its active zone, the windowing of attention. Apart from these cases where the information conveyed by the Presentative is strictly locational or those where it is used by reporters for live events that the audience cannot see, why should the speaker describe to the addressee what is happening in a situation shared and witnessed by both of them? First of all, to indicate that the predicated event happens to him suddenly and, strictly speaking, unexpectedly<sup>28</sup>, whence the frequent mirative value taken on by the Presentative, as in (31). The focus of attention is then on the novelty of this event for the speaker: in this case, the active zone profiled by the context is this specific viewpoint of the speaker on the events that occur before his eyes, that of a mere witness of the state of affairs, which can be a good or a bad surprise for him.

(31) [a child is shocked by the bad behaviour of his brother who just beat him]

Mu      ngi      fekk   ma-y      nelaw,   mu      dóor   ma!  
PRST.3SG   PRST:PROX   find   O.1SG-IPFV   sleep   ZERO.3SG   beat   O.1SG  
'He finds me asleep and he hits me!'

In dialog, this mirative value is generally associated with an intersubjective function, that of drawing the addressee's attention on the novelty of the situation. Unexpected events tend to be perceived as detrimental, so the Presentative clause also often expresses a warning as in (32).

(32) Jàppal      xale      bi,      mu      ngi      daanu!  
catch: IMP.SG   child   DEF   PRST.3SG   PRST:PROX   fall  
'Hold the child, (can't you see that) he is about to fall!'

As a powerless witness of the event, the speaker calls on the addressee to intervene, to do something about what they are both witnessing. As speech acts, such utterances can be viewed as appeals to the addressee to align with the speaker's position (the event is unexpected and often perceived as detrimental), by reacting to the predicated event. This holds true for quality verbs too<sup>29</sup>: in this case, the speaker uses the Presentative to single out the predicated property as a hot news about which the addressee should react. With quality verbs, the uses of Verb Focus and Presentative are very similar to those of *ser* (for permanent or lasting attributes) and *estar* (for temporary states and locations) in Spanish, as illustrated in (33)a and b. More specifically, in Wolof, the Presentative construes the predication of a property as a true event defining the current state of affairs.

(33) a Dafa      rafet.  
FOCV.3SG   be.beautiful  
She is beautiful. (plain statement or permanent property)

b Mu      ngi      rafet      (de) !  
PRST.3SG   PRST:PROX   be.beautiful   PTCL

<sup>28</sup> For more details on the various uses of the Presentative, see Robert (1991: 165-197).

<sup>29</sup> Stative verbs appear to be rarely used with the Presentative alone, as it is also the case with the Zero-tense. This point is to be related to the constraints of using a compact process with a punctual viewing. However, they are frequently found in paratactic structures expressing an unexpected contradiction between two events, as exemplified in (31). More details can be found in Robert (2010a).

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‘(Look) she is beautiful! (you should do something).’

Thus, with the Presentative, the main role of the speaker is to locate the process in the space and time of speech. A viewpoint is still present but as mere witness: the speaker’s commitment is limited to indicating that, in his view, the predicated event is what defines the situation of speech, without any anticipation on his part. This can make it a hot new for him and his addressee. The Presentative case confirms that  $S_0$  (the speaker’s viewpoint) and  $T_0$  (the moment of speech) are correlated deictic coordinates that are always at play in any predication **but their** specifications can nevertheless be dissociated.

#### 4.2 (Im)perfectivity and epistemic modality

The description of the Wolof imperfective is limited here to the purposes of this study. For a comprehensive presentation, one can refer to Robert (1991: 257-81 and 2016: 201-214). In Wolof, imperfective forms are made by suffixing -y to the flexional part of basic conjugations (cf. section 1). This suffix preserves the conjugations’ general properties and their tense locus (the time of speech except for Zero-tense) but modifies their aspectual characteristics. Importantly, the Perfect is the only conjugation that cannot receive the imperfective suffix (e.g. \*àgg na-y for (29)). I propose the following definition: the imperfective indicates that the process is ongoing and that its endpoint or term has not yet been reached. This internal viewing of the process results in aspectual variation or instability. In this tensed verbal system, the most obvious effect of the imperfective suffix is a temporal one: it changes the temporal value of dynamic verbs from past (with bare conjugations) to ongoing present as in (34).

