

Editors' Introduction and Acknowledgements

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The 41st Annual Conference on African Linguistics (ACAL 41) was held in Toronto, from May 6-8, 2010. This was just the third time in its history the conference has been held in Canada and the first time it had come to Toronto, with the 13th (1982) and the 18th (1987) ACALs having been held in Montreal. This was also one of the few times, if not in fact the first time, that the conference was a collaborative effort, being jointly organized by colleagues from York University – from both Glendon College and Keele Campus – together with colleagues from the University of Toronto. Conference sessions were held on alternate days at the St. George campus of the University of Toronto, and at Glendon College. Though logistically challenging at times, our collaboration allowed us to pool our efforts, and find increased sources of support, as well as allow participants to become acquainted with multiple institutions of higher education and research in the Greater Toronto Area. As they say, “many hands make light work”.

The conference was organized around the theme ‘African languages in contact’. This was addressed in stimulating keynote/plenary talks by Prof. Sammy Beban Chumbow (‘Language Contact and Mother Tongue-based Multilingual Education: Theory and Models’) and Prof. Salikoko Mufwene (‘Population Movements and Language Contacts in Africa: Perspectives on Language Evolution’). Many other papers addressed issues related to language contact throughout the conference, some of which are featured within the ‘Language Contact’ section of these proceedings. As with any ACAL meeting of course, papers from the entire range of linguistic topics and themes were eligible for inclusion insofar as they represented work done on an African language or languages, as exemplified by our third plenary talk from Prof. Sharon Rose (‘Insights from Kordofanian on African Language Structures’). The conference theme of language contact was itself very diverse, as contact and the effects of contact can be manifested in all areas of language structure, performance, and comprehension.

In total, approximately 100 papers were presented at the conference. Of these, a third were submitted for consideration for inclusion in the Proceedings. The 17 papers eventually included in this volume were chosen through peer review and comprise the Selected Proceedings of ACAL 41. The volume is organized somewhat thematically: Phonetics/Phonology; Morphology and Syntax; Semantics and Pragmatics; and Language Contact. It is not always a straightforward matter to ‘pigeonhole’ a paper thematically (Mary Pearce’s contribution, for example, could just as appropriately have been included under Phonetics/Phonology as Language Contact), but we trust we have not done disservice to any author by our categorizations.

The categories in our volume generally reflect the range of topics presented at the conference. By the same token, the topics not covered in these proceedings are conspicuous in their absence, for instance, the absence of work of a typological, comparative-historical, and, to a lesser extent, sociolinguistic nature (not to mention language acquisition or more psycholinguistically oriented subdisciplines). This holds true not just from this volume but for the conference more generally, and reflects an imbalance that bears addressing. In short, there seems to be a substantial and growing amount of impressive work being done in these areas by Africanist scholars which appears not to find its way sufficiently to ACAL.

To the many scholars who contributed their time and effort in providing readers’ reports on the submitted papers, thank you. We recognize the commitment and contribution to scholarship these comments and suggestions represent, in guiding us as editors in making our selections, and in helping authors of papers, whether selected for inclusion or not, to improve their work. The papers are better and the volume stronger as a result.

Like any conference, ACAL 41 would not have been possible without the support of a great many people and institutions, both financial and otherwise. In our case they are far too numerous to name individually, so we mention here only the various departments and institutions, hoping none has been omitted: Office of the Principal, Glendon College, York University; Linguistics and Language Studies Program, Glendon College, York University; Department of English, Glendon College, York University; Centre for Research on Language Contact, Glendon College, York University; Office of the Dean, Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies, York University; Department of Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics, York University; Faculty of Arts and Science, University of Toronto; Department of French, University of Toronto; Department of Linguistics, University of Toronto; African Studies, University of Toronto. Thank you to each of these offices and departments, and the people concerned, for making ACAL 41 possible.

Many people gave their time and energy in organizing this conference. Colleagues on the Local Organizing Committee in addition to ourselves included Peter Avery, Parth Bhatt, Emmanuel Nikiema, Juvenal Ndayiragije, and Keren Rice. Volunteers included Simone Akyianu, Ailis Cournane, Radu Craioveanu, Derek Denis, Lukasz Dorozynski, Liisa Duncan, Méliane Etien, Lidia Giosa, Isaac Gould, Meghan Hollett, Roy Hou, Eunice Kang, Sachi Kikuchi, Annat Koren, Netta Kornberg, Rory Laing, Jenny Lee, Safieh Moghaddam, Menik Senanayake, Sandrine Tailleur, John Velazquez, Siera Vercillo, Rachelle Woldegiorgis, and Richard Yanaky. Many thanks are due to each of you.

The ACAL Steering Committee tends to stay behind the scenes and offer encouragement and advice to local organizers. Most importantly, they ensure the continuity and success of ACAL. The Committee is comprised of Akinbiyi Akinlabi, Lee Bickmore, Eyamba Bokamba, Tucker Childs, Laura Downing, Lioba Moshi, and John Mugane. Thank you.

Finally, we want to express our gratitude to all the participants of ACAL 41, without whom the conference would not have been the enjoyable and stimulating meeting that it was, and to the contributors who have made editing the proceedings a smooth and rewarding process.

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