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Glottopolitical Interventions and Virtuality in Spanish Language Teaching for Senegalese Immigrants during the Pandemic (Buenos Aires, 2020–2021)

Resumen: Este artículo forma parte de una investigación en curso sobre intervenciones glotopolíticas realizadas por espacios educativos, populares e institucionales, para la enseñanza del español a migrantes senegaleses en Buenos Aires. En este caso, me centro en el curso de español del Bloque de Trabajadorxs Migrantes (BTM), a través del canal de YouTube *Damay Jaangë Español*, y en el curso realizado desde la Universidad de Buenos Aires (UBA), el cual está enmarcado en un proyecto productivo textil, a cargo de la Fundación Nobleza Obliga.

Los datos para esta investigación provienen de un acercamiento etnográfico y discursivo en los espacios de enseñanza de español. Además, este trabajo se inserta dentro de la glotopolítica (Arnoux 2012; Del Valle 2007), entendida como una perspectiva interdisciplinaria en los estudios del lenguaje, que implica interrogar el tema de estudio tanto desde su dimensión lingüística como desde su dimensión sociopolítica.

En el artículo, presento una caracterización sociolingüística de la migración senegalesa en Buenos Aires considerando su transnacionalidad. Posteriormente reviso algunas de las estrategias glotopolíticas de esta comunidad y su relación con las Tecnologías de la Información y la Comunicación (TIC). En el segundo apartado, caracterizo los cursos de español como intervenciones glotopolíticas, atendiendo al contexto en el que surgieron y señalando su relación con la educación popular. Finalmente, describo el proyecto del BTM *Damay Jaangë Español* y el curso de español realizado por WhatsApp para el proyecto textil, revisando sus contenidos y la manera en que hacen uso de la virtualidad y las TIC.

Note: This contribution has been translated by Agustina D'Andrea.

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1 Introduction

This paper is the result of an ongoing research on glottopolitical interventions carried by a group of instructors working in educational spaces, both popular and institutional, teaching Spanish to Senegalese immigrants in Buenos Aires. Being one of the researchers in charge of the study, I will present on this occasion an article focused on two courses: a Spanish course offered by BTM/*Bloque de Trabajadorxs Migrantes* (Block of Immigrant Workers), held on the YouTube channel *Damay Jaangë Español*, and a course conducted with the help of the professorship in Grammar “C” at the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters of the Universidad de Buenos Aires (UBA), which was part of a textile production project in charge of Fundación Nobleza Obliga (Nobleza Obliga Foundation).

Multiple restrictive measures have been decreed in Argentina since March 2020 in order to contain the outbreak and minimize the spread of the COVID-19 virus. One of such measures was the suspension of face-to-face classes in all the educational levels and the consequent use of digital platforms to support the teaching process. In the case of immigrant Senegalese students, some of the educational approaches involved the implementation of virtual teaching modes on video conferencing platforms or social media.

The data for this research was collected using an ethnographic (Cassels/Ricento 2013) and discursive (Arnoux 2012) approach within the Spanish teaching spaces. In the case of BTM, I am a member of the Spanish commission and I participate in the production of *Damay Jaangë Español*. As for the textile project, I collaborated with the implementation of the course, being an intermediary between the professorship and the organizers of the course, and interviewing the Senegalese participants of the project.

This research is set in the framework of Glottopolitics (Arnoux 2012; Del Valle 2007), understood as an interdisciplinary perspective within language studies, which implies questioning the subject of study both in its linguistic and sociopolitical dimensions, in order to understand it and explain it. Glottopolitics primarily explores interventions in the public space of language, linguistic ideologies and its relation and effect in power structures and social relations.

I will present hereafter a sociolinguistic description of Senegalese migration, considering its transnationality. Then, I will examine some of its glottopolitical strategies and its relation with Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs). In the second section, I will describe the Spanish courses as glottopolitical interventions, contemplating their context of emergence and their relation with popular education. Finally, I will describe the project by BTM *Damay Jaangë Español* and the Spanish course imparted via WhatsApp for the textile project, and then I will look into the contents of both courses and the way ICTs and virtuality are implemented in each of them.

2 A Transnational Linguistic Community

Senegalese migration occurs because of economic reasons, and it is voluntary. In Argentina, it started in the 1990s, and was increased in the 2000s. ARSA, (Association of Senegalese Residents in Argentina) estimates a number between 4 and 5 thousand people (Zubrzycki 2018). This population consists mostly of young men who have migrated as part of a family strategy to send back remittances.

Religion is a central aspect in the community and it is very important in the construction of migration networks (Pedone 2010). Almost every immigrant belongs to the Mouride brotherhood, which falls under Islamic Sufism.¹ Besides that, Senegalese ethnic diversity is also present in Argentina: most of them are Wolof, but there are also Jola, Serer, and others, as it has been observed in the fieldwork process.

