

# Quantifiers in Siin Seereer

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**Abstract**—The present study deals with quantifiers in Seereer, a language belonging to the West Atlantic branch of the Niger- Congo family. More specific research questions concern the uses, the places and functioning of this language's quantifier determiners. Thus, their uses depend on the meaning the speaker wants to express even if they are placed after or before the noun they determine.

**Keywords**— Class, countable, definite, determiner, indefinite, marker, noun, quantifier, Seereer, uncountable.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Seereer is a language with many dialects all of which are mutually intelligible. Sauvageot (1965) makes the observation that the differences between the dialects are principally in the phonetics and lexicon.

Linguistically speaking, this language is spoken in Senegal and especially in the large traditional region of Sine Saloum which has become the present regions of Fatick, Kaolack Diourbel and Thies. The Seereer Siin dialect, also called Sin-Gandum, which is in the main focus of this study, is spoken in the Fatick region and in some parts of the Thies and Kaolack regions. Writing, speaking or studying this Seereer language, is not an easy task for non- speakers due to the complexity of its pronunciation, its phonological system and its class markers or determiners. Seereer uses determiners like other languages and among these determiners there are the quantifiers each of which has its own use and characteristics.

Quantifiers in Seereer are modifiers combined with nouns to produce expressions, the reference of which is thereby determined in terms of the size of the set of individuals or in terms of the amount of substance that is being referred to. In other words, a determiner in Seereer indicates people which member or which subset of entities set is in question. A quantifier shows how many entities or how much substance is being referred to.

Quantifiers, not only are common in Seereer language but they are also semantically difficult to deal with for the only fact that their meanings depend on the structure of the sentence, the context, sometimes on the intonation and even on the intention of the speaker. Furthermore, selecting the correct quantifier in a sentence will depend on your understanding, the distinction between countable and non-count nouns. Thus, quantifiers in Siin Seereer can be unique words or compound words. But their meanings sometimes depend on their places in the sentence. Yet unlike other languages such as English, Seereer language does not have many words to express the quantifier determiners.

However, this fact of not having many words to express quantity causes lots difficulties to Seereer non speakers or to students or learners of this language. The structure of

quantifiers in particular and of determiners in general is one of the main points which cause many problems to these people. In addition, the way quantifiers are formed in this language can be very intricate for these non- speakers in so far as a quantifier can be built by using two or more than (free) morphemes and there is most of the time an initial consonant alternation when there is a shift from singular to plural. Thus, the pronunciation cannot be put aside for there are some consonants (implosive) which exist in Seereer and whose pronunciation might cause many difficulties to non- speakers.

The fact that much has not been written in Siin Seereer language is also one of the problems that have obliged us to make such a study. The striking notice is also the difficulty of young people or students to write, read or speak with confidence and ease their native or foreign languages. In this case it becomes interesting to wonder whether the communicating and language acquiring tools can be well done.

So, this work aims at enlightening the use of Siin Seereer determiners such as quantifiers. Our objective is also to settle all the problems, misunderstanding and confusion of determiners made by students or learners of Siin Seereer language. We would also like to promote this Senegalese language, around the world. Furthermore, we want to let many documents about the language and allow it to be discovered by everyone and more specifically by all those who wish it. That being so this study will be based on the analysis of Siin Seereer quantifier positions. In other words, we are going to focus on the distributionalism. However, we will deal with quantifiers one by one and try to see the relationships between some of them and what they might mean in English.

## II. THE QUANTIFIER FOP

The determiner “fop” is a word that is mostly used with countable nouns in Seereer language. So, it is the equivalent of the English quantifier “ALL”. It can be used with indefinite or definite nouns or noun phrases. When it is used with indefinite nouns, it is placed just after the noun. The latter can be in plural.

➤ Wiin fop nandee  
Men- all-UNACC  
“all the men are not the same”

➤ Pambe fop mbuugu kiic  
Goat - all ACC - jujube  
“All goats like jujube”

In these examples the quantifier “fop” always follows the noun that is in plural. As a result, in Seereer, whether the noun is used with the o.c.m, the a.c.m or the zero class marker,

one notices that it is the same thing. In other words, the quantifier is always placed after the noun it determines.