(34) a Yaa            tóx  
      FOCS.2SG    smoke  
      ‘You are the one who smoked’

      b Yaa-y            tóx  
      FOCS.2SG-IPFV    smoke  
      ‘You are the one who is smoking’

However, the comparison between the perfective and imperfective forms sharing the same temporal present value - i.e. for all verbs in the Presentative, and for stative verbs in all conjugations - reveals a modal dimension involved in this aspectual viewing when anchored in the time of utterance: this modal dimension is not present with the Zero-tense. Thus in the following example, the consultant’s comment bring to light the epistemic differences between the perfective and imperfective Presentative; in (35)a the event is certain while in (35)b it remains uncertain.

(35) a Mu            ngi            dund            (perfective)  
      PRST.3SG    PRST:PROX    live  
      ‘He is alive’

      b Mu            ngi-y            dund            (imperfective)  
      PRST.3SG    PRST:PROX-IPFV    live  
      ‘He seems to still be alive (for the time being, apparently, let’s hope it will last)’

In fact, these modal distinctions constitute the only difference between the perfective and imperfective forms for all conjugations (but Zero-tense) with stative verbs. The difference in meaning can be very subtle and has required fine-grained discussions with my consultants, following the elicitation method described in Robert (2004). Examples (36) and (37) highlight the distinctions between the certainty expressed by the perfective in (a) and connotations of uncertainty ('likely but not certain') or appreciative incompleteness ('almost but not really') visible in (b) for the imperfective forms.

(36) a Picc    bii    moo            mel        ni    ndobin  
bird    DEM    FOC.S.3SG        look.like    as    bird.SP  
'This bird looks (definitely/indisputably) like a big calao.'

b Picc    bii    moo-y            mel        ni    ndobin  
bird    DEM    FOC.S.3SG-IPFV    look.like    as    bird.SP  
'This bird sort of looks like a big calao (to my mind, questionable)'

(37) a Moo            tolloog            garab        gi  
FOCS.3SG        reach:with        tree        DEF  
'He is as high as the tree.'

b Moo-y            tolloog            garab        gi  
FOCS.3SG-IPFV    reach:with        tree        DEF  
'He is almost as high as the tree.'

The comparison between the two aspectual forms thus reveals a remarkable correlation between aspect and modality in a tensed system. On the one hand, epistemic stability goes along with perfectivity (the speaker is certain about his statement). On the other hand, the aspectual incompleteness of the process (or instability) conveyed by the imperfective results in a modal incompleteness corresponding either to epistemic instability or to an incomplete appreciation on the part of the speaker about his predication.

With imperfective forms, the shift from temporal to modal reading for compact predicates (be this compact character due to the properties of the lexical verb or to that of the Presentative conjugation) parallels the one observed for Perfect (3.3). In both cases, this correlation between aspect and modality originates from the specific viewing of the speaker on two different phases of the same process at the time of speech: the speaker validates one phase at the time of speech, in relation to the other one in the background. With the Perfect, the backgrounded phase was one of instability at a previous moment (hence the epistemic stabilization), whereas with the imperfective forms, the backgrounded phase is that of completeness and stabilization to come at a later time (hence the epistemic instability). This analysis explains why Perfect cannot be suffixed with the imperfective marker, and this for all verb types: the epistemic instability of the imperfective would contradict the epistemic stability of the Perfect.

Finally, it is worth noting that, here again as for the Perfect, the correlation between aspect and modality in the semantics of imperfective holds true for all verb types, though it is more

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salient with stative verbs. This correlation is visible, for instance, in the modal component of the possible future reading of the imperfective forms: in this case, the imperfective future refers to a likely future, contrasting with the predictive future expressed by an auxiliated form using the Perfect inflection (Robert 2016: 219 sqq). Lastly, the deontic or gnomic meaning taken on by the imperfective suffix in combination with the Verb Focus in specific contexts is another possible modal outcome of this aspectual construal (ibid.: 210-1).

