

THE LINGUISTIC ECOLOGY OF DAKAR'S MARKETS

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With support from a Research Tutorial Abroad grant from the Center for African Studies and the Center for International Business Education & Research (CIBER), in May and June of 2014 Fiona McLaughlin accompanied two UF linguistics students to Senegal to participate in a new research project entitled *The linguistic ecology of Dakar's markets*.

The goal of this research trip was to start to collect data on the variable use of different languages in Dakar's markets, including the use of written language in advertising, and to see what kind of correlation exists between the type of market and the languages used. Markets were characterized as predominantly 'sites of necessity' or 'sites of luxury,' following Stroud & Mpendukana's (2009) work on the material ethnography of the linguistic landscape in a South African township. Markets that constitute sites of necessity include those that involve little investment in infrastructure and that sell basic food and clothing, ie: necessities. Those included in our study were the centrally located food and clothing markets, Sandaga and Tilène, as well as the HLM cloth market, and the Chinese-run Centenaire market. Our mid-range markets included the Casino and City Dia supermarkets. Casino, a French company, has long had a presence in Dakar, catering to European expatriates and the Senegalese bourgeoisie. City Dia is a new Spanish-owned chain in Dakar which has been successful in implanting itself conveniently in popular neighborhoods. Finally, the Dakar Biennale, a prestigious international art show and one of only two on the continent, served as the 'site of luxury' in our research.

The two students involved in this project carried out individual research projects, working with Senegalese research assistants, and gathered data for their MA



thesis and undergraduate honors thesis, respectively. Claire Harter is interested in sociolinguistics and discourse analysis. While in Dakar she collected data on bargaining sequences, primarily in Marché Sandaga, a major market in downtown Dakar, but also traveled to several other markets to look at the strategies used by buyers and sellers to achieve their goals in the market. Claire's research focuses on bargaining as a genre in the Dakar marketplace and how buyers and sellers demonstrate their competence in the genre by using cultural and economic strategies. Claire will graduate with her Master's degree in May, 2015.

The focus of Tracy Lu's research in Centenaire market was to explore how the Chinese merchants communicate in this environment. When they arrive, the Chinese have almost no background knowledge about Senegal, let alone French or Wolof, but these merchants are able to effectively adapt to the environment and communicate with the Senegalese by developing their own pidgin which based on urban Wolof. In the streets of Centenaire there are around 200 Chinese owned shops. Tracy collected data from around thirty-five of these shops. She interviewed the Chinese owners about when and why

they decided to move to Senegal and what methods they were using in their attempt to learn the local language. She took pictures of their notebooks, in which they create their own Wolof-Chinese dictionaries.

The data collected during this project will be archived in the UF Department of Linguistics' Language Documentation Archive. The corpus consists of audio recordings of natural conversation, interview with Chinese merchants and their Senegalese employees, and photographs of the markets, the Chinese merchants' notebooks, and the commercial linguistic landscape.

Fiona Mc Laughlin is an associate professor of linguistics and African languages and currently serves as the chair of the Linguistics Department. Funding provided by the Center for African Studies, the UF Center for International Business Education and the UF Office of Research.