However, this quantifier can be used with definite nouns. In this case, it will follow the noun. But it will not be linked directly to the noun. Consequently, there will be the noun plus the definite part plus the quantifier “fop”.

- naak ke fop  
cow - Def all  
“all the cows”
- xa box axe fop  
P.c.m-dog-Def all  
“all the dogs”
- a cek ake fop  
c.m-hen-Def fop  
“all the hens”

From these examples, it can be said that the quantifier “fop” is always placed after the indefinite or definite nouns; contrary to English in which the equivalent quantifier “all”, is always placed before the noun it determines. Nevertheless, the operator “fop” can be used as an indefinite pronoun. Still, it is used either, as a plural subject followed by a verb used in plural, or as an indefinite quantifier meaning “everything”. It can also be used with singular uncountable nouns.

- foofi le fop  
water-Def-all  
“all the water”
- ndaw ke fop  
ashes-Def-all  
“all the ashes”

The determiner “fop” is a Seereer quantifier which can be used with both countable and uncountable nouns. But whether it goes with countable or uncountable nouns, its place remains unchanged; that is to say, it is always placed after the noun it determines. Thus, all the countable nouns with which this operator is used are in plural. In addition, it can be used with indefinite or definite nouns. So, if it is with the definite noun, it is always placed after the definite part (definite article). However, there are other quantifiers in Seereer, some of which is the one expressing the lack of quantity generally called the quantifier “leng”.

### III. THE QUANTIFIER LENG

The quantifier “leng” is an operator which is used in the Seereer language with singular nouns. Thus, it is the equivalence of the English quantifier “no”. It can be used with the zero class marker, the o.c.m or the a.c.m. When it is with the former, this determiner is placed just after the noun that it determines. Whether, the noun is in singular or in plural, there is no difference as far as the quantifier and its position are concerned. The difference is on the noun or on the verb if it is in a sentence, which can undergo an initial consonant alternation.

- fambe leng refee mene  
goat- no UNACC (be) - here  
“no goat is here”

- naak leng refee mene  
cow - no UNACC (be) - here  
“no cow is here”

Yet, when this quantifier is used with the o.c.m, there will be, unlike with the zero class marker, a difference as far as the singular and the plural are concerned. With the singular, there will be a reduplication of the o.c.m before the quantifier or just after the noun. So, there is: o.c.m + noun + o.c.m + leng. Nevertheless, if the noun is in plural, the class marker can be reduplicated or erased; it just depends on the noun class to which the noun belongs.

- o kiin o leng gaare  
c.m- man - c.m- no - UNACC (come)  
“nobody has come”
- o qooxoox o leng gaare  
c.m-farmer - c.m- no- UNACC (come)  
“no farmer has come”

When this operator is used with a noun going with the a.c.m, there will be a reduplication of the class marker before the quantifier or just after the noun. However, whether the noun is in singular or in plural, there will be most of the time: a.c.m + noun + o.c.m + leng.

- a cek a leng refee meene
- c.m - hen - c.m - leng UNACC (be)  
there  
“there is no hen there”
- a tud a leng refee meene  
c.m- vulture-c.m - leng UNACC (be)  
there  
“there is no vulture there”

Thus, this quantifier can be equated with the numeral “one”. As result, the difference between “leng” as a quantifier and “leng” as a numeral will be on the stress or on the following verb. If it is a quantifier, there will be a rising tone on the quantifier or the following verb will be in the negative form. When it is a numeral, there will be a falling stress or the verb will be in the affirmative form.

- o kiin o leng retu fatick  
c.m- man- c.m - one - go- ACC Fatick  
“one man has gone to Fatick”
- o kiin o leng retee fatick  
c.m- man-c.m- no go- UNACC Fatick  
“no man has gone to Fatick”

In the examples above, the difference is based on the forms. In the first sentence there is the affirmative form that is shown by the morpheme “**u**” which designates the idea of accomplished. As far as the second example is concerned, there is the negative form, which is noticed by the presence of the morpheme “**e**” that shows the idea of negation or unaccomplished in Seereer language.

