

Foreword

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We are happy to present the 43rd volume of the Annual Conference on African Linguistics proceedings. The conference was held on March 15-17, 2012 at Tulane University, with sponsorship from two key units: Tulane Interdisciplinary Linguistics Program and the New Orleans Center for Gulf South. We would like to acknowledge the financial, material, and intellectual support we received from these units as well as the assistance of students, faculty, staff, and administrators who contributed to the success of the conference, including the School of Liberal Arts Dean— Carole Haber, Judie Maxwell (Director of Linguistics), Nathalie Dajko, Tom Klingler, Michael Cunningham (Associate Provost), Adeline Masquelier (Chair, Department of Anthropology), Tara Hamburg (Assistant Dean), Nicole Westerfield (SLA Program Manager), Shane Lief, Darcie Blainey, John DePriest, Patricia Anderson, Zach Hebert, Kat Bell, Joshua Rogers, Shayra Burgos-Garcia, Robyn Yang, Linda Davies, Elayna Napoli, Kelsie Davis, BusỌla Adebẹsin, and Deborah Oriama. We would also like to thank the following for helping with various stages of review of abstracts and papers submitted: Laura Downing, Peter Jenks, Cecile Vigouroux, Sharon Rose, James Essegbey, Daniel Finer, Şeyẹ Adeşola, Jason Kandybowicz, Deo Ngoyani, Ọladiipọ Ajiboye, Patricia Anderson, and Michael Saunders.

The theme of the conference was Linguistic Interfaces in African Languages. It featured eleven plenary talks addressing interfaces in various contexts: Douglas Pulleyblank and Allen Blake’s “Issues in the phonology-phonetics interface in African languages,” Larry Hyman’s “Issues in the phonology-morphology interface in African languages,” Laura Downing’s “Issues in the phonology-syntax interface in African languages,” Ọlasope Oyelaran and Ọladiipọ Ajiboye’s “The challenge of syntactic categories in African languages,” Salikoko Mufwene’s “What African linguistics can contribute to evolutionary linguistics,” Ọladele Awobuluyi’s “Official language policies in Africa,” Victoria Nyst’s “Sign languages and deaf communities in Africa,” Rose-Marie Dechaine’s “What spell-out reveals: how Niger-Congo prosodification constrains the syntax-semantics interface,” Juvenal Ndayiragije’s “Raising out of Bantu control,” Mark Dingemans’s “Ideophones at the intersection of theory and methods in African linguistics,” and Akinbiyi Akinlabi’s “African linguistics school.” In addition, there were over 100 papers presented in a wide range of linguistics subfields and African languages. This volume contains a selection of 25 papers covering substantial theoretical and descriptive interface issues in diverse spoken, gestured, and signed languages of Africa. The papers present new experimental and analytic techniques for studying linguistic interfaces. These findings contribute to our current understanding of the nature and extent of the interaction of different linguistic modules in African languages.

The volume is organized by subject matter. The first section, “plenaries,” contains seven of the plenary papers given at the conference: the first three papers (Pulleyblank and Allen, Hyman, and Downing) concern phonology-based interfaces, the fourth paper focuses on empirical issues involving syntax interfaces (Oyelaran and Ajiboye), and the fifth (Mufwene) discusses African genetic linguistics and its contribution to issues involving migrations, language contact, language coexistence and competition, and the dynamics of language vitality, which may result in language endangerment and loss. The sixth paper (Awobuluyi) examines official language policies in Africa and raises a concern on how indigenous languages are losing out in contact and contest with exogenous colonial languages. The seventh plenary paper (Nyst) is on African sign languages. This paper presents some of the unique properties of African sign languages and makes the point that research on African sign languages is crucial for the typology of sign languages, as well as for the general typology of African languages.

The second section contains two papers on phonetics and phonology—Boyer and Zsiga’s “Phonological devoicing and phonetic voicing in Setswana,” and Green’s “On the role of prosodic structure in French loanword incorporation into Bambara.”

The next group of papers in section three focuses on morphology and syntax interface issues: Anyanwu’s “Ibibio causative and anti-causative verb alternations;” Barlew’s “Point of view in Mushunguli locatives;” Burns’ “Abo optional anti-agreement;” Finer’s “Deriving Turkana word order: head-movement and topicality;” Hyman, Peter Jenks and Moselly-Makasso’s “Adjectives as nominal heads in Basaa;” Johannes’ “The pre-prefex in Nata: an interface account;” Ngoyani’s “Surrogate imperatives in Bantu languages with postverbal negative particles;” Portia Sakyi’s “Modal adverbs and predicative modal adjectives in Akan;” Safir, Baker, and Sikuku’s “Complex anaphora in Lubukusu;” Shirtz and Payne’s “The problem of ‘head’ in Maa (Massai) nominal phrases;” and Torrence and Kandybowicz’s “Comparative Tano interrogative syntax: the view from Krachi and Bono.”

Following this in section four are papers on acoustic and visible gestures and sign languages. The section begins with Essegbey’s “Touch ideophones in Nyagbo;” followed by Ori’e’s “From conventional gestures to sign languages: the case of Yoruba Sign Language;” and Sanders’ “Methods of studying ciTonga gestures in everyday activities.”

The final group of papers in section five concerns language and society, featuring Waldburger’s “The plurilingual repertoire of the Comorian community in France: remarks on status and function based on selected sociolinguistic biographies” and Zouhir’s “Language situation and conflict in Morocco.”

Finally, we would like to thank all contributors for inspiring progress in the field through their work on a wide range of interface-related issues. It is hoped that a volume with such an emphasis will be of lasting value.

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