



Africa Knows! – Blog

## Exploring the wealth of African knowledges through the power of language



*Paper presenters and participants of Panel D27a 'Language issues: Reconfiguring language use in African Studies' during the ongoing Africa Know! Conference.*

**DEFYING** the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the *Africa Knows!* Conference, which is one of the leading African Studies conferences, has been going on hitch-free since December 2, 2020. The theme, *Africa Knows! It is time to decolonise the minds*, is indeed an apt expression suggestive of the depth and wealth of knowledge that

inheres in Africa and Africans. One panel unearthing this concealed fact of African experience is Panel 27a with a sub-theme: 'Language issues: Reconfiguring language use in African Studies'. This panel examines how the depth and wealth of African knowledges could be explored through the power of language.

There were ten researchers that showcased the power of language.

Dr Abisoye Eleshin spoke on the 'African language for African studies: Agenda Setting'. He argued for a new and better engagement of African languages in the discipline of African Studies. The area of determining who

engages in, and how African Studies is engaged, that is, the politics of African

Studies was also highlighted in Dr Kayode Eesuola's paper titled: "What about politics? A realist interrogation of the stand to conduct African studies research in African languages".

The conference took a philosophic twist with professor of Philosophy from the University of Ibadan, Prof. Olatunji Oyeshile, discussing 'Language decolonization and deconstruction: Re-integrating disparate linguistic epistemes in contemporary African Studies'. For him, the pertinent goal of African scholarship is to attain an all-inclusive renaissance that will be conducive to universal scholarship and sustainable development for Africa. Dr. Ademola Fayemi, in his paper, titled: 'The Limitations and prospects of African languages in ethics scholarship in African Studies', exposed some fundamental limitations of the new emphasis of African languages in ethics scholarship and gave some prospects for the future. Another philosopher on the panel and a co-convener of the panel, Dr. Anthony



*Prof. Oyeshile making his presentation at the conference.*

Okeregbe in his paper, 'Afrophony and the language of African Philosophy: Reflection on problems and prospects', argued that multiplicity of language use in African Philosophy reflects the multiple expressions of the African experience, and this raises some critical questions. Dr Peter Oni, in his paper, titled: 'Re-examining the philosophical potentials in African languages', advocates a deconstruction of the mindset on African Languages and argues that conceptualization of thought can take place in African languages.

The assembly of philosophers were joined by linguists, first of whom is Dr Ayo Yusuff, who in his paper 'Modern faiths and the Yoruba language: Reconfiguration of the Yoruba Lexicon' showed that the advent of modern faiths has systematically affected the use of the Yoruba language in its attempt to serve its purpose of propagation in the modern religions. Dr Feyi Ademola-Adeoye, posited in her paper 'Language, culture and the conceptualization of character in selected Yoruba proverbs' that proverbs are one of the tools for communicating,

negotiating and practising moralities and this happens when the conveyed thought is expressed and understood. Finally, a religious dimension was brought into the discourse with Dr Akinmayowa Akin-Otiko, in his paper; *Ìràpadà* (redemption) in the religion of the Africans: Do you really understand what they mean? For him Christian missionaries did not and still do not understand the language of Africans when they speak about religious issues, just because the language of African religions does not have the ideas of Jesus and his messages. These presentations brought in the uniqueness of African languages and how dynamic and widely they can be applied. African languages show what already exists in Africa, that is, what Africa knows. It can be said that before the conference, what Africa knows was denied, however, during the conference, what Africa knows was showcased. Now, the world will be able to access and know what Africa knows. The researchers gave papers across intellectual fields of study such as; Philosophy, language, Religion, Political Science, and Education, making it possible for the world to reflect on what Africa knows.

Indeed, Africa Knows! is an expression of fact; the phrase is value laden, and to be explored by anyone who cares to know about Africa.

This conference provided an opportunity to push further the mission of the Institute of African and Diaspora Studies (IADS) University of Lagos, which is to be



*A cross section of participants at the conference.*

a foremost “Institute for the exchange of cultural and social ideas and research excellence in pursuit of knowledge for the development of Africans at home and the diaspora as well as humankind”.

This blog is gratifying to presenters and organisers alike because it will ensure that the many and wonderful ideas generated and shared during this conference will not end up only in shelves and computer backup files, but can be and will be accessed by many in and out of Africa. Now that the conference is winding down, the papers and researchers get into more activities of building bridges and making connections. The continent of Africa indeed has a lot to offer the world, if only the world can listen and discover what Africa knows.

We are grateful to the organisers and sponsors of the conference, particularly, the Institute of African and Diaspora Studies, University of Lagos and the Africa Multiple Centre of Excellence, University of Bayreuth. Now we all can say, ‘indeed Africa Knows! It is time to decolonise the minds,