So, the determiner “LENG” is an operator which is used with countable and uncountable nouns and with all class markers. But whether it is used with countable or uncountable nouns or with any of the class markers, it is always placed

after the noun it determines. With the a.c.m, there is a reduplication of the class marker before this quantifier. With the o.c.m, there can be a reduplication of the class marker, depending on the noun class to which, as it is said above, the noun belongs. With the zero class marker, it just comes after the noun. Furthermore, this word “Leng” can be used as the numeral “one”. Yet, this quantifier is never used with a definite noun, unless it is reduplicated; which gives “Leng-Leng” that is also a determiner in Seereer language.

#### IV. THE QUANTIFIER LENG-LENG

The quantifier “leng-leng” is a compound quantifier composed or a reduplication of the word “leng”. This word is often regarded as the numeral “one”, or as a quantifier. But as a compound word, it can be used to refer to the English quantifier “some”. That is, as most of the quantifiers in Seereer, it follows the nouns that are always used in plural. As such, whether it is used with the o.c.m, the a.c.m or the zero class marker, the quantifier “leng-leng” is always placed after the noun or the noun phrase (provided that it is in its indefinite form). So, if it is with the zero class marker, the quantifier comes directly after the noun.

Thus, nouns used with this quantifier are mostly used in the indefinite form. Besides, the full form of this quantifier can be “a leng-a-leng” or “o leng-o-leng”. But thanks to the elision of the “a” or “o” sound which is due to the meeting of the two “ng” sounds, the “a” or “o” has dropped and given the reduced form “leng-leng”

- pambe leng-leng ngaru  
goat - some - came  
“*some goats came*”
- Naak leng-leng a jegu  
Cow - some- (s)he -ACC (have)  
“*he has (just) some cows*”
- paal leng-leng i mbaru  
sheep - some we -ACC (kill)  
“*we have (just) killed some sheep*”

These examples illustrate that the use of the determiner leng-leng is the same in all of them. But something very important has been noticed as far as the other class markers (o.c.m, a.c.m) are concerned. If one takes the case of the o.c.m, there are two cases. These two cases are the ones which are used with the plurals of the o.c.m. That is, the plural in which the o.c.m is erased, and the one in which it is changed into another plural class (xa).

However, in the first case in which the class marker is erased in plural, the quantifier comes directly after the indefinite noun: noun + quantifier. But with the plural “xa”, the class marker “xa” is placed before this quantifier. So, there is: xa + noun + xa + quantifier.

- Wiin leng-leng ngaru  
People-some ACC (come)  
“*some people came*”
- Goor leng-leng mbaagu njal  
Men- some ACC (can) - work

“*some men can work*”

- xa paam xa leng-leng  
P.c.m-donkey- P.c.m some  
“*some donkeys*”
- xa box xa leng-leng  
P.c.m-dog-P.c.m leng-leng  
“*some dogs*”

In the a.c.m, like in the second plural of the o.c.m, the quantifier is not attached to the noun. But it comes just after the a.c.m that is the duplication of the first class marker. That is, the class marker which is used with the plural will be used before the quantifier: xa+noun+xa+ leng-leng; a.c.m + noun+ a.c.m + leng-leng.

- a caf a leng-leng  
c.m-foot- c.m some  
“*some feet*”
- a tud a leng-leng  
c.m-vulture-c.m some  
“*some vultures*”

The quantifier “leng-leng” is regarded as a reduplication of the determiner “leng”. It can go with any of the Seereer class markers. Thus, its position is always after the noun it determines.

