

The Use of Appellatives in the Senegalese Rap Discourse: A Strategy of Demonization

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Abstract: In the Senegalese rap discourse, terms of address such as appellative are generally used to address others or to designate something. This article aims at analyzing the different forms of diabolic appellatives used by rappers when they are addressing the politician or are talking about the political system. The corpus is composed of fifteen songs produced during the last 20 years by rappers well known in the Senegalese hip hop scene. The obtained results indicate that the categories of appellatives most frequently used by the rapper are neological, qualifying, anthroponymic, kinship and metaphorical appellatives. These appellatives have a negative connotation and aim at caricaturing the politician or the political system.

Keywords: appellative, discourse, rap, Senegal, strategy, communication and demonization.

INTRODUCTION

In his daily life, man uses language to convey messages. Language, on the other hand, is a linguistic system that can be analyzed according to the communication situation. Basing on Hymes' conception according to which communication does not require the possession of a language, grammar and vocabulary are indispensable factors in communication. Its understanding as well depends on sociocultural norms and the pragmatic rules that govern the community that speaks it (communication skills) (HYMES, D. 1984).

Indeed, the systems of appellative are part of these norms or rules and usually appear in the rap discourse as it is the case in Senegalese rap, which constitutes the main purpose of this study. Rap is nowadays a social phenomenon and a means of expression enabling its actors, especially young people, to reveal their true identity, but also to convey messages of bitterness, anxiety and dreaming through appellatives.

In this form of communication, rappers, acting as spokespersons for an oppressed people, aim at demonizing the politician or the political system. Moreover, our interest, in this article, is to show not

only the different forms of appellatives appearing in Senegalese rap discourse, but also to explain their pragmatic aims according to the communication situation of the speaker (rapper).

Literature Review

The literature about appellatives is rich and varied. Many linguists and grammarians have discussed about it differently. However, before analyzing our corpus, we have considered it necessary to review previous work on this theme in relation to linguistic communication.

In his Universal Dictionary dating from the end of the 17th century, Antoine Furetière grammatically defines the term "appellative" as "a name given to species, and which is opposed to a proper name, given to each individual" (Furetière, Antoine. 1978). The author believes that "angel" and "man" are appellative names, while "Peter" is a proper name. The *Petit Robert* 2014 makes the historicity of the term by affirming that it appeared for the first time in the fourteenth century under (appelare, "call") and defines it respectively from an opposite and different angle, in didactics, as "a common name (opposed to proper name)" and, in the modern language, as "any

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word to call someone to whom one is addressing (eg, sir, mother, my pretty)” (Le Petit Robert 2014. 2013). As for the Collins Dictionary, available on the Internet, the term is an adjective referring to a name or title, or to a proper name used as a common name. As a name, the same word is an identifying name (an appellation), or, in grammar, another term for common name (Collins Dictionary). According to the grammarian Vanier, this term comes from Latin *appellare*, meaning to call, is an adjective associated with the name (“appellative name”), and which is:

[...] a name of gender, in other words, a common name, such as *man, horse, dog, cat, house*, etc. It is opposed to a *proper or individual name* which designates such a being seen in itself, disregarding all others of its kind. Grammarians wanted, by *appellative*, to designate the word which recalls under the same denomination the idea of a whole class of beings which bears the same name. The name is called *appellative* or common when used to designate the genus or species (Vanier, V. A. 1836).

This conception of Vanier means that the term preceding the name is the only fundamental criterion that can qualify it as “*appellative*” or not. As for Guillaume (quoted by Jean Stéfani), he seems to share the point of view of Vanier, when he studies the definite and indefinite article in the French system. The latter analyzes the article from two angles: the one (article *a*) which aims to particularize with an orientation starting from universal to the digital singular; the other which aims to generalize with an orientation starting from the numeric singular to universal (article *the*) (Stéfani, J. 1967). With regard to Dubois et al, they define appellatives as:

[...] terms of the language used in the direct communication to question the interlocutor to whom one is addressing in denominating it or indicating the social relations that the speaker institutes with him: *Madam, are you ready? Comrades, all at the demonstration! Paul, come here*. Appellatives are proper names, kinship terms or specific names (*dad, mom, sire, sir, etc.*). There are terms in the indirect statement with a particular syntax: *I met Mrs Dupont yesterday* (Dubois, J. et al., 1994).