Senegalese migration is characterized by its transnationality (Espiro 2020; Zubrzycki 2018; Kleidermacher 2016). Its members maintain social practices and contact with their communities of origin. They might return to their country, be it regularly or permanently. An analysis based on this approach implies the acknowledgement of relations and social networks which function as a link between destination and origin, beyond Nation-State borders (Pedone 2010; Levitt/Glick-Schiller 2004). Moreover, an understanding of the concept of community beyond its territorial dimension (Canales/Złolniski 2000) leads to considering the members of a group able to keep on being part of a community, including its linguistic aspect, even though the members reside in different places.

In Sociolinguistics, the definition of community has several edges, which Duranti (2000, 122) problematizes by defining it as “the product of the communicative activities engaged in by a given group of people”. This standpoint allows to go beyond both a monolingual perspective and territorial determinism. In this framework, a transnational linguistic community would be one whose members identify themselves as part of the group, keep constant interaction and participate in recurring communicative and discursive practices. It also reunites multilingual or monolingual members, who interact face-to-face or remotely, from different places of residence.

The Senegalese community is, as already noted, a transnational group of people, determined by a dynamic plurilinguism resulting from their mobility, their ethnic and religious affiliation, and their educational and migratory trajectory.

¹ One of the approaches to define Sufism states that it constitutes the mystical spiritual dimension of Islam, and that it revolves around the figure of a leader or saint (Gázquez 2021); in this case, Cheikh Amadou Bamba.

On account of their religious culture, some of the members are literate in Arabic, although the use of such language is restricted to the reading of the Quran and other sacred texts. Because of colonization, the official language in Senegal is French, but such language is only mastered by those who have pursued formal education. Languages prior to colonization have more presence in the community and they usually correspond to ethnicity: Wolof –also as a vehicular language–, Djola, Serer, Toucouleur, Mandinka are some of the main examples (Jabardo 2013). This combines with transnational mobility to and from other countries, which leads to incorporating, in different degrees, other languages to their repertoires. Such is the case of Portuguese for some Senegalese people residing in Argentina, who participate in a mobility network with Brazil (Espiro 2020).

Despite this broad linguistic repertoire, a low rate in literacy² in the Latin alphabet and a nonstandard competence in Spanish constitute challenges to this community within Argentina. According to Senegalese researchers and based on the fieldwork, most of the members of this community are not functionally literate (Jiménez 2005). This may restrain them from accessing some spaces which are characteristic of countries with a rate of literacy as high as that in Argentina. In addition, their literacy is affected by the growth of some new communicative practices in writing, allowed by new technological resources such as internet trading and online administrative procedures.

2.1 Glottopolitical Strategies and ICTs

Senegalese migrants have developed several community strategies to participate in the host society (Kleidermacher/Murguía 2021), many of which address the problem of using a variety considered nonstandard. According to Bourdieu (2011) strategies are actions of a certain degree of systematicity and recurrence which lean on previous knowledge, cultural background and ability to endure unfavorable situations.

In Murguía (2023), I examined those actions where language use is central and contributes in transforming the power relations of the Senegalese community within the host society. That is to say, such actions constitute glottopolitical strategies for learning, communication and visibilization. Migratory tradition, which is based on trajectories, networks and sociocultural capital, is core to such strategies and allows the members of this community to migrate to countries with a language unknown. Some of the strategies include teaching the newcomer a repertoire of

² In Senegal, literacy rate is under 52% (Agence Nationale de la Statistique et de la Démographie, 2016).

phrases and words for trading, aid from literate peers (or those more competent in Spanish) to carry out administrative procedures, immersion learning, and attendance to language courses, although formal study is not a usual practice.³

I will for now focus on those strategies related to the use of ICTs, keeping in mind that such technologies have allowed for the emergency of transnational communities (Melella/Perret 2016). I am particularly interested in those linked to the internet, which have a key role in the strengthening of some transnational relations characteristic of migratory dynamics. Learning the language of the receiving country (Brignol 2015) is one of them, and it is greatly relevant, considering that this kind of resource has been used in Spanish courses in order to maintain education services in a context of confinement as a result of the pandemic.

The new ICTs have allowed for a global expansion of communicative practices for Senegalese immigrants, who constantly use their cell phones in everyday life, as has been noted in the fieldwork. Such devices are used to stay connected with their families and friends through social networking such as Facebook and WhatsApp; to perform religious activities such as listening to *khassidas*⁴ or receiving reminders to read the Quran from an app designed for this purpose; for remittance sending, also from a dedicated app; for entertainment, by watching YouTube or Facebook videos on contents relevant to the community; and to build and sustain digitally supported practices of association through groups, websites and channels on social media.

