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ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA (JOLAN)**

SPECIAL EDITION I

on

NIGERIAN LANGUAGES IN THE DIGITAL ERA

in honour of

PROFESSOR ROSE AZIZA

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PROFESSOR ROSE AZIZA

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Preface

The *Journal of the Linguistic Association of Nigeria (JOLAN)* publishes occasional volumes to complement its regular issues, each devoted to a specific theme or purpose. These publications are issued in two categories: *JOLAN Supplement* and *JOLAN Special Edition*. To date, five occasional volumes have been published as *JOLAN Supplements*. This volume, however, is the first in the *JOLAN Special Edition* series and is published in honour of Professor Rose Aziza, a distinguished linguist and accomplished scholar whose outstanding contributions to phonetics and phonology, Urhobo language studies, language documentation, and the development of Nigerian languages have significantly enriched linguistic scholarship in Nigeria and beyond. Through her research, teaching, mentorship, and academic leadership, she has contributed immensely to the advancement of Linguistics and the training of generations of scholars.

This volume brings together twenty distinct contributions that examine the complex, evolving relationships between theoretical linguistics, sociolinguistic dynamics, language documentation, and technological adaptation across West Africa. At a time when digital advancement rapidly transforms human communication, the preservation, revitalization, and digital integration of indigenous languages have become paramount concerns. The papers collected here offer a comprehensive overview of current scholarship by bridging empirical structural analysis with practical applications in artificial intelligence, pedagogy, and socio-political discourse.

The volume opens with Ihuoma Akinremi's exploration of the position of Nigerian languages in the digital era, assessing their vitality against UNESCO guidelines regarding language expansion into new media. The study identifies existing digital resources, maps the key systemic challenges hindering digital integration, and offers practical recommendations to position indigenous languages to thrive in a rapidly globalizing world. Following this, Aniefon Akpan, Moses Ekpenyong, Eno-abasi Urua, and Margaret Okon address computational data processing through the development of a rule-based audio annotator for Ibibio. Built using Python and informed by orthographic transcriptions and a custom bilingual mini-dictionary, this word tagger significantly reduces the time required to annotate large audio and video files, offering an adaptable framework for related Ibibiod languages.

Focusing on structural and acoustic phonetics, Ebitare Obikudo and Mee-eebari Kiine present an instrumental and autosegmental investigation into the undocumented tonal system of the Baan language. Utilizing Praat software, their pitch track analysis

identifies three distinct level tones - High, Mid, and Low - while establishing both lexical function and grammatical roles, such as aspectual marking and word class derivation. In a related vein of sociolinguistic inquiry, Esther Iveren Shagba, Benjamin Iorbee Dennis, and Juliet Doowuese Akume investigate politeness expressions in Tiv using Brown and Levinson's framework. Through qualitative interviews and group discussions, the authors detail how respectful titles, endearments, and euphemisms navigate social face, preserve community harmony, and reinforce cultural values.

Addressing educational assessment challenges, Abdullahi Salami Magaji, Sulaiman Abubakar Muhammad, Sherifat Bashir, Aishatu Ibrahim Shehu, Usman Ibrahim, and Daniel Buba Mshelia survey students at the Federal College of Education (Technical), Gombe, regarding Computer-Based Testing. Their findings show that while students possess high computer literacy and appreciate the speed and reliability of automated assessments, lingering issues with infrastructure, power stability, and test anxiety require targeted interventions. Turning back to language technology, Sumayyat Ibrahim Gambo evaluates the representation of the Hausa language across Artificial Intelligence systems, including ChatGPT and Google Translate. Framed by Language Preservation, Language Education, and Digital Humanities theories, the study uncovers persistent inaccuracies in handling complex grammar, dialectal variations, proverbs, and speech synthesis; and called for strategic collaboration between linguists and AI developers.

Theoretical phonology and grammar are further enriched by Evarista Ikoyo-Eweto and Tongman Fwangwar Rabo, who examine the lexical and grammatical functions of tone in Mwaghavul within the Autosegmental Phonology framework. Analyzing basic lexical items and continuous speech, the authors demonstrate how tonal modification derives nominals from adjectival verbs and uniquely marks temporal distinctions across habitual, progressive, and perfective timeframes. Shifting to critical discourse, Patrick Uchenna Azubuike, Ngozi Ugo Emeka-Nwobia, and Edith Ada Anyanwu employ Critical Stylistics to analyze selected hip-hop lyrics by Innocent Idibia (2FACE). Their study illustrates how artistic language stylizes and satirizes political corruption, deploying specific relational processes and implicit linguistic structures to expose systemic governance failures.