#### V. THE QUANTIFIER MAYU

Seereer uses determiners as the other languages do; and among these determiners, stand out the quantifiers. There are several quantifiers in Siin Seereer, each of which has its own use and characteristics. MAYU, which is under study here, is among these quantifiers. This specific Seereer quantifier can be used with countable and uncountable nouns. When it is used with a countable noun, the latter will be in plural. However, in Siin Seereer, countable nouns are expressed through three forms: those used with zero class markers (ø.c.m), those with “a” class marker (a.c.m) and those with “o” class marker (o.c.m). In the first case, it follows the same rule as some quantifiers such as ‘leng-leng” (some) (Faye, 2016). In other words, when it is used with the zero class marker, there will be: noun+mayu.

- paal mayu ndefu mene  
sheep - ACC (be) here  
“*many sheep are here*”
- pambe mayu njiru rend  
goat - many - ACC (to be sick) - this year  
“*many goats are sick this year*”
- naak mayu ta jegu  
cow - many (s)he ACC (have)  
“*(s)he has many cows*”

Nevertheless, apart from this zero class marker, the quantifier MAYU (which means Many, a lot of, Much... in English) can be used with the o.c.m. Furthermore, it is noticed that with the o.c.m and the a.c.m, this quantifier follows the

same rule. But with the o.c.m, there are two forms: the form in which the o.c.m is erased in plural, (in this form there will be: noun + mayu) and the second one in which the o.c.m becomes “xa” (in this form there will be: xa + noun + xa+ mayu).

- Wiin mayu  
People - many  
“many people”
- rew mayu  
women - many  
“many women”
- Xa kiic xa mayu  
P.c.m- jujube- P.c.m- a lot of  
“a lot of jujubes”
- xa paam xa mayu  
P.c.m- donkey-P.c.m. many  
“many donkeys”

In these examples, it has been pointed out that the quantifier MAYU is always placed after the noun it determines and that it changes morphologically. However there is with all these examples an initial consonant alternation when there is a passage from singular to plural, even though, the a.c.m nearly follows the same syntactic and morphological ways. As such, in Seereer the a.c.m is used with two different noun classes. In the first class, the nouns have the class marker in singular; but in plural the class is going to be erased. In this context, if the quantifier MAYU is used with the noun, it is formed by: noun + mayu. The second form is composed of the nouns which have a.c.m in singular and in plural this a.c.m is going to be kept without any change. So it is formed as follows: a.c.m + noun + a.c.m + mayu.

- paaw mayu  
sheep many  
“many sheep”
- a fat a mayu  
a.c.m- way- a.c.m - many  
“many ways”

In these examples and more specifically in the first one, an initial consonant alternation will be found. In Siin Seereer when there is a changing from singular to plural, all the prenasals alternate with their voiceless corresponding plosives ([mb] becomes [p]; [nd] becomes [t]; [ng] becomes [k]; [nj] becomes [c]; [nq] becomes [q]). In the second example, there is no changing a part from the reduplication of the class marker. In the first example as in the second one, the quantifier Mayu is placed just after the noun.

Nevertheless, this quantifier can be used with uncountable nouns. However, this uncountable noun sometimes refers to liquids in singular. Furthermore, whether it is used with countable or uncountable nouns, this determiner is always placed after the noun (Faye, 2016). When the noun is used with the zero class marker, there will be: noun + mayu. In this context, it means “much”; “a lot of”.

- foofi mayu Rog a deḥu rend  
water- many God-ACC (rain) - acc-this  
year  
“there is a lot of water this year”
- Nju’ax mayu i yeru

Curds - much we ACC (drink)  
“we drank much curds”

When it is a noun used with the o.c.m, there will be a reduplication of this o.c.m: o.c.m + noun + o.c.m + mayu. This quantifier, like the other quantifiers, does not vary. In other words it is invariable. Whether it is used with singular or plural; countable or uncountable nouns, there is no change as far as its morphology is concerned.

- O sis o mayu naak le jegu  
o.c.m-milk-o.c.m-much-cow-Def- ACC  
(have)  
“the cow has much milk”

However, even if in Siin Seereer there are two kinds of uncountable nouns: those which are always singular and those which are always plural, this quantifier MAYU can be used with both of them. The uncountable nouns that are in plural mostly refer to substantives or have collective meanings, but be that as it may, its morphology and syntax are not going to change. There will be: noun + mayu.