Some of these activities are part of glottopolitical strategies of communication and visibilization before the host society. One very important is the creation of a virtual community through channels implemented from Argentina with the purpose of being connected and informed. Those are mainly YouTube channels (usually synchronized with Instagram and Facebook), which can be considered community and alternative means of communication.

Touba Argentine TV is a TV programme broadcast on a YouTube channel created in 2017. It has almost 20 thousand followers and has published 854 videos.⁵ It has a primarily religious content, but it is now also possible to find in it interviews, events, debates and reports on different topics, which have been oriented to problems related to the pandemic in such period. The programme also

3 The number of students in different spaces identified in fieldwork as having attended language courses at least once is under 500 in AMBA (Buenos Aires Metropolitan Area), which makes them a minority.

4 Religious poems written by Cheikh Amadou Bamba (founder of the Mouride brotherhood), and recited in religious gatherings.

5 The channel website is <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCtAGhyX-8WiIdn3VPoCFbw/featured>. These data correspond to January 2022, as well as the succeeding.

publishes Senegalese business and entrepreneurship. The content expresses the plurilinguism present in this community and their preference for audiovisual means: most of the videos are in Wolof and the main receivers are Senegalese people living in Argentina, but they are also addressed to people living in Senegal and other countries, in order to show them the characteristics of the lifestyle and activities here. Most of the titles of the videos are in French, and even some in Portuguese. From 2019, content in Spanish has escalated, and Argentines or other immigrants connected with the community (such as lawyers or activists from different organizations) have been invited to the programme. This is a transnational and regular practice: many other channels can be found in different countries, e. g. Touba Brasil TV, Touba Allemagne TV, among others, all named after the sacred city in Senegal, home of Mouridism.

There are two more channels, whose manifested purposes are to connect with the host society, to spread Senegalese culture and relevant topics, to fight stereotypes and to discuss problems with the community. In the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires (CABA) there is a channel named *Big Dealer in the House*,⁶ created in 2015, with 4,360 followers and 63 videos. Content includes interviews, reports, shorts films, and videoclips, many of which are in Spanish, especially since the end of 2018. Topics like discrimination, Afro-Argentinity, rights, language, integration, and behavior in the country, among others, are discussed on this channel.

Lastly, there is a channel by a youtuber named El Negro Jimmy, which was created in 2017. It has 11,600 subscribers and 17 videos.⁷ It is based in La Plata, and is geared towards a Spanish speaking audience. It promotes commercial ventures and broadcasts interviews with prominent members of the Senegalese community, as well as conversations with Argentine people and content against institutional violence in the abovementioned city.

With reference to practices of constant communication within Argentina, the use of WhatsApp stands as a generalized strategy which allows the members of the community to solve immediate difficulties and rising opportunities within the host society. Referents and members of the two main organizations, ARSA and *Act* of the Senegalese in Argentina,⁸ note the involvement and organization they

6 The production team also participates in Touba Argentine TV. Since 2019, the videos are recorded in “the first African studio in Argentina, Massar Ba studio, a homage to a great fighter for the Senegalese community” (*Big Dealer in the House* 2019). Link to the channel: <https://www.youtube.com/c/bigdealerinthehouse/featured>.

7 The channel website is <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCEN2yKw91YZbEAoAngGbFYg>.

8 There are two main organizations: ARSA, characterized by an institutional stand, and the *Act*, which emanated from the Association of Dahira Mouride. Most of the Senegalese people interviewed somehow participate in both associations (Kleidermacher/Murguía 2021).

have achieved by means of WhatsApp groups, where –they claim– all Senegalese people in Argentina participate.

Likewise, many of them participate in other WhatsApp groups according to territorial criteria. Through these means, they share relevant and immediate information by recording audio messages, sending images and, to a minor extent, writing. In the fieldwork, I have noticed, for example, a use of WhatsApp audios for a live record and report of important events, such as speeches by referents, or to report police violence cases. I have also observed that a great number of people use headphones constantly, whether they are chatting or listening to audio messages, even when participating in face-to-face communicative practices.

Finally, I will mention another use of the ICTs which is relevant to the present research: the utilization of *Google Translator* (between French and Spanish) and language teaching apps, such as Duolingo (also between French and Spanish), as a supplement to their learning in the streets or in language courses. As with other practices in which reading and writing abilities are necessary, this method is only accessible to those who have had official school instruction in some degree, and are therefore literate and competent in French, given that, unlike Facebook, Google has not incorporated Wolof translation yet.⁹ It is also necessary for these purposes to have a certain inclination to self-learning and some digital literacy.

