

# The morpho-syntax of silent wh-expressions in Wolof

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**Abstract** This paper analyzes the morphology and syntax of wh-expressions and agreeing complementizers in Wolof, an Atlantic language. I argue that Wolof possesses a set of null wh-expressions, in addition to a set of overt ones. The null wh-expressions occur in a relative clause-like construction in which they trigger agreement on a complementizer. I examine the properties of the null wh-expressions and compare them to their overt counterparts in Wolof. I provide evidence that the null wh-expressions, like the overt ones, move successive cyclically, and may trigger agreement on intermediate complementizers that occur in the movement pathway. I also compare the Wolof construction to a superficially similar complementizer agreement construction in the Bantu language Kinande, and to null operators in German and wh-drop in Dutch.

**Keywords** Wolof · Wh-movement · Agreement · Complementizer · Connectivity · Successive cyclicity

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 The *u*-construction

This paper investigates the morpho-syntax of a wh-construction (i.e., an operator-trace construction) in Wolof, an Atlantic language of Senegal. I call this construction the “*u*-construction”, and argue that Wolof possesses a set of null wh-expressions

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