Current Trends in Pragmatics Research: Theory and Practice

Nana Aba Appiah Amfo, PhD

INTEGRI PROCEDAMUS

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Overview

- **Scope of Pragmatics as a linguistics sub-discipline**
- **'Formal' pragmatics**
  - **from Austin, Searle, Grice, Levinson to Sperber & Wilson**
- **'Social' pragmatics**
  - **multilingualism, language in education, language and religion, gender, health, politics and development**
- **Concluding remarks**

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Voltaire

When a diplomat says *yes*, he means 'perhaps';
When he says *perhaps*, he means 'no';
When he says *no*, he is not a diplomat.

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Pragmatics

- **Language use in (social) context**
- **The contribution of context to meaning construction (interpretation)**
- **Knowledge and belief of the speaker**
- **Relationship between speaker and addressee**

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Semantics vs. Pragmatics

Semantics

- Specific meaning of language
- What people say

Pragmatics

- Social cues that accompany language
- How they say it, how others interpret it

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IPrA

- **IPrA**

the science of language use, in its **widest interdisciplinary sense** *as a functional (i.e. cognitive, social, and cultural) perspective on language and communication*

'Formal' Pragmatics

- **Austin, Searle & Speech act theory**
- **Grice and conversational implications**
- **Sperber & Wilson & Relevance Theory**
- **Levinson and Generalized Conversational Implicatures**

Demonstratives

Demonstratives
Form, function and grammaticalization

Holger Diessel

Akan Demonstratives

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Norwegian University of Science and Technology and University of Ghana

1. Introduction

Dixon (2003: 61-62) defines a demonstrative simply as "any item, other than 1st and 2nd person pronouns, which can have pointing or (deictic) reference".[1] He suggests that all languages may have at least one demonstrative, even though their types, forms and functions may vary across languages.

Diessel (1999) provides a more extensive characterization of what a demonstrative is. He characterizes demonstratives based on three features: syntactic, semantic and pragmatic. He suggests that demonstratives are deictic expressions which serve specific syntactic functions. They do not only include pronouns and adnominals, but also locational adverbs such as English *here* and *there*.

At the semantic level, demonstratives found in most languages are deictically contrastive; there is usually a proximal demonstrative denoting closeness to the deictic center and a distal demonstrative denoting some relative distance from the deictic center. The distinction may be more elaborate in some languages, as reflected in the existence of demonstrative systems which exhibit more than a two-way proximal-distal distinction. Spanish, for instance, has proximal, medial and distal demonstratives (*este*, *ese* and *aquel*, respectively). Levinson (1983) cites languages like Tlingit (North West American) and Samal (The Philippines) which have a four-way distinction and Malagasy (Austronesian) which has a six-way distinction. However, as Diessel correctly remarks, there are a few languages, like German (cf. *dies* 'this/that') and French (cf. *ce/cette/ces*), which have distance-neutral demonstratives. Even so, these languages have the capacity to linguistically distinguish distance if need be (cf. French *ce-ci* and

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Information Structure

Ex-situ and In-situ Focus in Hausa: syntax, semantics and discourse

Melanie Green (Sussex) & Philip J. Jaggar (SOAS)

1. Introduction

Hausa (Chadic, Afroasiatic) has traditionally been described as having only one focusing strategy: focus fronting (McConvell 1973; Tuller 1986; Green 1997; Newman 2000:187-95). More recently, however, Jaggar (2001:496-98) has argued that there is evidence for focus in-situ in Hausa. The aims of this joint paper are twofold. Our first aim is to clarify the descriptive facts, in order to establish whether there exists in Hausa a systematic correlation between the syntax and semantics of focus, or whether the interpretation of focus rests purely on discourse-pragmatic grounds. Our second aim is theoretical: to consider the data in the light of Minimalist considerations (Chomsky 1995; 2000; 2001a; 2001b), in order to present a unified syntactic analysis of in-situ and ex-situ focus. This in turn relates to broader theoretical issues, concerning optionality in a perfectly economical system. Assuming the notion of 'interface economy'[1] as proposed by Reinhart (1995) and adopted by Chomsky (2000; 2001a; 2001b), a 'marked' or 'costly' operation is only licensed if, at the interface, it results in a distinct interpretation from the 'cheaper' option. There are, however, a range of views about what constitutes 'markedness', 'complexity' and 'cost', to which we return below. The ensuing empirical research question can be framed as follows: if a language has