To summarize, this migratory group holds a preference for WhatsApp for immediate communication, both with their families and the community in Argentina. They have also developed more elaborate practices such as communication on YouTube channels (synchronized with Facebook and Instagram accounts). All these practices are carried on cell phones, since the members of the community do not usually own computers or tablets. The use of other apps (e. g. Zoom), which have become essential during the pandemic, is instead uncommon, as is the use of e-mail and browsers.

The outlined glottopolitical strategies carried by the immigrants help them manage not only linguistic but social differences as well, by allowing for a less uneven participation and producing a different kind of relations with the host society.

9 It is already possible to translate from Wolof to other languages and vice versa on Facebook. This can be done by means of *Translate Facebook* (<https://facebook.com/translations>), an app where translators and multilingual speakers do collaborative translations online and vote for them, what is called *crowdsourcing* (Jiménez-Crespo 2017). Such method has enabled this social media site to grow around the globe, without hiring professional translators. There is an official group in which the social media community can discuss about the translations, called *Translate Facebook into Wolof* (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/779265972167467/>).

3 Spanish Courses as Glottopolitical Interventions

3.1 Glottopolitical Interventions

I propose to think of the Spanish courses examined in this paper as *glottopolitical interventions*, retrieving some aspects proposed by Arnoux (2000), Guespin/Marcellesi (2019) and Calvet (1997). Glottopolitical interventions are actions on language which have an impact on its social distribution. Such actions might be performed on speaking, on discourse, on the different languages, or on one of them, its corpus and its status. They comprise a range from small, domestic actions to public and visible interventions. They might as well constitute empowering or vindicative actions, or, on the contrary, regulatory interventions. Besides, they might be performed by the population, as practices to solve communication problems or to carry a procedure independently, or by power centers, as is the case with linguistic policies.

The interventions that I will examine are motivated by some linguistic ideologies which share an assumption that language is a powerful tool to make sociopolitical changes, and, in that sense, seek an empowering effect (Murguía et al. 2022). The courses are thought to allow for a change in power relations between the Senegalese community and the rest of the Spanish-speaking society in Argentina by enhancing their linguistic repertoire through language teaching. People who run and attend the courses assume that learning Spanish might improve their living conditions in the host society, whether to have a more active participation in it or to accede to more formal employment opportunities.

To describe the two courses at issue as glottopolitical interventions, it is necessary to consider, even if shortly, their motivation, and an outlook on the period when they emerged. That is so because glottopolitical interventions are “expressions of economic, social and political processes on which they besides act dialectically” (Arnoux/Bein 2015, 13).

3.2 Spanish Teaching: Between Institutional Violence and Popular Education

The Argentine State does not require speaking Spanish as a condition to live and work in the territory, but it does not guarantee that the immigrants learn it, so it depends essentially on their interest and possibilities. The supply of language courses for economic migrants and refugees as a public policy is limited, especially if they are African. It was not until 2018 that state initiatives on education for this community were documented, even though migration legislation specifies

that the State must promote the implementation of these courses for non-Spanish speaking immigrants (Art. 14, Law 25871). The educational aspect and the administration of justice are central axes of the relation with society, but neither have been attended to until very recently.

The first courses addressed to this community were community projects or projects by political and social organizations with a perspective of popular education; some institutional courses appeared shortly after (Murguía et al. 2022). All of them emerged in a scenario of institutional violence against Senegalese sellers, and in a context in which the administration of justice suffered a setback in terms of human rights (Murguía 2022).

The climax of this problem occurred with the issue of the DNU (Decree of Necessity and Urgence) 70/2017, which criminalized immigrants and was declared unconstitutional by the judicial power (CELS 2018). In March 2021, it was revoked. This DNU was an expression of how migratory policies re-entered the domain of security and control (Penchaszadeh/García 2018). While urban control raids against the workers of popular economy have a long history, there was a major increase in CABA, marked by police violence, in 2015 (Rabasa 2021; Penchaszadeh/García 2018), and a media peak in 2018.¹⁰ Almost every documented Spanish course started that year, which allows to think of language teaching as part of a response to institutional violence.

A common aspect of both courses here discussed is their identification with popular education, which strengthens them as glottopolitical interventions. Most definitions highlight their relation with the working class, as well as the topics discussed (knowledge linked to the world of work, for example) and their aims, particularly the contribution to a process of fighting, change and empowering (Gómez 2015). In accordance with Cano (2012), these educational practices are determined by three aspects, which will be considered in the present analysis: a pedagogical dimension, associated with teaching methods; a political dimension, related to change in popular sectors; and an ethic and methodological dimension, which establishes coherence between the purposes of such practice and the means of construction, transmission and socialization of knowledge.

