

Conference Report: Peace Benson

Submitted to: Le Comité International Permanent des Linguistes (CIPL)

Conference: Linguistic Society of America (LSA) Annual Meeting

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Location: New Orleans, New Orleans Marriott

This report documents my participation in the Linguistic Society of America (LSA) Annual Meeting, held from January 8–11, 2026. The LSA Annual Meeting is one of the most prominent international conferences in linguistics, bringing together scholars from diverse subfields to share their current research and innovations. My attendance was supported by the CIPL travel grant, for which I am excited and grateful for.

The 2026 LSA Annual Meeting featured plenary talks, paper presentations (talks), poster presentations, and first timers' workshop. The conference covered a broad range of linguistic subdisciplines, including syntax, phonology, semantics, morphology, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and language documentation. A strong emphasis was placed on cross-linguistic research, and empirical data from underrepresented languages.

I attended several sessions relevant to my research interests, particularly those focusing on syntax: A'-phenomena, tone and grammar, Morphology, tone and prosody, and sociolinguistic account. Notable themes across sessions included the interface between syntax, morphology, tone and prosody, the role of prosodic structure in clauses, and the importance of language variations in constructions. These discussions provided valuable comparative perspectives and reinforced the relevance of my ongoing research. The highlight of the conference for me was the talk by the president Heidi Harley who talked was about syntax, language variation and semantics in recent times. This talk challenged my expectations and provided me with valuable insight into research about the syntax and variation of the other undocumented Jen-Cluster languages of the Adamawa group in Taraba, Nigeria.

I am also privileged to present my talk *Polar interrogatives and hybrid prosody in Dzø*. This study investigated the characteristics of Dzø polar interrogatives (particularly, phonetic parameters that differentiate polar interrogatives from declarative clauses and content interrogatives). It also probes how Dzø relate to attested prosodies of African languages, and whether data from Dzø support categorizing languages into “lax” and “tense” prosodies. Contrary to the well-known high-pitched or rising question prosody which is common in Indo-European languages and elsewhere in the world and often considered to be near universal, Dzø gives a different story. Dzø shows an intensive vowel lengthening: a slight and gradual lowering in toned across the duration of the vowel. There is also vowel coalescence: vowel quality changes also (optionally) occur /-a/ or /-a:/, or due to constraints on which Vs can be long. Lastly, breathy termination i.e., cancellation/reduction of downdrift. The implication of this is that is Dzø is a hybrid prosody

language having both high-pitched/tense prosody (downdrift cancelation/reduction and final lowering cancelation/reduction), and non-high-pitched markers/lax prosody (Lengthening by V or by V..., breathy termination and open vowel), which Rialland (2007, 2009) states that are the areal features of the Sudanic Belt region languages.

Participation in the conference will contribute significantly to my academic growth as I work toward completing my PhD in a year and half. I engaged in scholarly discussions with researchers working on related theoretical and empirical questions, received feedback on my research ideas, and gained exposure to new analytical tools and methodologies. The conference also provided opportunities for networking with linguists from different institutions, fostering potential future collaborations.

The insights gained from the LSA Annual Meeting directly inform my current research on prosody and syntactic structure, particularly in understudied languages. Several presentations offered theoretical and methodological frameworks that are applicable to my work, strengthening both its empirical grounding and theoretical contribution.

I am sincerely thankful to the CIPL for its financial support, which made my participation possible. The grant enabled me to engage with the international linguistics community and further contribute to the advancement of linguistic research in tone, prosody and under-documented language like Dzø. The invaluable comments and intellectual exchanges at LSA have broadened my understanding of tone, prosody, syntax, and morphosyntax, and will directly impact my study.