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INTRODUCTION

This special issue of *GJL* contains seven papers coming out of the eighth annual conference of the Linguistics Association of Ghana, hosted by the Departments of Modern Languages and English Language at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology on 27th–29th July 2015. The conference theme was ‘Language in the Midst: Theories and Practice’, and under this umbrella a wide range of papers were presented, ranging from topics in theoretical and descriptive linguistics to discourse analysis, language and gender, language and social issues, language and religion, language and politics, language in education, language and literature and corpus linguistics. Some 25 languages were discussed, including Arabic, French and local varieties of English. Paul Kerswill (University of York) gave a keynote dealing with demographic change and dialect change in the UK, drawing parallels with language change in Africa.

The papers we present here reflect the diversity of the conference, dealing not only with the indigenous languages of Ghana, but also those spoken elsewhere in Africa, including Nigeria and Kenya, as well as English in Africa and internationally. Topics, too, are diverse, covering phonology (Kuubezelle & Akanlig-Pare), morphology/syntax (Imoh, Areo, Moles & Gambo, and Lamidi), discourse (Kpogo & Abrefa, Kambon & Duah, Kambon & Dzahene Quarshie) and language and literature (Kodah).

Kuubezelle & Akanlig-Pare describe the Dagara (Gur, Niger-Congo) tongue-root vowel harmony using Autosegmental theory. They suggest that Dagara has bi-directional [ATR] harmony which is triggered by [+ATR] vowels. They conclude that there is a strict co-occurrence restriction on vowels of words in Dagara.

Imoh, Areo, Moles & Gambo investigate verbal extensions which affect the valency of verbs in Basà (Western Kainji). Of interest to them are the morphosyntactic effects of reciprocal and reflexive affixes in Basà. They note that affixes attached to the verb root result in deriving intransitive verbs from transitive ones, and transitive verbs from bi- or ditransitive ones. Lamidi examines the syntactic behaviour of multi-word expressions in Yoruba–English code-switched utterances. Using a combined Myers-Scotton Matrix Language Frame theory and Chomsky’s Transformational Generative Grammar, he suggests that switching is allowed when components of multi-word constructions are relatively free as in English prepositional verbs, but barred when they are fixed as exemplified by some Yoruba splitting verbs and idioms. His conclusion is that Yoruba serves as the base language in these expressions.

Kpodo & Abrefa examine the structure of face-to-face casual conversation openings and closings in Akan (Kwa, Niger-Congo). The openings consistently had greetings and

how-are-you sequences. On the other hand, the closing section of conversations are categorized into three types: introductory closings, future arrangements and transmitted greetings, and final closings. Kambon & Duah show that quotative ‘like’, may have originated from varieties of African speech of the continent (represented by Akan (Asante Twi)) and the diaspora (represented by Anti-American African (AAA)). They show similarities between the bases for grammaticalization for Akan (Asante Twi) *se* and AAA ‘like’ which have gone from showing resemblance/approximation to serving as quotatives. They conclude that there is enough evidence to postulate a common African source for this particular linguistic phenomenon. Kambon & Dzahene-Quarshie demonstrate that as a result of a shared African worldview, there exist a number of (near) parallel proverbs in Kiswahili (Bantu, Niger-Congo) and Akan (Kwa, Niger-Congo). These similarities may be due to shared cultural and/or historical experiences on one hand, or the genetic relationship as languages belonging to the same language family – Niger-Congo.

Finally, Kodah examines the linguistic devices employed by Chinua Achebe in “A Man of the People.” Using a critical discourse approach, he combines elements of literature and language to define the book’s satirical outlook, which effectively communicate messages of socio-cultural relevance aimed at igniting attitudinal transformation to enhance socio-economic and political development.

The diversities of sub-disciplines reflected in this volume provide an indication of the breadth and wealth of research that is found on the African continent. The spread of theoretical approaches provides an avenue for the thorough exploration of varying data. The single paper, which circumnavigates aspects of language and literature, is intended to ignite interdisciplinary scholarship, propelling scholars towards an exploration of language phenomena from interrelated disciplines, with the aim of deepening our understanding of specific linguistic occurrences.

We hope you find this collection stimulating and informative.

Nana Aba Appiah Amfo
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Paul Kerswill

Accra & York