

The Itupale Online Journal of African Studies

Volume I (2009)

Introduction

The *Itupale* Editorial Board is proud to announce the online publication of Volume I (2009) entitled 'Understanding the African Experience'.

Itupale (a Yoruba word meaning 'in depth investigation') was launched in March, 2008 as a research initiative supported by the not-for-profit organisation 'Cambridge to Africa'. The journal's conception was born out of a discussion in Cambridge between myself and the Nigerian scholar Dr Adeleke Fakoya during the summer of 2007. The theme centred around those African academics residing on the African continent, the difficulties in keeping abreast of the field on an international scale, and the perennial 'publish or perish' *addendum*. The outcome of that discussion was to develop an open publishing platform for African academics to present their work within an international context. The *Itupale* Online Journal of African Studies was thus born.

Our first call for papers was limited to the African continent. Fifteen submissions were received; of these five were accepted for publication and three articles made it through to the final stage of the editing process. At this point I must thank our reviewers and editorial staff who volunteered their time and expertise throughout the submission and revision cycle. The delicate balance of how to accommodate culture-specific Africanisms within English academic discourse must also be acknowledged here. Today's world of dissolving borders, and the emergence of world Englishes alongside traditional English varieties, raised a number of questions during the editorial cycle. During this process all efforts were made to capture the stylistic features specific to the region, while incorporating what is deemed as acceptable academic discourse within a published global setting.

Scholars living in Africa face many obstacles: a lack of library resources, unreliable internet connection, little or non-existent international conference funding, and predominantly teaching-driven workloads all contribute to the difficulties in publishing outside the African continent. In light of such obstacles, the richness and authenticity of the data presented here allows for a refreshing and unique insight into the 'African experience' from both a linguistic and social-cultural perspective.

Beatrice Ekanjume examines the phonological code-switching processes between English and Akóóse, a Bantú language spoken in southwest Cameroon. Using inter- (between sentences) and intra-sentential (within a sentence) code-switching examples, the author presents single word, clausal and phrasal switches that are further supported by sample derivations. The findings demonstrate a range of phonological rules governed by Akóóse and provide new insights into Bantú language code-switching data.

Emmanuel Taiwo Babalola and **Rotimi Taiwo** extend the theme of code-switching to contemporary Nigerian hip-hop music. Using the lyrics from five well known Nigerian musicians, the authors examine the stylistic code-switching effects carried out in English, Yoruba and Nigerian Pidgin. Their examination shows that Yoruba operates as a stylistic device in order to express uniquely linguistic and cultural Nigerian realities. The authors interpret the importation of Yoruba dialogue via code-switching as a dual mechanism that allows all sections of Nigerian society to enjoy the message, and further promotes the globalisation of Nigerian music.

Adeyemi Adegoju presents a fascinating social commentary on Nigerian society via the lyrics of the Nigerian musician Lagbaja, a masked performer whose musical form and social critique of contemporary Nigerian society has placed him at the forefront of the Nigerian music scene. The use of music as a social-political tool emerged in Nigeria during the 1970's with the late Afrobeat musician and legend Fela Anikulapo-Kuti. His revolutionary music was a strategic device used to raise awareness within society; a technique that Lagbaja continues within a contemporary Nigerian context. The author critiques Lagbaja's lyrics along the themes of ethno-religious conflict, the loss of traditional African values, the talking drum and Yoruba dance style.

To finish, the studies published in Volume I provide unique insights into the linguistic and cultural diversity that exists in Africa. Each study highlights the need for future research in specific areas, facilitating the extension of current methodologies, theoretical justifications and wider scholarly collaboration. We at *Itupale* have achieved our primary objective: to collaborate with African scholars residing on the African continent, and to provide an open publishing platform for dissemination of their work to the wider research community. Within this context the launching of Volume I has been a novel and most rewarding experience. We very much look forward to the future growth and development of the journal.

Dr Sacha DeVelle

Editor in Chief

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