¹⁰ In a preliminary and ongoing analysis on the appearances of the Senegalese community in the written press, published between 2006 and 2020, we have found that, from a total of 238 articles, 59 (25%) denounce police violence. 18 of those 59 (30%) were published in 2018.

4 *Bloque de Trabajadorxs Migrantes (Block of Immigrant Workers), Damay Jaangë Español*

The Block of Immigrant Workers (BTM) is a self-managed and independent organization created in 2017 after the issue of DNU 70/2017, in order to organize and fight for its revocation. In 2018 and 2019, we (BTM) imparted free classes to Senegalese people, in a space for the memory of the civil-military dictatorship in Argentina, in the neighborhood of Flores, a strategic location of work and housing for the Senegalese community. During those years, about 90 students participated in one or other weekly course. Teachers had diverse professions, and most of them came from Latin American countries. This space was home for a community bonded by the migrant identity and the fight for rights. Spanish classes also resulted in the creation of a commission of assistance in police violence cases.

The course has a popular education approach, and is different from language classes imparted in schools or institutes, whose declared purpose is usually the acquisition of the standard variety of a second language. In this case, the aim is to provide the students with tools for a more active social and political participation in the host society.

When confinement was decreed in Argentina, classes were interrupted, and they have not yet restarted in a face-to-face modality, because of the difficulty in obtaining physical spaces. With the aim of maintaining the learning experience, we discussed some options, like imparting synchronous classes via WhatsApp or any videoconference platform at a scheduled time, or creating materials thought for being used independently at any time. We finally opted for the latter, and in 2020 we created a YouTube channel called *Damay Jaangë Español (I learn Spanish, in Wolof)*. There we have uploaded learning videos specifically designed for beginner Spanish-learning speakers of Wolof.

The team imparting the classes is heterogeneous: there are linguists, teachers of Spanish, audiovisual professionals (some of whom study at the Argentine public film school), a Senegalese professor of Spanish who contributes remotely, and some Senegalese peers who help translate and participate on the videos. The project received support from UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which provided a computer for editing.

So far, a season of 12 videos of approximately 5 minutes each has been launched. A second part is under production. They are published on YouTube, but also Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp. Accounts have about 800 subscribers and some videos have over 3,000 views.

4.1 Content and Features

It is convenient to remember that there is a general lack of Spanish learning materials for this specific type of populations, since those are generally intended for university students, professionals or Western tourists (Murguía et al. 2022). Thus, it is necessary to design a content with specific characteristics. I hereafter present a list of the titles of the videos, to subsequently highlight the details of the content.

1. Memoria de clases de español (Memory of Spanish Classes)
2. Presentación Damay Jaangë Español (Presentation of Damay Jaangë Español)
3. Coronavirus
4. Saludos y despedidas / Nuyu (Greetings)
5. Mi nombre es / Maa ngui tudd (My name is)
6. Nacionalidad / Sama thioissan (Nationality)
7. ¿Dónde vivís? / Fan nga dëkk? (Where do you live?)
8. ¿De qué trabajás? / Jàng wax liñuy ligéy (What do you do for a living?)
9. Venta, compra y números / Jëndak jây ak waññi (Buying and selling – Numbers)
10. Edad y fecha de nacimiento / Say att ak bess binga judoo (Age and date of birth)
11. Cápsula. Pronombres personales en wolof y español argentino / pronoms personnels uolof espagnol (Capsule. Personal pronouns in Wolof and Argentinian Spanish)
12. Cápsula. Verbo “ser”. Conjugación en español (Capsule. Verb “to be”. Spanish conjugation)

Videos of less than a minute were also published on Facebook and Instagram. There, some brief grammar explanations and simple contents were resumed.

The project draws from a communicative approach for learning Spanish. As for the audiovisual production, we created *communicative scenes* with actors. They included examples of conversations on the main topic of the video, and then an explanatory summary. For instance, in video 4, three scenes occur in which characters are in different situations where it is possible to use “buenos días”, “buenas tardes”, “buenas noches”, “hola” and “chau” (“good morning”, “good afternoon”, “good evening”, “hello” and “bye”): shopping in a pharmacy, receiving a delivery, meeting someone on an elevator.

Translation to Wolof is a second feature on some of the videos, although in general we have chosen to teach only from Spanish, since using audiovisual support and retrieving knowledge from the students make it possible. On the videos for the second part of the course, which are still unpublished, drawing on Wolof will be more relevant. Because of this, some Senegalese partners have been included in the design of lesson plans and recording, in addition to their preexisting collaboration (recording of audio and video for the final edition).