Sociopolitical participation forms the focus of Ali Kadiri, Sumayyat Gambo, and Bamanga Aliyu's study on the interplay between linguistics and politics for national development in Nigeria. Anchored in Fairclough's Critical Discourse Theory, their observational analysis across multilingual regions reveals that strategic indigenous language use in civic campaigns enhances grassroots engagement, whereas the

dominance of English in official governance systematically marginalizes rural populations. Continuing the theme of political discourse, Chioma Sunny-Adikwu and Eberechi Amadi analyse digital resistance and transnational activism among Nigerian netizens across X, Facebook, and WhatsApp. Applying Critical Discourse Analysis and Aristotelian rhetoric, they demonstrate how satire, irony, metaphors, and hashtags build collective solidarity and counter hegemonic political narratives.

Morphosyntactic analysis takes center stage in Abdullahi Bashir and Isah Fada's investigation of clitics in Hausa under the framework of Lexical-Functional Grammar. The authors outline the structural and functional properties of proclitics, enclitics, and endoclitics, proving that clitics cannot function independently without host words. Addressing early child education, Juliana Mgbechikwere Okeke investigates the availability of Igbo Subject-Specific Dictionaries in primary schools as mandated by the National Language Policy. Adopting the Substance over Form theoretical approach, the study uncovers a total absence of specialised subject dictionaries, advocating for their immediate compilation to ensure effective mother-tongue instruction.

The sociolinguistic dimensions of international mobility are explored by Akese Teryima and Ronke Falade, who analyse language and literature as instruments to mitigate the challenges of diaspora migration. Grounded in Neo-classical Macro theory, the study highlights how colonial language dominance accelerates brain drain, positioning literary works and linguistic revalorisation as vital catalysts for national consciousness and peaceful coexistence. In cognitive linguistics, Chinenye Onuoha applies Conceptual Metaphor Theory to vision-related expressions in Igbo. The study reveals how the Igbo concept of sight (*anya*) serves as a fundamental source domain that structures abstract thought, equating physical sight with knowledge, clarity of vision with understanding, and eye-opening with enlightenment.

Linda Nkamigbo and Ukamaka Agummadu, in their investigation of partial temporal restoration during segment and syllable deletion in Igbo, presented an empirical acoustic research which analyses speech data through Praat. They show that while adjacent vowels undergo compensatory lengthening after deletion, the resulting duration rarely matches the full temporal duration of the original lost sequence. Broadening the scope of digital resources, Edosa Edionhon and Cecilia Eme advocate for the systematic creation of digital corpora for Igbo and Edo. Their paper establishes

that archived machine-readable datasets are an indispensable precursor for incorporating African languages into Machine Learning and Natural Language Processing systems.

Francis Nsiah Kubi examines the structural and semantic compounding processes in Asante Kente weaving terminology in Ghana. Applying Lexicalist Word Formation Theory, this cultural lexicography study categorises compound terms across ten structural combinations and identifies endocentric and exocentric semantic classifications used daily within the traditional textile industry. On their part, Richard Ikolo and Chikaodiri Onowenezi addressed issues on applied second-language pedagogy through a contrastive analysis of noun phrase structures across the Ngwa dialect of Igbo, Standard Igbo, and English. By highlighting structural asymmetries such as pre-head versus post-head modification, the authors predict specific transfer errors to aid English language instruction in multilingual contexts.

Synthesizing low-resource adaptation models, Musa Jatau, Dorothy Okpanachi, Andiyaryau Yohanna, and Ali Kadiri explore future directions for developing Natural Language Processing tools for Nigerian languages. Utilizing the Joshi low-resource NLP framework and the Language Resource Management Framework, they outline resource limitations while offering open-source initiatives and community-driven models as viable solutions. To conclude the volume, Agnes Legbeti provides a comprehensive account of syllable structure and Prosodic Word boundaries in Ósósò. Drawing on Syllable, Moraic, and Prosodic Hierarchy theories, the paper illustrates how phonemic open-syllable restrictions interact with boundary-sensitive repair strategies to resolve vocalic hiatus in the language.

Taken together, these twenty foundational contributions offer a rich, continuous narrative that captures the current state, dynamic growth, and future possibilities of West African linguistics. By bridging deep theoretical descriptions with modern technological adaptations and pressing sociopolitical realities, this collection stands as a valuable resource for scholars, educators, and language engineers committed to the preservation and digital inclusion of indigenous languages.

Prof. Gideon Sunday Omachonu
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