Here the author tries to say that an appellative can be a common name or a proper name according to the form of communication, that is to say a direct or indirect speech. Beyond all these various opinions, there are other terms functioning as an “appellative”, and through which one can address others. These terms can be an insult, the personal pronoun “you” even has an affectionate connotation. In this sense, Perret, in his article about appellatives, gives a rather detailed definition of these ones, in these terms:

Appellatives are defined by both a function and a form. When a lexicon term is used in the discourse to mention a person, it becomes an appellative. However any term does not meet indifferently in this function. There are usual names; these are personal pronouns; proper names; some common names: titles (“sir”, “my general”), certain terms of relationship (“comrade”), kinship terms, terms that designate a human being (“girl”). Other terms, metaphorically used to refer to a human being, are also common names (“my hen”); similarly, some adjectives are used in the same function (“old man”). However, any metaphorical designation of a human being does not become a common appellative (neither “my couch grass” nor “my person suffering from abulia”). Appellatives are used as the first, second and third person of the verb, to designate the person who speaks: the speaker; the one to whom one speaks: the addressee; and the one we are talking about: the delocutor (Perret, D. 1970).

METHODOLOGY

The corpus of this work consists of fifteen songs produced by different rappers. These selected songs have been released during the last 20 years and are much more characterized by political events which constitute, moreover, the central theme of our study. The rappers in this work are veterans of the Senegalese hip hop movement.

After the manual transcription, the songs are presented in italics and the translation into English in the normal style with quotation marks.

After the creation of the corpus, a detailed analysis of lyrics has been made to identify and classify the different types of appellatives that are diabolic.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The obtained results indicate that these appellatives aim to demonize by caricaturing negatively the politician or politics as management of the city (the political system). They are essentially composed of neological, qualifying, anthroponymic, kinship and metaphorical appellatives.

Thus, they are not only a discursive strategy for rappers to denounce the bad managerial practice of politicians, but also strategies to decry the precarious living conditions of their fellow citizens for whom they have decided to be liberating activists.

Neological Appellatives

In rap discourse, we notice that Senegalese rappers, as well as others, frequently use neologism (lexical creation). These appellatives or lexical units, which do not exist in the current or standard register, generally have an identity, cryptic and playful dimension. Nevertheless, this type of language may

have another function that permits to demonize an individual or a situation.

Moreover, in our corpus, most of these appellatives belong to other categories; for example, they are borrowed from English, Greek or African languages.

Many of these appellatives have undergone a semantic modification. They are apparent in our corpus in the form of processes such as truncation, suffixation and abbreviations, and have a very pejorative, devaluing and negative connotation. They have a deforming function. We can quote as examples the following statements:

In statement (1), the abbreviations **AFP** (Alliance of the Forces of Progress) and **PS** (Socialist Party) refer respectively to very representative political parties in Senegal. However, in the rapper's discourse, these abbreviations have undergone a denaturalization (change of meaning) to become respectively (Association des Fainéants du Peuple "Association of the People's lazybones") and (Posson nu Senegaal "Poison of Senegal"). The latter used these ironic processes to ridicule political leaders and their visions.

In statement (2), the rapper used the process of truncation with the terms **bac** that derives from **Baccalauréat** "A-levels" and **fac** which is derived from **faculté** "faculty". Indeed, in the rapper's discourse, these appellatives, as the case of the abbreviations of political parties, have also lost their true meaning and stand for respectively *Brevet d'Aptitude au Chômage* "Certificate of Aptitude to Unemployment" and *Formation Accélérée au Chômage* "Accelerated Training to Unemployment". Thus, through these lexical processes, the rapper emphasizes the plethora of unemployed graduates and denounces indirectly the inefficiency of the government's employment policy.

In statement (3), the rapper uses the process of suffixation in creating new lexical units from a combination of lexemes belonging to different languages or varieties of languages. In this case, this form of combination mainly concerns Wolof (Senegal's most spoken national language) and French. However, **martocratique** is composed of two French lexemes; "**Marto**" which comes from **marteau** (hammer) and "**critique**" of Greek origin (Kratos). As for **kassocratique**, it is composed of two lexemes: Wolof-French, "**kasso**" which means prison (prison) and "**critique**" of Greek origin (Kratos). Thus, this lexical neologism is a manner for the rapper to criticize and demonize the political system of President Abdoulaye Wade which is characterized the most through oppression.