A third feature of the videos is complementary written support. It is not a key characteristic, but it might be useful to those students literate in the Latin alphabet, and even to those who are not, because it may help them relate spoken words with their representation in spelling. Accordingly, joint effort with the audiovisual team, especially graphic design, is relevant to allow the students to distinguish language functions through visual strategies such as different colors, typographies, etc., as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Video frame: Yo soy senegalés (I am Senegalese) (Damay Jaangë Español, 2021, 1m13s).

On another note, many of the teachers are immigrants, but we have sought to adapt to River Plate Spanish, particularly regarding vocabulary and voseo (the use of “vos” as second person singular pronoun, instead of “tú”, used in much of the Spanish speaking world), because this is the standard in the host location. However, varieties from the places of origin of the teachers emerge, mainly in pronunciation. We do not consider learning other varieties of Spanish as a disadvantage, given that Senegalese immigrants often cohabit with (or have the possibility of cohabiting with) other Latin American immigrants. On video N°6, whose topic is nationality, the verb “ser” (to be) and grammatical gender, we exploited this circumstance, asking people related to BTM to send a video with both grammar structures: “soy de [country]” (I am from . . .) and “soy [nationality]” (I am . . .). This also has a political dimension, inasmuch as we have sought to strengthen the immigrant identity as part of the host community, which comprises different voices.

Another sociopolitical aspect is the intention to practice an antiracist, anticolonial gender perspective. As regards gender, we have avoided to reproduce stereotypes by, for example, presenting a woman who is looking for a job as a mechanic,

while there is a man working as a nurse, in video N°8 on jobs and professions, the verb “ser” and grammar gender. The antiracist perspective materializes on the video by avoiding an exclusively white representation of bodies in illustrations and including indigenous and black persons, as seen in Figure 1.

The anticolonial perspective is practiced by including references to more than just the European or the North American cultures, as is often seen in regular learning materials. For instance, the music and sounds on the videos have been composed by a Senegalese musician who participates in the project. In addition, a video about food and singular/plural is being produced using a Senegalese recipe as example. In this vein, we have sought to develop contents that might be useful to the community and reflect their everyday life, e. g. administrative procedures, interviews, filling of forms, etc.

4.2 Assessment of the Virtual Mode in the Course

Offering the course in a virtual mode leads to some advantages related to the platform of choice, YouTube. First, the students have the possibility to watch the videos on a cell phone, without the need of a computer or tablet (which they usually do not own), or written materials such as books and booklets. Besides, the audio-visual support allows non literate students to benefit from the content. Lastly, Senegalese immigrants make regular use of this platform, so they are familiar with it.

However, this decision weakened the emotional and political bonds between the attendees, although it also strengthened their relationship with the members of the current project. Furthermore, the virtual mode has expanded the reach zone of the content by allowing more people, in any territory, to access it. The videos are thus intended to work as a supplement for future face-to-face classes.

Another advantage of virtuality relates to the amount of content that can be produced in a short period of time, considering that this space is sustained on voluntary work. This leads to a situation in which content is focused on basic topics, which, nevertheless, can be exploited. It is often necessary to revise grammatical gender, number and verbal inflection, topics which Wolof students find difficult.

5 Spanish Courses for the Textile Production Project

At the beginning of 2021, Nobleza Obliga Foundation¹¹ began to promote the creation of a textile production project for the Senegalese community, considering that many of its members are tailors. The project has the support of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Argentina's Ministry of Social Development (MDS, for *Ministerio de Desarrollo Social*). The latter manages the Spanish courses offered as an extra benefit within the project. With the help of ARSA, people interested in the project were gathered. This Senegalese association invited those people with textile experience to participate in the project, by means of WhatsApp groups. The participants are Senegalese people between 25 and 54 years old. 55% of them reside in CABA, and the rest of them reside in the suburban area of Buenos Aires. At the moment of the survey carried by MDS in 2021, 74% work informally as street vendors.

Against this background, the aim of the project is to offer options and tools for the insertion of this group of Senegalese people in the formal labor market, in order for them to avoid institutional violence situations related to street selling.

Over the planning stage, coordinators of MDS considered necessary to offer Spanish classes so as to hold a more fluent communication with the members of the project, familiarize them with the Spanish vocabulary related to textile work, and give a workshop on popular economy and cooperativism which may lead to the adoption of such characteristics.¹² A requirement to take the Spanish classes was established in order for the members to participate in the project. Their self-perception on their performance in Spanish was moderate for 74% of the people, fluent for 8% and nonexistent for 18% (MDS, 2021).