## **5. Conclusion: speaker's viewpoint as a key concept to integrate pragmatics to linguistics**

Through this study using a unifying framework for predication and assertion, speaker's viewpoint has proved to be a powerful tool to account for the various functions taken on by the TAM markers in discourse, while maintaining a unitary definition for each of them. In this model the situation of speech, with its two temporal and subjective coordinates, is defined as the cardinal frame of reference for utterances, the base space in Fauconnier's (1985) terms. The systematic inclusion of the speaker's viewpoint in this cardinal space of speech acts is, to my view, what was missing in the various cognitive models I have mentioned. The need to include the speaker's viewpoint in the deictic parameters of the situation of speech, arose first from the puzzling case of Zero-tense and its varying functions, ranging from narrative to subordinating mood through various figures of subjective or intersubjective modality. But this concept also allowed me to relate the temporal and modal readings of other aspectual markers in an operative way, thus revealing some regular mechanisms connecting aspect, tense, modality and stance.

In this approach, the Presentative signalling a mere temporal and global viewing of the process, devoid of any foresight, makes the speaker a powerless witness of what is happening suddenly at the time of speech. This analysis explains the frequent mirative value and intersubjective warning wrought by the Presentative. As for the the Zero-tense (or Narrative), the other conjugation conveying a global overview of the process in Wolof, the analysis of this predicative marker has revealed a new type of reduced finiteness. Its complete lack of deictic framing (regarding both temporal anchoring and speaker's viewpoint) makes it a pending assertion, which is nevertheless validated provided that an extra-clausal locator specifies its frame of reference. These particular ties between the Zero-tense clause and its locator result in various types of dependency according to the degree of integration of the two in context. This integration gradient goes along with various modal values ranging from interrogative, jussive and deontic modality, in dialogs, to a specific modality of necessity connecting clauses in a sentence or events in a narration, featuring here the specific reconstructed necessity of history or tales, and substantiating the thematic continuity implemented by the narrative tenses in general. The inherent dependance of the Zero-tense on its extra-clausal locator is in accordance with the definition of (non-)finiteness as proposed by Givón: "Finiteness belongs to the grammar of inter-clausal connectivity; it may be defined as the systematic grammatical means used to express the degree of integration of a clause into its immediate clausal environment" (Givón 1990: 853).

Applied to the Perfect, this framework explains the regular shift from a temporal reading with dynamic verbs to a modal reading with stative verbs. The strictly modal reading of the latter is the result of a common image-schema mapped to compact processes blocking any internal

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viewing of their temporal unfolding. This image-schema involves a hierarchical view on two aspectual phases of the same process (a previous instable one and a stabilized one) and the validation, by speaker, of the expected stabilization of the process at the time of speech. The fulfilled expectation results in an epistemic value of certainty for all verb types, which contrasts with the uncertainty conveyed by the imperfective suffix. This regular correlation between aspectual and modal components thus reveals a homology between the temporal space of events and the space of the speech acts, which includes the speaker as the source of the modal and assertive specifications. Moreover, in dialog, the different aspectual phases can be associated with different positions of the interlocutors regarding the predicated event, resulting in different stances and various types of alignment between the two. These subjective uses corresponds to what De Smet and Verstraete (2006) call ideational subjectivity. There are associated with regular argumentative effects ('the discussion is over / I disagree / I agree / I am relieved / you should do something...') corresponding to what De Smet and Verstraete (ibid.) call interpersonal subjectivity that "deals with the positioning of the speaker with respect to [the representation of the extralinguistic and extra-discursive world] and his or her interaction with the interlocutor".

In sum, this theoretical framework operationalizing the speaker's viewpoint and the time of speech as the founding parameters of the default frame of reference (or base space) provides a matrix to account of the various uses of the TAM markers in context: this two parameters are the source of the temporal and modal values of any utterance. The varying salience of the two for a same TAM marker is shaped by its context of use. Encoded in the TAM markers, the speaker's viewpoint and the time of speech function as the contextualization cues (or indexical signs) pointing beyond the utterance to its presupposed conditions of use, as defined by Gumperz (1992) and Silverstein (1976) according to Du Bois (2007). By bridging TAM with stance, the speaker's viewpoint operationalized as a key concept in a new model of assertion opens up new avenues to account in a broader way for the various uses and functions of TAM markers across languages, and thus to integrate more tightly pragmatics and language interactions into the linguistic analysis.

