

The semantics of temporal concepts in Wolof

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Certain temporal metaphors are well described for a variety of languages (Dancygier & Sweetser 2014), but these metaphors account for only a small portion of temporal semantic structures. This paper studies semantic structures that express some of the same concepts as canonical temporal metaphors (Gentner et al. 2001) such as Moving Ego (“*We are **moving ahead into the future***”) and Moving Time (“*Fall is **coming***”). Using Wolof (West Africa), we examine structures that do not instantiate metaphors such as those just mentioned but still use related concepts involving location, motion, and advancement. Treating conceptual metaphor as a subtype of blending (Dancygier & Sweetser 2014), I distinguish canonical conceptual metaphor from other blends. The data mostly come from ethnographic interviews with Wolof monolinguals in rural Saloum, Senegal.

One strategy uses *tollu* ‘be equivalent to’. In example (1), the speaker indicates the size of a picture frame (see data below).

Turning to temporal uses, *Tollu* applies directly to a time-indicating phenomenon — in (2), the shadow of a fence metonymically indicates clock-time.

While the “motion” of the shadow in (2) is analogous to the motion in source frame of Moving Ego, *tollu* also applies to temporal phenomena without space-motion concepts, as in (3). Thus speakers talk about temporal phenomena in terms of measurement without space-motion metaphor. Nonetheless, the strategy with *tollu* is consistent with the TIME IS SPACE metaphor complex as seen in (2). Similarly, *dem* ‘go’ plays a role in Moving Ego (Moore 2014), but temporal *dem*, though compatible, is not always fully analyzable as Moving Ego. In (4a), Ego is moving but the Ground (Talmy 2000) that Ego moves relative to is not indicated. (“Ego” represents the entity having an experience of time/motion.) By contrast, (4b) is canonical Moving Ego because it maps a complete spatial scenario — Mover/Figure and Ground (The Ground is ‘at front’).

However, we see the same morphosyntactic structure (in bold) with *toog* ‘sit’ (4c). Since there is no Mover in (4c), the space-to-time mapping is only partial. Such partial structures are not typical of conceptual metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson 1999) but they are expected in blending (Fauconnier & Turner 2002).

Finally, the semantics of activities motivate structures that are different from those of time as such. In (5), we see *ñów* ‘come’ behaving as it does in canonical temporal metaphor, where future times “come” to Ego, but *topp* ‘follow’ contradicts the expectations of temporal metaphor, because if something is coming, you are not following it. In (5), Ego’s engagement in work is talked about as *topp* ‘following’, while the realization of the opportunity to work is talked about as *ñów* ‘coming’.

To summarize, while measurement (with *tollu* ‘be equivalent’) is compatible with spatial metaphors, it also applies directly to time. Verbs of motion such as *dem* ‘go’ and *topp* ‘follow’ play a central role in canonical temporal metaphor, but they also have temporal uses that must be analyzed using mapping structures that deviate from such metaphor. The current talk describes some of these structures in an analysis that furthers our understanding of temporal metaphor and how temporal phenomena are talked about.

Wolof data

- 1) Bii, bu **tollu** **nii** sæ saa.
this REL be.equivalent like.this five hundred
‘This one, one of **this size** (gesturing), [costs] 500’. [Saloum] on23:05
- 2) Bu subaa ba amut montar, dangay xool fee rekk,
when tomorrow:COND when have:NEG clock youSENT.FOCUS:IMPF look there only
- nga xam ne fii kat, **fii** la diiz ãer **tollu** -woon. Waaw.
you know that here EMPH, here FOC ten o’clock be.equivalent-PAST yes
‘Tomorrow if there is no clock, you just look there [at the shadow of a fence]; you know that in fact here, **here** is where ten o’clock **measured**.’ [Saloum sj27:40]

- 3) ... jamano ... yi nga **tollu** di am liggéey...
 times which you be.equivalent AUX have work
 "the times that you **measure** (at) and have work"
 'the **stage** of your life in which you have work' [Saloum INN]
- 4a) Bu mboq ñoree, nga **dem** tuuti xaal ñor, sunna ñor.
 when corn ripe:COND, you go little watermelon ripe, millet ripe
 "When corn gets ripe you go a little bit and watermelon gets ripe, millet gets ripe."
 'After the corn gets ripe, a little later the watermelon and millet get ripe.' [Saloum. mj8:30]
- 4b) **Buñ dem-ee ba ci kanam** dinga gis
 when:we go-COND to.the.point.of LOCPREP front you.FUTURE see
 "When we have gone until at front, you will see." 'When we get farther ahead [i.e. 'later'], you will see.' (E.g., the addressee will see that what the speaker had been saying is true.) [APS, Ba:211, constructed]
- 4c) Léeg-o-léeg seet ñer mooy nekk fajar, léeg-o-léeg siiz ñer mooy nekk fajar.
 'Sometimes dawn is at seven o'clock; sometimes dawn is at six o'clock.'
- ... **buñ toog-ee ba ci kanam...**
 when:we sit-COND to.the.point.of LOCPREP front
 "...when we have sat until at front..." '...at a later time of year' [the speaker then elaborates on the topic of dawn and clock times]. [Saloum sj32:05]
- 5) Yaa ngi **topp liggéey bi** waay terewul ba-tey
 you PRESENTATIVE follow work the but prevent:NEG until-now
- liggéey анги ñów.**
 work PRESENTATIVE come
 "You are **following the work** but that doesn't prevent **work** from **coming**". 'You are attending to the work but that doesn't stop work from coming.' [Saloum sj11:40]

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