AFP

Quoi

Association des Fainéants du Peuple

Waay ken bëggul

PS

Lan, Posson nu Senegaal

"AFP

What

Association of the people's lazybones

But nobody wants

PS

What, the Poison of Senegal"

(Song of Kërji "the house" group which is entitled 2e mi-temps "second half-time".

Après le bac, Brevet d'Aptitude au Chômage

C'est la fac, Formation Accélérée au Chômage.

"After A-levels, certificate of Aptitude to unemployment

It is Faculty, accelerated training to unemployment"

(Song of Xuman and Keyti which is entitled hymne "hymn").

Ndax fi moy la république martocratique du Sénégal

Fi moy la république kassocratique du Sénégal

"Because here is the Senegalese martocracy republic

Here is the Senegalese kassocracy republic

(Song of Xuman which is entitled Yaa tey "you don't care"

Metaphorical Appellatives

Rap is described as vulgar or unhealthy music by some people because of the barbaric, wild or demonizing nature of the lexical terms generally used by rappers. This language cruelty has meant that there is always a struggle between politics and rap.

Moreover, for some politicians, these words of rap must be combated because they are not only insulting or abusive, but also incite racism and inspire violence. In the Senegalese Rap style, this terminology is full of metaphorical images that make the rapper's communication inaccessible, hence its cryptic dimension. These encoded appellatives, through which the rapper compares human beings to animate or inanimate beings, result from the feeling of frustration. According to Jean Dubois:

Metaphor consists in the use of a concrete word to express an abstract notion, in the absence of any element formally introducing a comparison; by extension, metaphor is the use of any term to which one substitute another which is assimilated to it after the suppression of the words introducing comparison (like, for example) (Dubois, J. 1973).

These types of appellatives can also be a manner for the Senegalese rapper, to protect himself against a possible legal prosecution from the politician, his target. This is the case in statements (4) and (5).

In statement (4), the rapper mentions a *geleem* (camel), a mammal, in specifying the *Yeel* (thigh) considered as the most important in terms of food. This appellative *geleem* is an insulting metaphor used to designate President Abdoulaye Wade. Here, the rapper highlights the old age of the candidate by trying to tell his Senegalese compatriots not to run the risk of voting for him because he looks dying and is physically unable to lead a nation.

In statement (5), the rapper, through the appellative *caimans* (caymans), also uses a metaphor that functions as an insult not allowing to designate a person, but a community of individuals like the close collaborators of the President of the Republic, Macky SALL. The rapper, with this form of indirect designation, conceives that these collaborators are aquatic carnivores who are only interested in the prey lying near them, that is to say the political privileges which would be at their disposal. For him, these collaborators are not in a dynamic of reflection that can help to boost the Senegalese economy.

Yeelu geleem bu magget mën ta def ñeex bu neex
 “An old thigh of a camel cannot make a tasty sauce”

(Song of Xuman of Kërji “the house” group which is entitled Goutte de trop “drop too much”)
Entouré de caimans et de maîtres chanteurs
Il a trahi ses partisans de premières heures

“Surrounded with caymans and blackmailers
 He betrayed his first supporters”

(Song of Pacotille which is entitled Bañ ba dee “to refuse till death”)

Qualifying Appellatives

To properly assume his role of representative of Senegalese people, the rapper can address his interlocutor (politician) using qualifying appellatives to describe his immoral and diabolical behavior. With this form of descriptive designation, the rapper deprives himself of quoting openly the name of his interlocutor, but often topicalizes him. This way of communicating also has a denunciatory character and allows the rapper to decry or criticize the bad managerial practices of the politician. He believes that the latter is responsible for his difficult living conditions and those of his fellow citizens. This is perceptible in our corpus through the following statements:

In statement (6), the rapper, to caricature negatively and unfavorably the politician or the political system, uses the adjectives *mercréant* (non-believer), *fainéant* (lazy), *défaillant* (faltering). This rapper,

through this descriptive approach, bravely accuses the executive power and the legislative power. Here, the rapper, in expressing his disappointment towards the political system, tries to say that Senegalese people very pinned to work and religion does not deserve this kind of President. He also denounces the extreme passivity of the parliament representatives who do not care about the well-being of the populations.

