

Pragmatics, Discourse and Society, Volume 2

Pragmatics, Discourse and Society, Volume 2:

A Festschrift for Akin Odebunmi

Edited by

Niyi Osunbade, Foluke Unuabonah,
Ayo Osisanwo, Akin Adetunji
and Funke Oni

**Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing**



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This book first published 2021

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-5275-7150-5

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-7150-1



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PROFESSOR STEPHEN AKINOLA ODEBUNMI

Bio-Data

Born on December 21, 1967 in Ogbomoso, to Yoruba parents of Ogbomoso origin in Ogbomoso North Local Government, Oyo State, Nigeria, Akinola Odebunmi, popularly known as Akin Odebunmi, received his primary and secondary education in Ogbomoso. He later obtained his B.A. (Ed.) (1992) and M.A. (1997) degrees in English from the University of Ilorin and earned a Ph.D. in English (Pragmatics) in 2004 at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. He took up an appointment with the University of Ibadan as a Lecturer I in the Department of English in September 2005, and rose to the rank of Professor of Pragmatics and Discourse Analysis in 2013 in the same university, as a highflyer.

Professor Akin Odebunmi is, in the main, a specialist in Pragmatics and Discourse Analysis. He is specifically interested in Clinical Pragmatics, Linguistic Pragmatics, Critical Discourse Analysis and Literary Pragmatics.

Professor Akin Odebunmi has to his credit at least 85 academic publications in local and international outlets across all the continents of the world. Some of his journal articles have appeared in the *Ibadan Journal of English Studies* (Nigeria), *Ife Studies in English* (Nigeria), *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia* (Poland), *Pragmatics* (Belgium), *Intercultural Pragmatics* (Germany), *California Linguistic Note* (United States), *Marang* (Botswana), *Review of Cognitive Linguistics* (Spain), *Pragmatics and Society* (Amsterdam), *Pragmatics and Cognition* (Amsterdam), *Multilingua* (Germany), the *Iranian Journal of Society, Culture and Language* (Iran) and the *Journal of Pragmatics* (United States). His professional competence in producing his many papers has aided his provision of refereeing services for several international journals, some of which are *Pragmatics and Society* (Amsterdam), the *Nordic Journal of African Studies* (Finland), *California Linguistic Notes* (United States), the *Journal of Modern Languages* (Malaysia), the *International Journal of Society, Culture and Language* (United States), the *International Journal of Information Communication Technologies and Human Development* (United States) and *Apples: a Journal of Applied Linguistics* (Finland).

Professor Odebunmi's sound academic knowledge and hard work awarded him with the prestigious and highly competitive German Alexander von Humboldt Fellowship Award for Experienced Researchers between 2010 and 2011; and the follow-up and renewed-stay awards of the same fellowship in 2012, 2014 and 2017. He is currently a research collaborator with Professor Dr Karin Birkner of Bayreuth University and Professor Sigurd D'hont of the University of Jyväskylä, Finland.

Professor Odebunmi was an official external examiner to the Department of English, Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo. He has served as a PhD external examiner at the University of Ilorin, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Covenant University, Ota and Periyar University, India. He is currently an official external examiner in the Department of English, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife and Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba Akoko. He has supervised about 30 B.A. long essays, 60 M.A. projects and twelve Ph.D. theses, (as of December 2017), at the University of Ibadan. He has also served as a consultant to the United Nations under the direction of the International Labour Organisation, on academic and research-based projects.

Professor Odebunmi belongs to different academic and professional organisations, among which are the International Pragmatics Association, Belgium, the Nigerian Pragmatics Association, the Reading Association of Nigeria and the English Scholars Association of Nigeria. Also, he has occupied several administrative and editorial positions: Sub-Dean, Postgraduate Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Ibadan (August 2011-2014); Deputy Editor, Journal of Nigeria English Studies Association (2011-2012); Postgraduate Co-coordinator, Department of English, University of Ibadan (August 2008-January 2010; March 2011-July 2011), Member, Local Organising Committee for the International Conference on African Literature, Department of English, University of Ibadan (July 2008); Member, Finance Committee Department of English, University of Ibadan (2007-2010); Member, Publication Committee, Faculty of Arts, University of Ibadan (2007-2010); Deputy Editor, Ibadan: Journal of English Studies (2006-2010); and Editor, Ibadan Journal of English Studies (April 2013 to date). He is currently the director of the University of Ibadan Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. He is also the pioneer president of the Nigerian Pragmatics Association.

Professor Odebunmi is married to Mrs Funmilola Janet Odebunmi, and the marriage has been blessed with three children: Verena Ayotomiwa, Gloria Oluwafikayomi and Olamiposi Goodluck.

