

## Interview with Paul Newman

Paul Newman received his B.A. (Philosophy) and M.A. (Anthropology) from the University of Pennsylvania, and his Ph.D. (Linguistics) from UCLA (1967). He has a law degree from Indiana University (J.D., *summa cum laude*, 2003).

Newman has held academic and administrative positions at Yale University, Abdullahi Bayero College (now Bayero University) Kano, Nigeria, University of Leiden, and Indiana University (where he was honored by being appointed to the rank of Distinguished Professor). After his retirement, he took up a two-year position as Senior Copyright Specialist in the library at the University of Michigan. He was a fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, Stanford, and has held short-term visiting positions at the Australian National University (Centre for Linguistic Typology), Hamburg University, University of Bayreuth, University of Leiden, and the University of Haifa (Fulbright in law).

He was the founding editor of the *Journal of African Languages and Linguistics* and a charter member of the advisory board of the online journal *Language Documentation & Conservation*. He has also served on the editorial board of *Language, Current Anthropology, Studies in African Linguistics, and Anthropological Linguistics*. His publications include some twenty books (written or edited), approximately 140 articles and book reviews, and a small number of sound recordings of Appalachian (USA) and West African (Northern Nigerian) music.

Paul Newman is married to Dr. Roxana Ma Newman, formerly Assistant Dean of International Programs at Indiana University and an accomplished Africanist linguist in her own right. They have one son, Michael Abraham Newman, who is a director of corporate strategy at Paramount in London.

Roxana Ma Newman (RMN)

*The tradition in the journal is to start by asking every interviewee what drew them into linguistics in the first place. So let me use that as my kick-off question too: why linguistics?*

Paul Newman (PN)

This came about purely by chance. It was an accidental and unlikely career path. It was unlikely because I had never had an interest in foreign languages and, to be frank, still have little aptitude in learning and using them. After completing my B.A. degree in philosophy at Penn [the University of Pennsylvania], I began postgraduate work in anthropology. Unlike in Europe, where social anthropology, prehistory, etc. tend to be separate disciplines, in America the norm was the Boasian four-field approach in which anthropology includes cultural anthropology, archeology, physical anthropology, and linguistics. As an undergraduate I had never taken a course in linguistics — I had never met nor even heard of Noam Chomsky, who in fact was a Ph.D. student at Penn at the time — but as part of my anthropology degree program this was something that I was required to

take. Much to my surprise, I discovered that I liked it. I was drawn to it because in those days, linguistics courses tended to focus on structural analysis, usually in phonology or morphology, rather than being weighted down with theoretical argument and discussion — “gratuitous verbiage” as I call it. The data may have consisted of language facts rather than something else, but the essence of the work and the challenge one faced involved careful empirical analysis, which is to say creative problem solving. My M.A. thesis was on Melanesian Cargo Cults, a non-linguistic study; nevertheless, whenever I had a choice as a student between taking a course on the pre-colonial peoples of the American southwest, for example, or on historical linguistics with Prof. Henry Hoenigswald, I would immediately opt for the latter.

RMN

*As a graduate student at that time, your geographical area of specialization was the Pacific and you even spent a year studying at the University of Hawaii for that reason. How then did you become the Africanist that you are so well known as?*

PN

Here we have a second instance of “by chance”. Around the time that I was finishing up my 3rd year of graduate study — and feeling restless and dissatisfied at still being a student — the U.S. Peace Corps was established. This was an exciting, idealistic venture, one that many members of Congress predicted would be a colossal failure; however, the Peace Corps struck me as a way to get away from hum-drum university life and do something meaningful with my life. And so I applied, naturally indicating my preference for an assignment somewhere in the Pacific. The government being what it is, I was invited instead to be a member of the very first group of volunteers being sent to serve as secondary school teachers in newly independent Nigeria. My reaction was, “Nigeria? Where is it and why in the world would I want to go there?” After the initial shock and consternation, I decided, “Why not? Let’s give it a try.” And as the cliché goes, the rest is history.

RMN

*During your Peace Corps years, when you had a full-time job teaching school, were you able to draw on your anthropology training and pursue your linguistic interests?*

PN

Before heading off on our individual assignments — mine was in Maiduguri in the far northeast of Nigeria (known now as the center of origin of the Boko Haram movement) — our Peace Corps group was given an intensive teacher training course at the University of Ibadan (then a college of the University of London) located in the western region of the country. Somehow I got to know the linguists there at the Institute of African Studies, namely Robert G. Armstrong, Elizabeth Dunstan, and notably Carl Hoffmann, whose work subsequently became well known and appreciated by theoretical phonologists as a result of his remarkable Margi grammar. (I only later met Ayo Bamgboṣe, destined to become a leading figure in West African, especially Yoruba, linguistics, since at that time he was away doing his Ph.D. at the University of Edinburgh.) Despite my lack of status in linguistics, they treated me as if I were a junior colleague and encouraged me

to take advantage of my Maiduguri posting to conduct descriptive research on languages spoken in that region. Which did in fact happen. The students in the school where I was teaching came from various places in northeast Nigeria and spoke a wide range of minority languages, thus there was no shortage of languages to choose from. Ultimately I ended up working primarily with a young man named Adamu Wuyo, a remarkably perceptive speaker of Tera, a Chadic language belonging to the Central (= Biu-Mandara) branch, that eventually became the subject of my Ph.D. thesis. (In principle one has to agree with Chomsky that all humans have native speaker intuition about their own language. Yet as a field linguist who has worked on quite a number of languages and with many different informants and assistants, one has to wonder. There are some people who do not seem to have the slightest idea about how their language works, to the extent that it is puzzling how they can create coherent sentences and manipulate morphophonemic rules in order to speak. By contrast there are others, often unschooled, who seem to be born linguists and who not only appreciate the intricacies of their language, but can also articulate what is going on.)