With the aid of the professorship in Grammar "C" at the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters of the Universidad de Buenos Aires (UBA), in charge of Dr. Claudia Borzi, a group of teachers was created who designed a Spanish course with the characteristics required by MDS. Besides, some Senegalese tutors joined the team. Their function was to offer pedagogical support, to motivate the students and to promote participation.

¹¹ This foundation is "an organization of Social Innovation which seeks to help ONGs, Businesses and Social Entrepreneurs find innovative solutions to current social problems" (Nobleza Obliga, n. d.). Its head office is located in Buenos Aires and they work with a crowdfunding model.

¹² It is to consider that the Mouride community follows a model of independent work, in which each person obtains their own merchandise and keep the profit from the sales. Although they have solidarity networks in case of unfavorable circumstances, and they are supportive of the newcomers to help them make their first sales, the cooperative model is not usual.

The teachers assumed their task with a perspective in popular education:

university should accompany social change processes linked to public policies and actions carried out by popular sectors [. . .]. We are joining the project from a political-pedagogical perspective in accordance with the Freirean ideas on a popular education which is transforming, democratic and a producer of popular protagonism (Blasco/Saavedra/Murguía/Gutiérrez 2022).

During 2021, classes were held twice a week, they lasted an hour, and they took place in the evening, when the students had finished their working day. Four groups were created according to the level of literacy of each student: one beginner course, two intermediate and one advanced. For the learning process, the teachers decided to use WhatsApp and a printed booklet, as well as images, audios and videos. It is worth noting that 37% of the interviewees claimed they were not skilled in the use of videoconferencing platforms like Zoom.

5.1 Content and Features

The curriculum planning included a division of the course in two stages. The first one (imparted during 2021) was designed to revise basic contents of Spanish and introduce textile vocabulary. The second stage was designed to reinforce contents related to textile work, cooperativism and production. In this sense, this represents a challenge to the teachers, who had to study these topics in order to incorporate them, as simply as possible, in a beginner Spanish course.

The virtual spaces for the meetings were different WhatsApp classroom-groups (Blasco et al. 2022), which were created by the teachers. A synchronous instance of communication with learning activities took place on a specific day and time. Each lesson also relied on previously designed audios and videos, which enable the teachers to incorporate corporeality, a generally lacking aspect in virtual spaces. Other WhatsApp groups were also created in which asynchronous communications were held.

In this case, the work of the Senegalese tutor was fundamental, because not only did he promote participation, but he also explained and translated whatever was necessary during the development of the activities. The team work with a Senegalese tutor is also a glottopolitical decision that has facilitated the teaching-learning process with students and has confirmed the ability of the members of this community to participate as teachers, and not only learners.

The development of the classes went along with the multi-level booklet that the teachers specifically designed (Blasco et al. 2021). It was printed and delivered by MDS to each one of the students. The plan was for each teacher to use the

material according to the characteristics and level of their groups. The contents of each unit are the following:

1. *¿Cómo te llamas?* (What's your name?) [Presentation]
2. *¿Qué hay en la cocina?* (What's in the kitchen?) [Verb *haber* and vocabulary]
¿Dónde está la pelota? (Where's the ball?) [Verb *estar* (to be), adverbs of place]
3. Places [Vocabulary]
¿Qué hacés? (What do you do?) [Routine verbs]
4. *Mucho, un poco, nada* (Much, a bit, none) [Adverbs]
¿Trabajás mucho? *¿Tomás café?* *¿Cocinás?* (Do you work much? Do you drink coffee? Do you cook?)
5. *¿Quiénes son?* *¿Qué hacen?* (Who are they? What do they do?) [Jobs, verbs, grammatical gender and number]
6. *¿Trabajan juntos o solos?* (Do they work together or alone?) [Grammatical gender and number]
7. *¿Qué hay en el taller?* *¿Qué puedo hacer?* (What's in the workroom? What can I do?) [Textile vocabulary, verb *poder* (can) and verbs related to textile work]
8. *¿Cómo se llama?* *¿Para qué sirve?* (What's its name? What is it for?) [Textile vocabulary and verbs]

As can be seen, units 1 to 5 include basic contents, like the verbs *ser* (to be), *estar* (to be), *haber* (there is/there are), routine verbs, grammatical gender and number, and vocabulary on jobs. The introduction of specific vocabulary related to joint work and cooperativism occurs in unit 6. Finally, units 7 and 8 revise the previously studied grammar contents and incorporate specific textile vocabulary.

As well as in the *Damay Jaangë* course, there is in this case an advocacy to adopt an antiracist perspective, avoiding an exclusively white representation in illustrations on the booklet and including indigenous and black people. There is also a gender perspective, by means of exemplifying the verb *cocinar* (to cook) with a father and son preparing the food. Besides, some jobs related to popular economy (and traditionally unrelated to language lessons) are included, like *cartoneros* (a person who collects discarded waste, cardboard in general, to reuse or resell) or garbage collectors.

