



RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

M.Ed. In TESL Program Language Group Specific Informational Reports

Produced by Graduate Students in the M.Ed. In TESL Program
In the Feinstein School of Education and Human Development

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Wolof Informational Report

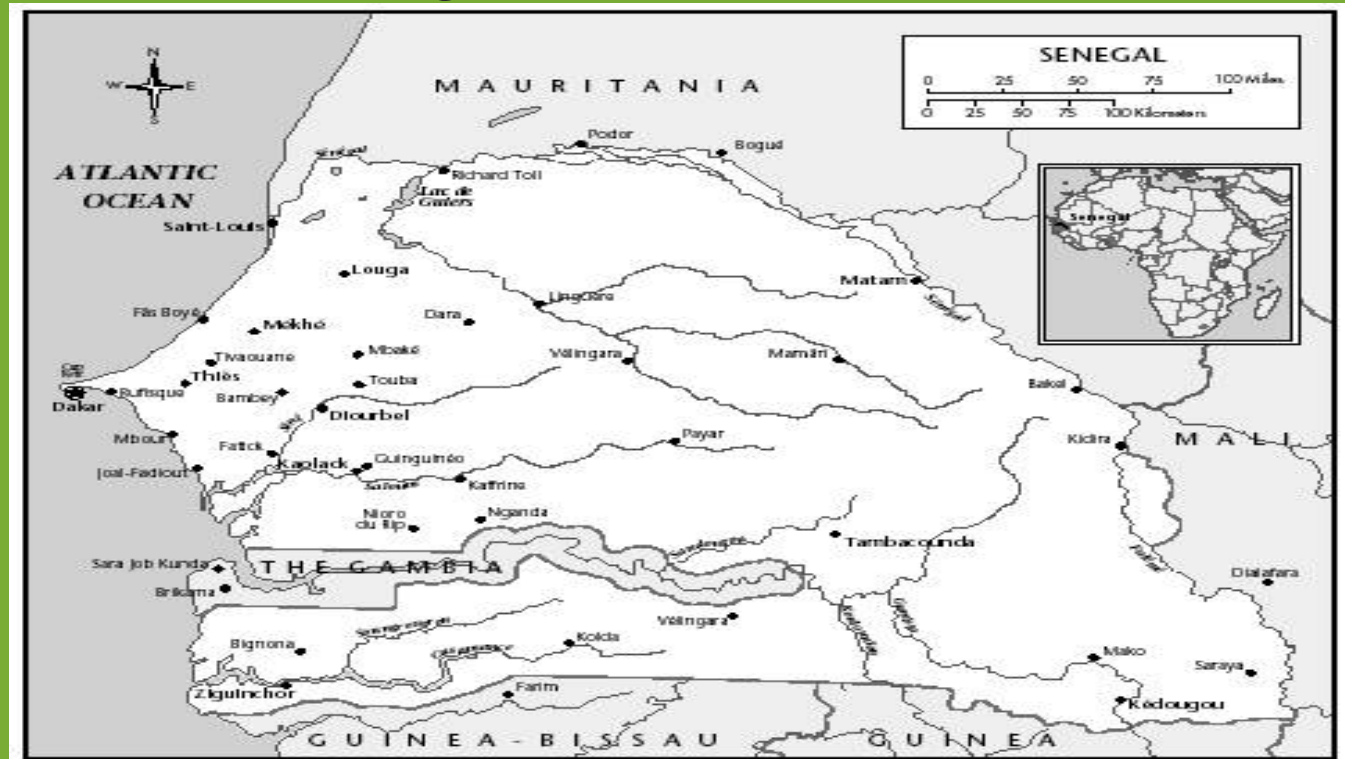


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Where is Wolof Spoken?

The language of Wolof belongs to the Atlantic branch of the Niger-Congo language family. It totals approximately 7 million speakers within the following countries.

- Senegal
- Gambia
- Mauritania
- France
- Guinea
- Guinea-Bissau
- Mali



Writing System

- Wolof was first written in Wolofal which is a version of Arabic script. This is still used by some of the older male population in Senegal.

Consonants										
خ	چ	ج	ث	ٺ	ت	پ	پ	پ	ب	ا
c	y	j	t	c	t	β	β	p	b, p, gb	alif
ط	ض	ص	ش	س	ز	ر	ذ	د	خ	ح
d	dhaad	tɕaad	chiin	s	zaay	r	dzaal	d	x	haay
گی	ك	ک	ق	ب	ف	غ	غ	ع	ظ	ظ
g	k	k	q	f	f	ŋ	gayn	ayn	f	tzaay
ل	پ	ء	ي	و	ه	ن	ن	م	ل	ف
l	v	·	y, ñ, ŋ	w	h	ñ	n	m	l	g
Vowels										
و	ة	ا	ي	ي	ي	ي	ي	ي	ي	ء
o/o	ó	o	í	in	i	à	an	aa	a	hamaz
		ا	ا	ا	ا	ا	ا	ا	ا	ا
		ú	ë	é	e	en/en	e/e	un	u	on/on

Writing System Continued

- In 1974, the Wolof orthography using the Latin alphabet was standardized and became the official script in Senegal for Wolof.