Lexical signaling of information structure in Akan*

NANA ABA APPIAH AMFO

Abstract

Akan (Kwa, Niger Congo) has a rich inventory of lexical items for the purposes of signaling information structure. This article examines the communicative role of a number of these markers. The focus marker na singles out the constituent within its scope as the only new information in the utterance in which it is contained. Two inclusive markers are identified; they are (n)so and mpo. (N)so is an additive focus marker which indicates that the utterance to which it is attached has to be interpreted

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Pragmatic/Discourse markers

Full Length Research Paper

A pragmatic appraisal of the translation of Yoruba discourse markers into English

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This paper examines the translation of discourse markers in Yoruba with the aim of identifying their pragmatic functions and constraints faced in their translation into English. The methodology of contrastive analysis is adopted in our analysis to identify similarities and differences in the use and function of specific discourse markers ('yes' and 'thank you') in both languages. The analysis is carried out within the pragmatic perspective based on the theory of speech acts and illocutionary force of utterances (Searle, 1969). The study also employs a contrastive linguistic pragmatic methodology which seeks to identify similarities and differences in the functions of discourse markers in Yoruba (source language). The findings from the data analysis show that translators' choices are constrained by cultural and pragmatic differences between SL and TL. They also demonstrate that a good knowledge of pragmatics can enrich the study and practice of translation.

Key words: translation, discourse markers, pragmatic constraints, illocutionary force, speech acts.

Explaining connections in Akan discourse

The role of discourse markers

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The present paper focuses on the communicative roles of three discourse markers, *na*, *(n)so* and *nanso*, in Akan, a Niger Congo (Kwa branch) language. *(N)so* is an additive focus marker. Its use gives the addressee an indication that the *(n)so*-utterance ought to be processed within a parallel context provided by the immediately preceding utterance. It highlights the fact that the kind of parallel context that licenses the use of *(n)so* is much more lenient than is the case for the use of its English equivalent *also/too*. Significantly, an explanatory relation is among the inferential relations that may arise as a result of the use of the clausal coordinating connective *na*, a situation which is not permissible in the case of its English counterpart *and*. The contrastive marker *nanso*, much like its English counterpart *but*, signals that the proposition expressed in a following utterance is contrary to what is to be expected. It is suggested that specific language-internal facts ought to be recognized and accounted for within the pursuit of a general cognitive theory of utterance interpretation.

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'Social' Pragmatics

- **Multilingualism**
- **Language in education**
- **Language and religion**
- **Language and gender**
- **Language and health**
- **Language and politics**
- **Language and development**

Multilingualism (1/4)

Language/Status	Ghana	Nigeria
Number	81	526
Living	81	519
Extinct	-	7
Indigenous	-	509
Non-indigenous	-	10
Institutional	13	19
Developing	46	78
Vigorous	15	348
In trouble	7	30
Dying	-	44

Multilingualism (2/4)

A kente of many colours: multilingualism as a complex ecology of language shift in Ghana

Adams Bodomo, Jemima Asabea Anderson and Josephine Dzahene-Quarshie

Abstract

Language shift, a process which may lead speakers to use their language in fewer domains with respect to other languages or even lose proficiency in their language altogether in favour of other languages, is a prominent concept in linguistics. But the concept has been mainly studied from Western perspectives (e.g. Fishman 1964, 1991, Veltman 1983 and Bastardas-Boada 2007). This paper discusses language shift from the perspectives of Ghana, a highly multilingual developing nation in West Africa. We introduce the concept of ecology of language shift, and argue that any theory of language shift must rigorously take into consideration the complexity of the ecology in which

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Literacy and Multilingualism in Africa

AU1

Kasper Juffermans and Ashraf Abdelhay

Contents

Abstract

A sufficient review of literacy and multilingualism in their full complexity in a continent as immensely and densely diverse as Africa is simply unachievable within the scope of an encyclopedic article if it were not for the relative margin-ality of Africa in global scholarship. With the exception of South Africa, Africa is not at the forefront of discussions in socio- and educational linguistics. This marginality, however, is greatly undeserved: African sociolinguistic realities are among the world's most complex and there is much to gain if it could inform literacy and multilingualism research more generally. In fact, this peripherality has recently been a productive source for a radical revision of some of the metropolitan epistemologies about multilingualism and literacy.