## Corpus and data references

When not otherwise indicated, the data come from native-speaker elicitation, following the contextualizing method described in Robert (2004). Otherwise the following abbreviations are used for the various references:

- D: Jean-Léopold Diouf's dictionary (2003).
- SP: Spontaneous discourse taken down by the Robert in Dakar in 1985, 1986 and 2010.
- T: *The anthology of traditional Wolof tales and mythological narratives* edited by Kesteloot & Mbodj.
- XCL: The play *Xët cig lëndëm*, the manuscript of which was provided in 1985 by the Daniel Sorano Theater Company in Dakar.
- XSW: *Xam sa waru gaar*, a play from an educational TV program, by the ORTS (Office de Radiodiffusion-Télévision du Sénégal) in 1986.

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## Abbreviations

ANTER	anterior suffix
APPL1	applicative verb suffix for the role of recipient, beneficiary or companion
COMP	complementizer
DEM	demonstrative
DIST	distal spatial suffix
FOCS	Subject-focussing conjugation
FOCV	Verb-focussing conjugation
IDEOPH	ideophone
IMP	imperative
IPFV	imperfective suffix
LOC	locative preposition ( <i>ci</i> proximal, <i>ca</i> distal)
LOC.PART	locative/partitive pronoun ( <i>ci</i> )
O	object pronoun
POSS	possessive
PROX	proximal spatial suffix (-i)
PRST	Presentative conjugation (discontinuous morpheme)
PST	past suffix
POSS	possessive determiner
PTCL	discourse particle
PRF	Perfect conjugation
ZERO	Zero-tense (a.k.a Narrative) conjugation

**Appendix:** The eleven primary conjugations in Wolof for *lekk* ‘eat’ and *loolu* ‘that’

	PERFECT	PRESENTATIVE	VERB FOCUS	SUBJECT FOCUS	COMPLEMENT FOCUS
1 sg	<i>lekk naa</i>	<i>maa ngi lekk</i>	<i>dama lekk</i>	<i>maa lekk</i>	<i>loolu laa lekk</i>
2	<i>lekk nga</i>	<i>yaa ngi lekk</i>	<i>dang lekk</i>	<i>yaa lekk</i>	<i>loolu nga lekk</i>
3	<i>lekk na</i>	<i>mu ngi lekk</i>	<i>da(fa) lekk</i>	<i>moo lekk</i>	<i>loolu la lekk</i>
1 pl	<i>lekk nanu</i>	<i>nu ngi lekk</i>	<i>danu lekk</i>	<i>noo lekk</i>	<i>loolu lanu lekk</i>
2	<i>lekk ngeen</i>	<i>yeena ngi lekk</i>	<i>dangeen lekk</i>	<i>yeena lekk</i>	<i>loolu ngeen lekk</i>
3	<i>lekk nañu</i>	<i>ñu ngi lekk</i>	<i>dañu lekk</i>	<i>ñoo lekk</i>	<i>loolu lañu lekk</i>
	ZERO-TENSE a.k.a NARRATIVE	(FUTURE) cf. PERFECT	OBLIGATIVE	NEGATIVE	EMPHATIC NEGATIVE
1 sg	<i>ma lekk</i>	<i>di-naa lekk</i>	<i>naa lekk</i>	<i>lekk-uma</i>	<i>duma lekk</i>
2	<i>nga~*a lekk</i>	<i>di-nga lekk</i>	<i>nanga lekk</i>	<i>lekk-uloo</i>	<i>doo lekk</i>
3	<i>mu~∅ lekk</i>	<i>di-na lekk</i>	<i>na lekk</i>	<i>lekk-ul</i>	<i>du lekk</i>
1 pl	<i>nu lekk</i>	<i>di-nanu lekk</i>	<i>nanu lekk</i>	<i>lekk-unu</i>	<i>dunu lekk</i>
2	<i>ngeen lekk</i>	<i>di-ngeen lekk</i>	<i>nangeen lekk</i>	<i>lekk-uleen</i>	<i>dungeen lekk</i>
3	<i>ñu ~∅ lekk</i>	<i>di-nañu lekk</i>	<i>nañu lekk</i>	<i>lekk-uñu</i>	<i>duñu lekk</i>
	IMPERATIVE	PROHIBITIVE			
2 sg	<i>lekk-al</i>	<i>bul lekk<sup>30</sup></i>			
2 pl	<i>lekk-leen</i>	<i>buleen lekk</i>			

<sup>30</sup> For this paradigm, the Zero-tense inflection (postposed to the *bu* morpheme) replaces the Imperative one for the 1st and 3rd persons (i.e. .1SG *bu ma lekk*).