A a B b C c D d E e Ë ë F f G g H h I i J j K k L l M m N n Ñ ñ O o P p Q q R r S s T t U u W w X x Y y

- Assane Faye, a Senegalese artist, also created an alphabet for Wolof in 1961. It goes from right to left and has some similarities to the Arabic script. Sometimes Wolof is written with this alphabet.



What does Wolof sound like?

Doomiaadamayéppdanuyjuddu, yam citawfeexci sag aksañ-sañ. Nekk na it ku xam dëgg te ànd na ak xelam, te war naa jëflante ak nawleen, te teg ko ci wàllu mbokk.

Translation:

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood. (*Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*)

*In the United States, classes are offered on the Wolof language. Some of these classes can be found at the Language Resource Center at Columbia University.

Dialects

- Wolof dialects vary between countries and the rural and urban areas.

For example:

- “Dakar-Wolof” is an urban mixture of Wolof, French, Arabic, and even English. This dialect is spoken in Dakar, the capitol of Senegal
- Some dialects include Baol, Cayor, Dyolof, Lebou, and Jander.
 - There is not a huge difference found by the dialectal differences. Although some variations are more evident such as the Wolof of urban inhabitants and the conservative dialects spoken in the country-side.

Common Errors

Rhythm and Stress

Language is syllable timed and in Wolof, there is stress put on the first syllable. When learning English, this syllable-timed speech affects their rhythm.

Intonation

There is some difficulty grasping the fact that in English there are different tones that we use to convey different meanings. They have difficulty with changing their voice for yes/no questions, asking wh-questions, etc.

Common Errors Continued

Vowels

There is some confusion with learning vowels that leads to some pronunciation errors in English.

- Some vowels sound identical and can be confused. For example: (ship & sheep), (bed & bird), (pull & pool).
- Most vowels are pronounced short and this leads to some confusion between voiced and voiceless consonants.

Consonants

There is also some confusion with learning consonants that leads to some errors in English.

- Some consonants are confused and therefore words are not pronounced correctly. For example: (day & they), (grass & glass), (rope & robe)

Grammar

Verbs

- Tenses such as present tense, past tense, and future tense are of secondary importance in Wolof. They play almost no role. The action is from the speaker's point of view and can be “perfective” (finished) or “imperfective” (still going on) regardless of if it takes place in the past, present, or future.

Therefore use of these tenses causes many mistakes.

Example: He doesn't goes to school. He didn't came back.

Numbers

- Wolof bases their numeral system on the numbers “5” and “10.”

Example: **benn** “one,” **juróom** “five,” **fukk** “ten”

Juróom-been “six” (five-one)

Fukkakjuróombenn “sixteen” (ten and five-one)

Ñett-fukk “thirty” (three-ten)

Wolof Communication Styles

- Days start with greetings. Young men will often shake hands and women curtsy or bend down on one knee to greet their elders.
- They greet over a prolonged handshake and ask about the person's health and family as a courtesy. This greeting process should not be rushed
- A hug or cheek kiss is exchanged with close friends. Cheek kisses begin with the left cheek and alternating.
- Very religious men and women may not shake hands with the opposite gender.
- They are indirect communicators. They use a lot of proverbs, sayings, analogies, and metaphors when speaking. They see this as being polite.

Wolof Communication Styles continued

- Making eye contact is seen as arrogant. They tend to lower their gaze when conversing.
- They are non-confrontational and will avoid discussing topics that may be deemed unpleasant for as long as possible. Foul language is not tolerated within a public setting. They don't like to be hostile or aggressive.
- It is customary to give a gift when invited to someone's home.
- They have "Kal" which is an institutionalized joking relationship that allows people within extended families, caste and ethnic groups to exchange blunt comments even if they do not know one another. The comments can be about eating habits, cleanliness, and intelligence.
- A person's social rating is often linked to how well they respect the community values (dignity, self-respect, self-knowledge).

Resources

Books

Swan, M., & Smith, B. (2001) *Learner English: A teacher's guide to interference and other problems. Second edition*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Internet Sites

Airtrade Intl. (2012). *Senegalese etiquette tips*. Retrieved September 13, 2011, from: <http://www.vayama.com/etiquette/senegal>

Kwintessential. (n.d). *Senegal: Language, culture, customs and etiquette. Kwintessential*. Retrieved September 13, 2011, from: <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/senegal.html>

UCLA International Institute. (n.d.) Wolof. *UCLA language materials project: Teaching resources for less commonly taught languages*. Retrieved September 28, 2011, from: <http://www.lmp.ucla.edu/Profile.aspx?menu=004&LangID=20>

Wolof language. (2011). In Wikipedia. Retrieved September 13, 2011, from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wolof_language

Resources Continued

Maps

Senegal [Map], Retrieved September 28, 2011 from:

<http://www.everyculture.com/Sa-Th/Senegal.html>

Images

Ager, S. (2012). *Wolof (Wollof)* [Image], Retrieved September 28, 2011 from:

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