Literacy and multilingualism in Africa does not form a unified field of research and is approached here rather as a field of practice. As such this field presents a

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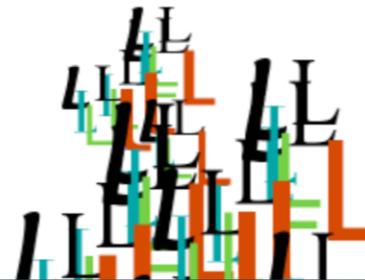
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Multilingualism (3/4)

- **Language contact**
- **Language use**
- **Language change**

Journal of Language Contact
Evolution of languages, contact and discourse

THEMA series, Number 3, 2010

Multilingualism and language contact in West Africa: towards a holistic perspective

Multilingualism (4/4)

Language socialisation practices of children in multilingual Accra, Ghana

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CODESWITCHING AS A MEANS AND A MESSAGE IN HIPLIFE MUSIC IN GHANA

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ABSTRACT

Ghana is a linguistically diverse country where the alternate use of multiple languages in conversations (i.e. codeswitching / CS) is an everyday phenomenon. However, CS in the popular music industry has been rare, a situation that is changing, with the emergence of bilingual hiplife songs. Unlike CS in spontaneous speech which is largely unconscious, the CS in Ghanaian hiplife music is usually premeditated, designed to elicit certain audience reactions. This paper explores the motivations for the use of CS in three hiplife songs: Praye's *Angelina*, Ɔkyeame Kwame's *Medo Mmaa* and Eduwoji's *Yenko Nkoaa*. We show that these artistes do more with CS in their songs than to merely use it to reach out to clients in their multilingual country and beyond. They use it (i) as a means to achieve aesthetic effects, which make their songs memorable and danceable, and (ii) as a message on various social issues, including love and social harmony. It is argued that in using CS for these purposes the artistes are simply reflecting what has long been a widespread communicative praxis, especially among fellow (urban)

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Language in Education

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

In this paper, the author examines the place of English in Nigeria vis-à-vis the National Policy on Education. She observes that despite arguments to the contrary, English has been given a pride of place in the Nigerian educational system; it is unofficially the lingua franca and the first language of the younger generation. The author opines that the domesticated version of English used by educated Nigerians be accepted and taught in the educational system.

Key words: *Nigerian English, educated English, National Policy on Education*

Introduction

English has developed in Nigeria, as has been the case in other colonies of Britain in Africa and Asia, largely through the education system, although the antecedent of Nigerian English – the English Based Pidgin – developed through trade (Elugbe and Omamor 1991). Its phonology, lexis, semantics, syntax, pragmatics and acceptability have been variously analyzed (cf. Banjo 1995).

Certain Problems, however, face the English Language in Nigeria. These are: the reluctance of the average educated Nigerian to accept Nigerianisms in English as indicating differences rather than deviant usages; the reluctance

English-only language-in-education policy in multilingual classrooms in Ghana

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The Language Policy of Education in Ghana: A Critical Look at the English-Only Language Policy of Education