Publications

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- (1) Odebunmi, Akin. 2006. *Meaning in English: an Introduction*. Ogbomoso: Critical Sphere.
- (2) Odebunmi Akin and Babajide Adeyemi (eds). 2007. *Style in Religious Communication in Nigeria*. Muenchen: Lincom Europa, pp. 1-26. [ISBN: 978-3-89586-496-4]. Germany.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The idea for this book, *Pragmatics, Discourse and Society: A Festschrift for Akin Odebunmi* was first mooted by Dr Foluke Unuabonah in 2016, in celebration of the academic prowess and golden jubilee (on December 21, 2017) of our boss and professional mentor, Professor Akin Odebunmi, a renowned linguist of international standing and a Professor of Pragmatics and Discourse Analysis at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. We, the editors, then sought the honouree's approval, after which work commenced in earnest. We are, therefore, grateful to God for giving us the grace to initiate and complete this project. Also, we greatly appreciate Professor Odebunmi for giving us the opportunity to do this in his honour. This project has afforded us access to his international professional network, and we will cherish this for the rest of our professional lives.

Following the impressively positive reception received by our Call for Papers on the *Linguist List* website and similar outlets, the publication process started at a speedy pace. The process, however, became delayed down the line, when some of the revised manuscripts were not returned on time. Serious editorial work on the revised manuscripts logically started late and we became pressured as Professor Odebunmi's fiftieth birthday anniversary celebration—the event where the festschrift was planned to be publicly presented—approached; yet, we were conscious of the standards expected of a good book. We were a bit relieved around September 2017 when Professor Odebunmi informed us that he had decided not to publicly celebrate his golden jubilee and advised us to attend to the rest of the publication process with less haste.

We owe debts of gratitude to the established and budding academics in Africa, Asia, Europe and the United States of America, whose contributions have made this two-volume book a reality. We thank them for their cooperation and patience. Apart from papers received from colleagues as responses to our Call for Papers, some professional mentors and colleagues of Professor Odebunmi were invited to send in their contributions. Those invited include Professors Jacob Mey, Paul J. Hopper, Joel Olatunde Ayodabo and Dr Aloysius Ngefac (in Volume 1) and Professors Wale Adegbite, Ming-Yu Tseng, Edmond Bamiro, Joyce T. Mathangwane, Zouhair Maalej and Gabriel Osoba (in Volume 2). We

thank all these individuals and other contributors for submitting their articles which have enriched the two volumes of the book. Also worthy of thanks are our anonymous reviewers, whose profound and professional inputs have contributed immensely to the success of this book. We sincerely thank all members of our immediate families for sacrificing the attention due to them while we were working on the book. Mr Gbenga Olaoye equally deserves our appreciation for the preliminary formatting of the manuscript. We are grateful to all other contributors, a number of whom are Professor Odebunmi's former and current students, colleagues and friends. We are also grateful to everyone who provided financial support to ease the burden of the publication cost.

We are especially thankful to Professor Peter Auer, who is the *festschrift*'s German host and mentor, for accepting to write the foreword to this book. Our very tasking, though pleasant, editorial experience has interestingly made our professional dream (of honouring our boss and mentor with a book project, which, according to Professor Jacob Mey, "is eminently deserved by him") a reality. We hope the readers will find this book an invaluable read and a remarkable addition to their knowledge.

PREFACE

This volume brings together no less than 51 scholarly papers on a diversity of subjects written in honour of Professor Stephen Akinola Odebunmi, Ph.D., on the occasion of his 50th birthday. The volume is a testimony to the remarkable academic standing of his jubilee in Nigerian linguistic academia and to his enormous impact on the training of young scholars in this country, but also to the international embedding of his scientific work.

In a European context, a festschrift on the occasion of somebody's 50th birthday would be exceptional. Usually, the genre is reserved for those who are approaching (or have already reached) the end of their academic career, and being given a festschrift resounds with overtones of imminent retirement, and of looking back on a lifetime of academic achievements—in short, of an ending rather than a beginning. Akin Odebunmi's festschrift is of a different type. It is presented to him at a stage in his career in which nothing is coming to an end, and many things are just beginning. Although an established and renowned scholar, although installed as full professor of English linguistics and also recently as Director of the University of Ibadan Centre of Excellence in Teaching and Learning, Professor Odebunmi is in the middle of his academic career, and we are expecting a wealth of new insights and initiatives from his future work, just as we have received from his past work, the foundation of the Nigerian Pragmatics Association being just one, very recent example.

The breadth of Professor Odebunmi's research is impressive. To be sure, it can all be subsumed under the heading of pragmatics, but as we all know, pragmatics is a huge field. Akin Odebunmi has contributed to it in theoretical ways through his often-cited 2006 book on "Meaning in English", but he has also worked on many empirical issues, some of them with a distinctly applied focus. A total of twelve completed PhD theses, supervised by him, reflect these competencies and interests, ranging from political discourse, media discourse, sexual discourse and religious discourse to literary studies. And, of course, he is professor of English and therefore concerned with the varieties of English spoken in Nigeria.