5.2 Assessment of the Virtual Mode in the Course

Again, the advantages of WhatsApp as the chosen support for the meetings have to do with what has been previously discussed about the impossibility of imparting face-to-face lessons. In the first place, it should be noted that WhatsApp was indeed the most utilized means to maintain educational activities in Argentine schools (Narodowski 2020), which indicates the importance of this support. It is viable because it is not necessary to have a monthly plan to use it, given that it

comes for free with any credit recharge for a prepaid cell phone. Hence, not only may it be more affordable but it is also a support familiar to the community.

The disadvantages of this means of communication noted by the teachers (Blasco et al. 2022) have to do with the fact that cell phones are used in spaces of distraction, at moments shared with relatives or friends, and even in the streets. Besides, it does not allow for a proper use of corporality and gestures, which are key in a language lesson. However, the teachers devised some options, like the use of videos and the booklet itself, which may help overcome such obstacles. The teachers also reported difficulties in engaging students to interact by sending audios to each other, since they tend to interact exclusively with the teacher.

The use of the booklet also presented some difficulties, because it essentially consists in reading and writing. Besides, it proposes activities based on a Western and classroom-oriented kind of learning, which are frequently taken for granted. Such activities include matching, filling in blanks, writing on the same line or direction of the writing and the booklet (which is opposite to that of the Arabic system of writing). It was also challenging for the students to compose a written production, take a photograph of it and send it to the teachers, as planned. Yet, the use of the booklet formalizes the learning process, organizes the contents in a progression, and may help students familiarize with writing, and with some practices and written learning genres in an additional language.

6 Conclusions

In this article, I revised some of the glottopolitical strategies of the Senegalese community and their relation with ICTs, especially those regarding the use of YouTube and WhatsApp. Through such strategies, which have grown both in content and relevance during the confinement, the right of speech of the Senegalese community, whether in Wolof or Spanish, has been bargained and defended. These strategies do not only occur in the Argentine territory. They are transnational and they allow interactions in diverse sites attended by Senegalese people.

Subsequently, I described the Spanish courses by BTM and the textile production project as glottopolitical interventions, and in relation to popular education. As many other interventions of the kind, these courses may take part in the constitution of sociopolitical subjects for both the students and the teachers. The latter often assume the teaching practice as a sociopolitical endeavor which may lead to militancy, whether for the right of speech or migration rights.

These learning experiences were adapted to virtuality. In one case, to sustain Spanish teaching, and in other case, to link that teaching to a textile production

project. Given the possibility to impart the lessons by videoconference, as happened in many educational spaces, two alternatives were created. One was technically and visually very elaborate, and asynchronous: the YouTube channel. The other was technically simple, but more complex in terms of implementation: WhatsApp and a printed booklet.

WhatsApp and YouTube are platforms which students are familiarized with and use in their everyday life. An advantage is that they can be used without WiFi under most cellular operators. These technologies started being used for learning without making many adjustments, even though this was not their original objective. On one hand, WhatsApp can contribute to collaborative learning, participation and the possibility of learning at any place and moment. On the other hand, YouTube also allows for such possibility, but, in addition, it has a greater reach.

Undoubtedly, it is necessary to reconstruct familiarity and friendship by reestablishing face-to-face meetings. However, although weakened, the bonds we have constructed so far are more numerous and have more connectivity (due to the use of social media). Hence, it is possible to offer a larger number of people resources which allow them to learn the language, a right currently not guaranteed.

I analyzed three dimensions of the classes considering that they have been developed in spaces of popular education. The political dimension is related to an antiracist stance and the defence of human rights for immigrants. The pedagogical dimension is related to the idea of Spanish learning as a tool for organization and participation of the Senegalese community. Lastly, the ethical and methodological dimension responds to an attempt to transfer knowledge participatorily and cooperatively, and to adjust the methods and contents considering reality, culture and the needs of the students.

It will be necessary to assess the actual reception and usefulness of these learning proposals. As an example, we have found in the videos a learning channel which may be more familiar to this community, because it links memory learning and repetition (i. e., drills of common phrases and words, which are read aloud and translated by the speaker on the video). This is something that we, as teachers and learners of Western languages, should revise.

Finally, it is fundamental to bear in mind that suffering from the violation of social, economical or political rights, as well as lacking some classroom habits, should not lead students to being treated as non-knowledgeable or incompetent. They are adults who have developed numerous strategies to overcome the obstacles of economic migration. Among them, some referring to linguistic differences, which led these persons to opt for a Spanish course imparted in the host community.

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