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Introduction

The language of education in multilingual societies has always been a matter of concern [e]ators and educational planners. As Ouadraogo (2000, p. 89) has pointed out "Education a[nd] [lang]uage issues are very complex in Africa because of the multi-ethnic, multi-lingual situation". T[he] [situ]ation is even more severe when the official language of the nation is different from any of [the] [indi]genous languages. There is always controversy over which language to use in school especially [at] [the] lower primary level in multilingual societies. Forty-eight years after independence, Ghana is s[till] [grap]pling with which language to use as the medium of instruction in the lower primary sch[ool] [prim]ary one to three/grade one to three). The language policy of education in Ghana has had [a che]ckered history since the colonial era. In May 2002, Ghana promulgated a law, which mandates [the use] of English language (hereafter L2) as the medium of instruction from primary one (grade one) [and repl]ace the use of a Ghanaian language as the medium of instruction for the first three years [of scho]oling, and English as the medium of instruction from primary four (grade four). This new pol[icy has]

Language and Religion

The role of Muslim devotional practices in the reversal of language shift

Andrey Rosowsky ✉

ABSTRACT

Fishman's scale for evaluating language vitality proposes a stage in language shift where exclusively the older generation takes part in 'rituals', 'concerts' and 'songfests' in the minority language. Once this generation dies away, according to the scale, these cultural practices disappear with them. Within certain Muslim youth communities in the UK, counter examples exist where the younger generation leads the way in reviving, performing and extending the repertoire of this religio-cultural heritage. Although this emerging expanded repertoire of song and poetry is clearly multilingual in nature, recitation and performance of the community heritage languages, Urdu and Punjabi, feature strongly. What remains to discover is whether such increasing familiarity with poetic language and form can impact positively on reversing the language shift these communities are experiencing in their third and fourth generations. Although there is evidence that singing and reciting in other minority language settings, secular and religious, are not infrequent pursuits of youth, it is argued in this article that an

SOCIOLINGUISTIC DOMAIN ANALYSIS, LINGUISTIC PRACTICES AND PERFORMANCE IN RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

NANA ABA APPIAH AMFO AND TOPE OMONIYI

Introduction

In this chapter, we interrogate the practice of domain assignment and analysis in Sociolinguistics. As a sociology of language and religion project (Omoniyi and Fishman 2006, Omoniyi 2010), we are questioning the extent to which concepts in the discipline of sociology of language can be adopted wholesale and employed in the sociology of language and religion (SLR) in order to help us develop a strong theoretical apparatus for the emergent subdiscipline. This is in line with Fishman's injunction in setting out the Decalogue of Theoretical Principles for SLR (Fishman 2006). We follow Fishman in suggesting that in multilingual contexts, diversity is expected and permitted, even for a restricted and controlled domain such as religion. Languages or varieties which may start out on the margins may find their way into significant aspects of certain religious rituals. Following the effort of Omoniyi and Fishman (2006) to construct a theoretical paradigm concerning the interconnectedness of language and religion, and the need for an integrated study of such, not only at the macro level, but also at the micro sociolinguistic level, studies which demonstrate the inseparability of language from religion and vice versa have emerged (see Mooney 2010, Darqueness and Vandenbussche 2011, Mukherjee 2013, Jyväskylä 2015).

This study continues along that trajectory, as we explore the language practices and associated performances of the worship domain through the case study of a Church in Accra, Ghana which we call Redeemer Church of Paradise (RCP). The study is part of a larger ethnographic one on religions and language practices in Ghana. Our intention is to argue that the

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Language and Gender (1/2)

ROUTLEDGE LINGUISTICS CLASSICS

WOMEN, MEN AND LANGUAGE

A SOCIOLINGUISTIC ACCOUNT OF

Powerful women in powerless language: Media misrepresentation of African women in politics (the case of Liberia)

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ABSTRACT

Research findings have shown that the media construct politics in stereotypically masculine terms (Kahn, 1996; Gidengil and Everitt, 2000; Lithgow, 2000; Everitt, 2005). That is, the language used by the media to report the activities of female political leaders tends to suggest that they are 'trespassing' on the traditionally 'masculine' world of politics. Some studies, however, have claimed that instances of biases and negative representation of female candidates have declined significantly in the media (especially newspapers with larger readerships) because of more professional reporting and sensitivity about gender biases (Kahn, 1996; Smith, 1997). The objective of this study is to investigate the validity of such claims. We do so by examining the media representation of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the first female president of an independent African state. We compare the African media and the international media reports on Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and her major rival George Oppon Weah. The paper seeks to establish whether there are any differences in the representation of these two candidates. It also considers whether there are any differences between the way the international media and the African media present the two candidates.