But at the heart of his empirical work lies for me the big theme of medical interaction, which was the topic of his PhD thesis. It is this topic that brought him to Germany (as a Humboldt fellow at the Freiburg

Institute of Advanced Studies, first in 2010, and later again for various shorter stays). Among his numerous publications in international journals, it seems to me that those on medical communication are the most important ones, not least because it is of such utmost importance to investigate the ways in which doctors and patients communicate and, not rarely, miscommunicate in Nigeria. Research on doctor-patient interaction is flourishing internationally, but it still has a strong “western” bias; we know very little about the conditions under which illness and healing are organised outside the western sphere, and about the cross-fertilisations but also the cultural conflicts and ideological clashes that are brought about by the import of “western” medicine into Africa. Medicine as a social institution is a key issue for the development of a country and for the well-being of its citizens. But while this is generally acknowledged, doctors and politicians often do not understand that more is involved here than medical drugs and technologies. Medicine is not only about the body and its physical diseases, but it is also, and most centrally, about communication. Without successful medical interaction between doctors and patients, the institution of medicine as a whole is bound to fail. Akin Odeunmi is one of the few who have understood that we need a holistic medicine which sees the patient first of all as a human being, and not only a body to be repaired when it does not function well. Language and interaction are part of such a holistic, non-reductive, approach to medicine. I wish Akin Odeunmi all the success he and his cause deserve to put this message across to the Nigerian public!

There is another point I would like to make in this preface. The scientific dialogue between Europe and Africa has for a long time been a rather one-sided issue, with European knowledge being channelled “southward” without much of an understanding of the cultural context in which it is received. No big words such as postcolonialism are needed to understand this. As somebody who is trained in the western tradition of linguistics and interaction analysis, I cannot avoid believing that many of the insights gained in this tradition must also be applicable and helpful in Africa. But this belief is sometimes wrong. It needs an open as well as a critical mind such as Professor Odeunmi’s in order to engage in a fruitful dialogue about the limits of western thinking. It needs somebody who is extremely knowledgeable about the current trends and developments in western pragmatics, but who is at the same time well-rooted in his own culture and tradition in order to resist the temptations of an all-too-easy transfer of western theories and concepts to African issues. Akin Odeunmi is such a person. His ongoing scientific concern with topics such as face-work and politeness in Africa is perhaps the best proof.

Talking with him about these and related issues has been inspiring and fruitful for me. I hope that this dialogue will continue.

Prof. Dr Peter Auer,
University of Freiburg,
Freiburg, Germany.

INTRODUCTION

Pragmatics, Discourse and Society: A Festschrift for Akin Odebunmi

P is a two-volume ensemble of research articles written by established and budding academics to celebrate Professor Akin Odebunmi's academic prowess and golden jubilee (December 21, 2017). The articles in it, across the two volumes, consistent with the editors' proposal, cover theoretical and empirical grounds in pragmatics, applied linguistics, stylistics, literary discourse and various other genres with high contextual constraints, demonstrating Professor Akin Odebunmi's commitment to strict engagement with textual and discursive salience and pragma-discoursal properties at micro and macro levels of interpretation. The two-volume book is structured into seven sections (four in Volume 1 and three in Volume 2), comprising 52 chapters (1-24 in Volume 1 and 25-52 in Volume 2), to demonstrate Professor Odebunmi's research engagement.

In this volume (Volume 1), Section One, Chapter One, **Jacob Mey** seats Odebunmi's research in international pragmatics scholarship. The chapter discusses the value of certainty or lack of certainty as a major pragmatic value relevant to the theory and practice of life sciences. It thus grounds its argument in the analysis of how communicating certainty and uncertainty plays a decisive role in the context of the medical interview and the professional treatment of patients, as amply demonstrated by Akin Odebunmi in much of his recent work.

Section Two, entitled "Theoretics", opens with **Paul Hopper's** paper (Chapter Two), which addresses the theoretical place of Pragmatics in the overall scheme of language and the study of language. He notes that understanding the place of pragmatics in language usage extends into the empirical study of human interactions and general questions of semiotics. He ultimately explores the latter thread, with attention to two figures whose influence in linguistics is, at the present moment marginal, but which has the promise of growing—Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin and Roy Harris—by comparing the theory of the "sign" developed in Bakhtin's essay, "The Problem of Speech Genres" with the independently conceived "integrational sign" of Harris. In Chapter Three, **Abdullahi-Idiagbon** focuses on deictic resources in English and Yoruba discourses. Using simulated samples of common utterances in English as well as Yoruba languages for illustration, the author discovers that the role of culture in