In statement (7), the rapper, as previously said, still describes the miserable behavior of the politician, President Macky Sall. However, when he uses the devaluing adjective *Manipulateur* (manipulative), the rapper seeks to criticize diabolically the addressee of the message. For him, President Macky Sall does not have the makings of a true statesman, and considers that he lapses into manipulation in order to hide his coaching weaknesses.

Président mercréant
Dirigeant fainéant
Parlement défaillant

“Non-believer President
 Lazy leader
 Faltering Parliament”
 (Song of B ONE X which is entitled Něk “to set one’s face against sth”)

Manipulateur
Avec ses bétissiers

“Manipulative
 With his collection of howlers
 (Song of Pacotille which is entitled Bañ ba dee “to refuse till death”)

Anthroponymic Appellatives

In these types of appellatives, the rapper sends a message to a well-known addressee, insofar as he is addressing this person by his surname and first name, diminutive or nickname. . This process of address reflects a mark of courage of the rapper who does not use circumventing strategies to demonize his target morally.

This also proves that the rapper, in his communication, is not afraid of a possible prosecution (to be sentenced) from the addressee for accusing him by name. As an illustration, let’s analyze statements (8) and (9).

In statement (8), the rapper uses, as an appellative, the diminutive *Laay* created from the name Abdoulaye to designate President Abdoulaye Wade. In Senegal, to fraternize or create a certain affinity with persons named Abdoulaye and Ablaye, they are commonly called *Laay*. However, in this case, the fact that the rapper addresses the President of the Republic, the highest institution of the state, by the diminutive of

his name of civil status, has a connotation quite negative and diabolical. This symbolizes that the latter is no longer worthy of respect or consideration, and is described as a buffoon.

In statement (9), the appellative *Njomboroo* (hare), through which the rapper designates President Abdoulaye Wade, is a nickname attributed to him by President Léopold Sédar Senghor during their harsh years of political adversity. This appellative results from the fact that President Abdoulaye Wade is a person endowed with a certain degree of intelligence allowing him to deceive easily his political opponents in order to reach his electoral objectives or intentions. Moreover, in the Senegalese cultural register, *Njomboroo* is considered to be the most cunning animal in the forest.

Soppi lañuy def laay

“Laye, we are going to change”
(Song of Canabasse which is entitled *xar mu jot* “waiting for the right moment”)

Njomboroo njomboroo come back!

“Hare, hare come back”
(Song of Xuman and Keyti which is entitled *hymne* “hymn”).

Appellatives of Kinship

In Senegal, the speaker, in his/her communication can culturally use kinship terms showing a biological link between him/her and his/her interlocutor. This one usually does it to express consideration, compliments or thanks to his interlocutor. But in rap discourse, these terms can probably have other connotations or orientations quite contrary to the goal previously explained. Moreover, this negative conception of the rapper appears in the following statements. In these statements, the rapper does not use the terms *père* (dad) and *maam* (Grand-father) to show respect towards the person he is addressing, but uses them to sabotage or to destabilize morally the addressee (President Abdoulaye Wade). Through these forms of address, the rapper tries to say that Abdoulaye Wade no longer deserves the trust of Senegalese people because of his old age.

Xam nga père li si toppu
Fuck yak sa njaboot

“You know Dad what is following
Shit you and your family”
(Song of Triga which is entitled *Dos au mûr* “to have one’s back to the wall”)

Yo nak maam nak
Maam ndank rek bul force
“You Grand-father

Grand- father, please, do not force”
(Song of Niagas which is entitled *Goorgi* “the old man”)

CONCLUSION

The analysis of this term of linguistic address, in the Senegalese rap discourse, has made it possible to understand how the rapper implements certain discursive strategies to make his discourse diabolical and shocking towards his target. In this hawkish discourse, the rapper is also in a mission of defense and representation of an oppressed people. Generally through the use of these different appellatives, the rapper tries to question the behavior of the politician and his management within the city.

Moreover, among the different musical forms, some listeners, especially politicians, believe that rap is the most provocative, inelegant and insulting, for daring to deal with a reality that these addressees do not want to hear.

At the end of this research article, we hope to have examined at least one angle of interest that this category of term of address represents in the communication of the Senegalese rapper. However, there are still many aspects to analyze in relation to the other terms of address existing in Senegalese political discourse with a theme that abounds in many areas such as linguistics, sociology and history.

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