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Language and Gender (2/2)

Article

Caring supporters or daring usurpers? Representation of women in Akan proverbs

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Abstract

The article examines the representation of women as espoused in a number of Akan (Niger-Congo, Kwa) proverbs. The objective is to analyze traditional views on the perceptions and roles of the woman in Akan society and explore the interrelation between language, gender

To dance or not to dance: Masculinities in Akan proverbs and their implications for contemporary societies

Grace Diabah and Nana Aba Appiah Amfo

Abstract

This study looks at how men are represented in Akan proverbs and the implications of such representations for contemporary Ghanaian men. It assesses the traditional views on what it means to be 'a man' among the Akan and how Ghanaian men perceive these in contemporary times. This is particularly relevant in an age when the demands of the modern world (high living standards, economic hardships, high unemployment rates etc.) put undue pressure on both men and women. More so, it is an age when women are increasingly being empowered to take up traditionally masculine roles. Such an enterprise aligns with the call on feminist and gender researchers to consider studying how men experience and enact gender. Thus, we explore the dilemmas of the contemporary Ghanaian man as he negotiates the expectations of traditional Ghanaian societies and the demands of contemporary families. We analyse 44 Akan proverbs on men, collected from texts and oral sources, as well as responses from focus group discussions on these proverbs. The results show that men are expected to be brave, providers, protectors, action or results-oriented etc. Men who are unable to live up to expectation are considered not men enough; they are often perceived as women's puppets. Reponses from our focus group discussions suggest that such representations put undue pressure on men to fulfil societal expectations; and as research has shown (for example, Ratele 2008), failure to fulfil such expectations can find expression in violence.

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Language and Health (1/3)

InLiSt no. 48

CODE SELECTION AT FIRST MEETINGS: A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF DOCTOR-CLIENT CONVERSATIONS IN NIGERIA[1]

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Greetings and Politeness in Doctor-Client Encounters in Southwestern Nigeria

Akin Odebunmi[1] *

Abstract

Doctors and clients sometimes experience interactive clashes during hospital meetings in South-western Nigerian hospitals because of their divergent culture-constrained orientation to politeness cues. The goal of this paper is to unpack the discursive elements that characterize interactive

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Discourse Tact In Doctor–Patient Interactions In English: An Analysis of Diagnosis in Medical Communication in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study describes discourse tact in diagnoses in doctor-patient interactions in English in selected hospitals in South-western Nigeria. Using recorded conversations between doctors and patients in those hospitals as data, the mutual contextual beliefs of participants, speech act patterns, including linguistic patterns, and other pragmatic features are analyzed from the perspective of the pragmatics of discourse.

The findings indicate the predominance of doctor-initiated spoken exchanges in which doctors elicit and confirm information and give directives to patients, while the patients give information and attempt to respond appropriately to the doctors' moves. It is also observed that conversation maxims are flouted and politeness maxims exploited in order to enhance

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"Insanity is from home"

The expression of mental health challenges
in Akan

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Eugene K. Dordoye and Rachel Thompson
University of Ghana | University of Ghana Hospital | Ankaful
Psychiatric Hospital | Griffith University

This paper examines selected expressions relating to the articulation of
mental health challenges in three Akan speaking communities in Ghana, in
the context of considering that language is reflective of human thought, and
that human cultural practices and behavior emanate from people's under-
lying appreciation of particular issues. Expressions of mental health chal-
lenges were extracted from a total of 37 one-on-one interviews and 12 focus
group discussions. We note that the expressions used fall into 3 categories:
idioms and proverbs, non-figurative language and code mixed utterances.
Overall, indirection permeates all the categories. Furthermore, our observa-
tion is that the expressions provide an indication of the manifestations and
perceived causes of the illnesses, which are familial, spiritual or biomedical.
There is a strong tendency towards an expectation of communal support for
the mentally ill. An appreciation of the languages and cultures of local
communities provides the basis for appropriate diagnosis, effective manage-
ment of mental illness and efficient public health education.

