

Editorial of JWAL Volume 43. Issue 1

The Editorial Board of the Journal of West African Languages (JWAL) is pleased to present volume 43, Issue 1. Since this is the first volume that I have edited on assuming the role of Editor with effect from October 2015, I would like to make a few remarks about this journal, which is the flagship journal of the West African Linguistics Society (WALS), and outline how my team and I intend to sustain and take this flagship journal to a higher height.

The journal was founded in 1964, that is, more than 50 years ago. I am thus honoured to have been appointed by the Executive Board of WALS as Editor of JWAL to lead its editorial for the years ahead. The outgoing editor, Dr Keir Hansford, has left behind a highly accomplished record that will be hard to match. But since he is staying on as Consulting Editor I still have someone to turn to when faced with puzzles. I thank Dr Hansford and his team for handing over a reputable journal to me and my team.

I have a very good team of editorial board members to work with in maintaining and developing the journal into one with an excellent reputation. My reorganized Editorial Board comprises me (Editor), Philip Ngessimo Mutaka (Associate Editor), Hasiyatu Abubakari (Assistant Editor), Akin Akinlabi (Editorial Advisor), Felix K. Ameka (Editorial Advisor), Flavien Gbeto (Editorial Advisor), Keir Hansford (Consulting Editor), Beban S. Chumbow, and H Ekkehard Wolff.

Many of the procedures for article submission are still the same as before, and can be read from our website at <<http://main.journalofwestafricanlanguages.org/index.php>>. We however now insist that - since the journal is completely open access and we thus do not have subscription fees, we do not have enough funds, if any at all, to pay for proof-reading services - authors of papers must ensure that they seek the services of a professional, native-speaking proofreader of the language they write in even prior to submission. We will most likely reject any paper that is not well-written to save our time and that of our external reviewers, who as I have already found out, are hard to come by.

Also, a new procedure is that only papers that are reviewed by at least two scholars in the field will be judged for publication or rejection. We will strive to use only external reviewers, as much as possible, but an editorial board member can be one of the reviewers in cases where it is hard to get external reviewers. The Editor will make a final decision to publish or reject based on the reviews. This procedure might make the publication process slower but we will do our best to speed things up. I would like to appeal to the WALS community not to delay reviews or even decline review requests altogether if we want a timely and high-quality published JWAL.

This volume comprises six papers, covering areas that include phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, issues of translation, and language situations.

Kolawale Adeniyi's article deals with downstep phenomena in two West Benue languages, Igalá and Yala. The paper describes how downstep in three-tone systems differs from that in two-tone systems. The author observes, among other things, that downstep affects all the three tone levels of the languages studied, but high tone spreading and voiceless obstruents in syllable onset position block the phenomenon in the languages.

The second paper, by George Akanlig-Pare and Rogers Krobea Asante, is on vowel harmony in Nkami, a lesser studied Guang language. The authors draw from a large corpus of natural data to provide a descriptive account of vowel harmony in the language.

Mimboabe Bakpa's paper on "Aspects de la négation de l'ànàá, variante ifè parlée à Kaboli (Togo)" describes negation phenomena of Anàá, an Ife language variety spoken in Kaboli in the

north of Togo. This third paper shows that negation in Anàá is expressed through negation morphemes preceding, most of the time, the verbal predicate.

Our fourth paper is also on Togo, written by Martin Minlpe GANGUE titled “Problématique du nombre de langues togolaises : une analyse de l’état des lieux à la lumière des outils de dialectologie et de dialectométrie” attempts to resolve the problem of cataloguing the languages of Togo using tools from dialectology and dialectometry.

Clement Odoje, in the paper titled “Human evaluation of Yoruba – English google translation” compares google translation to human translation and attempts to explain why machine translation applications make some errors while translating human language. This fifth paper shows that human translation fares better in terms of accuracy and fluency which are informed by the quality and the quantity of training data and suggests that more data, especially literary texts, should be acquired to train the translator for general efficiency and fluency.

The last, but not the least, paper is an interesting syntactic treatment of identificational focus in Tiv. The authors, Oye Taiwo and Michael Terhemem Angitso, account for in-situ and ex-situ strategies in the language and reveal that in-situ focus strategy in Tiv is achieved by tone expansion, while ex-situ focus in Tiv is marked by focus and emphatic particles.

I wish to thank the reviewers of these six articles as well as those of articles that did not make it into this volume. I am all the more grateful because one of the early challenges I have faced as a new editor of the journal is that even though many scholars of West African languages want to get published, many are not readily willing to accept review requests. JWAL is a highly sought after avenue for publication (I have received more than 30 submissions since becoming editor in less than a year!), so we need a dedicated group of selfless senior and active young academics to serve as reviewers. I appeal to scholars, through this editorial, not to decline review requests!

Finally, I also thank the editorial board members for the collective team work, especially, Ms Hasiyatu Abubakari, who is new to the team, and Richard Gravina, our website manager, for layout and formatting of the six papers into one volume – Volume 43, issue 1.

Adams Bodomo  
Editor, JWAL