- calel mayu i njegu  
job - many - we - ACC (have)  
“we have many jobs”

As shown above, MAYU is a Siin Seereer quantifier which requires a lot of attention. It is always placed after the noun it determines and its morphology does not change whether it is used with countable or uncountable nouns. But as it is commonly regarded, this quantifier is said to come from the Seereer verb “may” meaning to “be full”. Therefore, in this verb, there is the idea of quantity, which makes this operator a quantifier. Therefore, this determiner MAYU can be said to be composed of two morphemes: the morpheme “may” and the morpheme “u”. The former, is a verb which includes the quantity. As far as the morpheme “u” is concerned, it can be said to mean something that is acquired or accomplished in Siin Seereer language.

#### VI. THE PHRASE “U + REF+NA

Unlike the other quantifier determiners, the phrase under consideration can be referred to as a verb phrase. It is not composed of a single word like the other quantifiers. In this phrase, there are the morpheme “u”, the verb “ref” meaning “to be” and the morpheme “na”. However, one has pointed out that this phrase is always used with a definite noun; and it is generally the equivalence of the English quantifiers “Every, Each, Any”. In this case, it is always placed after the noun it determines.

- Pis nu ref na kaam mbine  
horse-Def.c- any - in - house - P.I.S  
“any, every, each horse in the house”
- o kiin oxu ref na anda tig  
o.c.m- man-o.c.m-Def.c- any - ACC  
know something  
“any, every, each (one) man knows something”
- a ndok alu ref na a jega wiin

a.c.m-room-c.m-Def.c- any - c.m- ACC  
 have- people  
*"any, every, each, room contains people"*

These examples give very interesting results as to the difference in the uses of the quantifiers "Any, Each and Every" in English language. In other words, Seereer language does not make any difference between these quantifiers. One only refers to the phrase cited above to deal with these quantifiers. In this case, only the context is going to guide the co-speaker to find out what the speaker means. Thus, this phrase is always used with a definite noun. However, the indicator of situation of the definite noun is going to be erased due to the juxtaposition of the two vowels (the one of definite found at the end and the one of the phrase found at the beginning).

However, the use of this quantifier determiner is the same whether it is used with the o.c.m, the a.c.m or the zero class marker. Anyway the noun must be in its definite form before using this phrase. So, the definite consonant (Def.c) varies from one noun to another or from class marker to another: (o.c.m + Noun+ o.c.m + (Def.c) x; l; + u + ref + na); (a.c.m + Noun + a.c.m + (Def.c) l + u + ref + na); (Noun + (Def.c) n; l + u + ref + na).

➤ o koor oxu ref na jega o tew  
 o.c.m-man-c.m-Def.c- every – ACC  
 have - c.m-wife  
*"every man has a wife"*

➤ a mbeel alu ref na mene i yera ten  
 a.c.m- backwater- a.c.m-Def.c-every-  
 here-we- ACC drink-in  
*"we have drunk in every backwater here"*

➤ maat nu ref na xan a fag  
 power-Def.c - any - will -c.m-take end  
*"any power will take end"*

Still, there is a difference in the building up of this phrase when there is a shift from singular to plural. As most of the nouns in Siin Seereer do, some verbs also operate a consonant alternation when they change from singular to plural forms. So, the verb "ref" (singular) will become "ndef" in plural. A difference between English and Seereer is going to be noticed as a case in part; in so far as the English quantifiers Every and Each are always used with singular nouns. The meaning of this then phrase will be "any", which can be used both with singular and plural nouns. Some people can also use the universal quantifier "All" to refer to this phrase.

➤ wiin wu ndef na  
 people-Def.c- any  
*"any people"*

➤ a cek aku ndef na  
 c.m-hen-c.m-Def.c - any  
*"any hens"*

➤ xa paam axu ndef na meene

P.c.m-donkey-Def- any- there  
*"any donkeys there"*

Nevertheless, when there is a shift from present tense to past tense, a big difference will be noticed in the formation of the phrase. This, as it can be said, is related to the fact that in the phrase constituents, there is the verb (ref: meaning to "be"). So, in the past this verb is going to put influence on the building of the phrase. Therefore, the mark of the past will appear. In other words, the phrase "u + ref + na" will become "u + ref + ' + i + na". Thus, it can be said that there are the presences of the glottal (') and of the morpheme "i". These glottal and morpheme are almost always used to deal with the past in Seereer language.