Consulting Room Interactions in Psychiatric Care in Akan Speaking Communities

Ekua E. Houphouet, Nana Aba A. Amfo, Rachel Thompson and Eugene Dordoye

Abstract

The present paper examines consulting room interactions in psychiatric care in selected
hospital settings in three Akan speaking communities in Ghana. Using audio-recorded data
from actual doctor/nurse-patient interactions, we examine the contents of the interactions.
Using a discourse analytic approach, we note how the use of language is used to reflect the
social identity of the interactants. Again, we observe some of the strategies used by the
participants to manage the multilingual communicative settings, such as code-mixing. Also,
we note that the use of proverbs as a diagnostic tool in psychiatric consultations in Ghana needs
to be reviewed. We propose that in order for the patients to experience a more interactive
consultation, with possible therapeutic benefits, the health practitioners need to make
considerable efforts to involve the patients in decisions regarding their health.

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Language and Politics

Aduradola & Ojukwu (2013)
- Campaign communication

Ofori (2016)
- Insults

Agyekum (2017)
- Apology

Language and Politics

Nebula *4.1*, March 2007

Language, Ideology and Power Relations in Nigerian Newspaper Headlines.

By Rotimi Taiwo

Abstract

This study is a Critical Discourse Analysis of Nigerian newspaper headlines. Three hundred Nigerian newspaper headlines were randomly selected from six Nigerian newspapers and they were examined for peculiarity in the vocabulary and rhetorical, devices used in order to identify the ideologies that lie behind their constructions. The study generated two typologies of headlines based on the theme addressed and the surface structures. A critical study of the headlines revealed that the headlines have hidden ideological meanings, being divided along some ideological lines reflecting the views of those whose interest is being served and those whose interest is being undermined. The study concludes that headlines are emotion-inducing strategy in the hands of the editor used to initiate, sustain discourse and shape the views of the readers on national issues.

The Language of Politics and Political behaviours: Rhetoric of President Olusegun Obasanjo and the 2007 general elections in Nigeria

Marietu S Tenuche, *Kogi State University*

"I AM A PASTOR…NOT A POLITICIAN:" LANGUAGE, POLITICS, AND RELIGION IN GHANA'S 2012 ELECTIONS CAMPAIGN

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines five political texts produced by politicians and religious leaders, on the hotly debated issue of state funding for secondary education, during the heat of Ghana's 2012 presidential election campaign. Using a critical discursive analytic approach, it does a textual analysis of these texts and explores the strategies employed by the various actors to communicate their messages. The strategies used depend on the communicator's assessment of the hegemonic forces at play in a particular communicative context. Direct strategies are used when the communicator is perceived to be more powerful and in control of the current state of affairs. On the contrary, communicators who feel less powerful and not in positions to exercise control resort to various indirect strategies as a means of venting their frustrations and seeking support.

Language and development

On Language and Development in Africa: The Case of Ghana[*]

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ABSTRACT

In their search for solutions to the development problems of Africa, students of African development have often ignored linguistic and other socio-cultural resources (Prah 1993). When linguistic issues are addressed at all, the fact that there is a multiplicity of languages in African countries is often seen as a hindrance to the development of the continent. This paper focuses on the relationship between language and development and offers a specific proposal for addressing issues of language policy and planning in Africa. Taking the language situation in Ghana as a case study, a model of development communication and education termed *localized trilingualism* is proposed; a model, it is believed, will enable Africa to harness its multilingual resources for accelerated and sustainable socio-cultural, economic and technological development in the 21st century.

INTRODUCTION

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In Conclusion… (1/3)

Interdisciplinary studies

Rigorous scientific work

Empirical work – foundation for theorizing

In Conclusion... (2/3)

There is plenty of room at the top because very few people care to travel beyond the average route. And so most of us seem satisfied to remain within the confines of mediocrity.

— *Nnamdi Azikiwe* —

AZ QUOTES

In Conclusion… (3/3)

Originality is the essence of true scholarship. Creativity is the soul of the true scholar.

-Zik

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