➤ o koor oxu ref ' i na glig ' a  
 o.c.m-man-c.m-Def.c- every – ACC get  
 married  
*"every man got married"*

➤ a mbeel alu ref ' i na mene i yer'a ten  
 a.c.m-backwater-c.m-Def.c-every-here-  
 we- ACC drink- in  
*"we drank in every backwater here"*

➤ o maad oxu ref ' i na adna fe Salmon  
 wag'un  
 o.c.m- king -c.m-Def.c - any - world-  
 Def- Salmon - be stronger – him  
*"Salmon was stronger than any king in the world"*

## VII. THE QUANTIFIER ONDIK

In Siin Seereer language, the quantifier Ondik is used to mean a small quantity. Thus, it is always used with uncountable nouns. In other words, it is used with nouns referring to the liquids, the small grains, the powder etc. So, almost all the nouns or most of the nouns determined by this quantifier are used with the zero class marker.

➤ ci am foofi ondik  
 give- me- water- a little  
*"give me a little water"*

➤ jegam mbidel ondik  
 have- I - powder - a little  
*"I have a little powder"*

➤ rend xan i nduuf kaaf ondik  
 this year - will -we- grow- millet- a  
 little  
*"this year we will grow a little millet"*

These examples illustrate the very important quantity introduced by this quantifier. Thus, in these examples the determiner is placed, like most of the quantifiers, after the noun it determines. But this does not mean that it is always placed after this noun. Of course it can be placed before the noun in question. In this case, a slight difference in meaning can be noticed between the places; that is to say when this quantifier is placed after the noun and before the noun. When it is placed after the noun, it just expresses a small quantity.

But when it is used before the noun, there is a kind of insistence on the very quantity. The speaker wants to insist on the very small quantity.

- ondik kaaf rek bugum  
little - millet- just- like - I  
“I just like little millet”
- ondik foofi um yera nqes  
little - water- I - drink - morning  
“I drink little water in the morning”
- ondik mbidèl ta jawa kiiran nu ref na  
little - powder- (s)he - cook-evening-  
Def.c- every  
“(s)he cooks little powder every evening”

There is a difference between these examples and the ones above; even in the translation in English or in other languages. If this determiner is placed after the noun, it can be translated by “a little or some” whereas if it is placed before the noun it determines, it means “little or very little”.

#### VIII. CONCLUSION

Quantifiers in Siin Seereer are determiners that are combined with nouns to produce expressions, the reference of which is thereby determined in terms of the size of the set of individuals or in terms of the amount of substance that is being referred to. In other words, a determiner in Siin Seereer tells people which member or which subset of entities set is in question. A quantifier indicates how many entities or how much substance is being referred to. In Seereer they are numerous and they are always used after the noun they determine, even if some of them such as “Ondik” can be used both before and after the noun. Thus, the meaning of this latter when it is placed after the noun is so different from its meaning when it is before the noun it determines.

In addition, there are some quantifiers which are always used with countable nouns (Leng-Leng) and others which can be used with both countable and uncountable nouns (Fop, Mayu...). Thus, some quantifiers in Siin Seereer are regarded as compound words for they are composed of more than one

morpheme (Mayu, Leng-Leng, u+refna...). So quantifiers are very important and meaningful in Siin Seereer.

#### ABBREVIATIONS

- 1- T.M.A = Time Mode Aspect
- 2- c.m = Class marker
- 3- o.c.m = “O class marker”
- 4- a.c.m = “A class marker”
- 5- P.c.m = Plural class marker
- 6- Acc = Accomplished
- 7- UNACC= unaccomplished
- 8- Def = Definite
- 9- Def.c = Definite consonant

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