RMN

*After Peace Corps did you return to the University of Pennsylvania to complete your Anthropology Ph.D.?*

PN

No, I went to UCLA instead. First and foremost, I now had a clear idea that I wanted to be a linguist, not an anthropologist, so it made no sense for me to continue in an anthropology department. (Penn did have linguistics as a department separate from anthropology, but it was very theoretical and formalistic whereas my orientation was that of an empirical field linguist.) Second, UCLA, but not Penn, had a burgeoning African Studies Center and was already offering courses in selected African languages, including Hausa. Third, UCLA linguistics had access to African Studies funds and was prepared to offer me a scholarship to cover my fees and living expenses. That is how I ended up at UCLA, which turned out to be an excellent decision for a variety of reasons, not the least of which was establishing what has turned out to be an over 50 year relationship with today's interviewer!

RMN

*While we were still Ph.D. students, you and I published a comparative, historical study of the Chadic language family, which, because of its scope, was considered to be an extremely ambitious and daring study, especially given the scholarly inexperience of its authors. Could you explain the significance of this work from both linguistic and professional points of view?*

PN

In his groundbreaking classification of African languages, Joseph Greenberg grouped Hausa with some hundred or so (now about 150) small languages of northern Nigeria, northern Cameroon, and Chad into a single Chadic family. He further emphasized that the family as a whole, and not just Hausa as had been previously suggested, was a constituent member of the Afroasiatic phylum, then known as Hamito-Semitic. The evidence offered to support the creation of the Chadic family was thin, but in our view convincing enough. Our working assumption was that if the many

languages grouped by Greenberg into Chadic were truly related, it should be possible to establish regular phonological correspondences, identify sound laws, and do preliminary lexical reconstruction, and in the process make a first step towards a sensible subclassification. This we did. From a scholarly point of view, the Newman/Ma comparative Chadic paper in effect launched Chadic studies as a distinct sub-discipline within African linguistics and persuasively incorporated Hausa, which already had its own long and independent scholarly tradition, into Chadic. Professionally, we suddenly became recognized as the leading *senior* scholars in the field of Chadic linguistics even though we were still young postgraduate students. Because of this, our professional paths in linguistics and our personal introductions to and interactions with established Africanist linguists were relatively seamless.

RMN

*You are well known to have been one of Joseph Greenberg's major admirers and proponents although strictly speaking you were never a student of his. How did your connection with him come about?*

PN

The first time I met Greenberg was when we had a brief get-together in front of the New York Public Library the year I returned from my Peace Corps assignment in Nigeria. Our real professional relationship, however, dates from my early years as assistant professor of anthropology at Yale University, where I was responsible for providing our students with practical linguistic training. Greenberg was in the process of moving from Columbia University and going to Stanford but hadn't quite left New York yet. While he was still nearby — New York City and New Haven, where Yale is located, being a rather short train ride apart — he was invited by our department to come give a once a week seminar for a semester. Since I was the most junior person in the department, the job fell on me to pick him up from the train station around noon and take him to lunch before his afternoon class. Typical of elite American universities such as Yale, Harvard, Princeton, etc., the permanent faculty members who had invited Greenberg to be visiting professor were all in constant demand and/or were too busy with various university obligations to find time to join their distinguished visitor for lunch. The result was that I personally ended up having one-on-one lunches with Greenberg for an entire semester. This was in effect an amazing post-doctoral tutorial. I am sure that I learned more about linguistics from him in those twelve or so weeks than I had in my entire Ph.D. program. Greenberg was known (and criticized) for basing his African language classification on mass comparison of large quantities of data; but what he emphasized in our discussions was that the key to a sound and productive scientific approach to linguistics was not raw facts per se, but rather (a) the *quality* of the facts, (b) coming up with good questions, and (c) thinking intelligently and creatively.

Although Greenberg remained my mentor and source of inspiration over the years, the only other time when we found ourselves in the same location for an extended period of time was when I had the honor of being invited to spend a year (1988-1989) at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford, which is where I wrote my book on Chadic plurality. Whenever possible, I would seek him out for conversation deep in the library or he would join me for outdoor lunch up on the hill at the Center.

If I may, let me add a comment here about Greenberg the person. In the brouhaha following the publication of his momentous Amerindian classification, a work in which he collapsed the multitude of supposedly separate New World families into just three large inclusive phyla, his detractors demonized him as being an egotistical, arrogant scholar who was dismissive of the work of others (especially the community of hardworking lifelong American Indianists who had been “scooped” by Greenberg). In this mean-spirited uproar, they caricatured him as a disreputable intruder who deserved to be “shouted down”. In point of fact, the real Greenberg was an intellectually open and inquisitive scholar and a wonderfully friendly and warm individual with a great sense of humor.

RMN

*Your PhD dissertation, which drew on your year-long fieldwork on Tera, was a syntactic study, syntax being a subfield of linguistics about which you had previously (and also later) shown little particular interest. Why did you choose syntax for your thesis?*

PN

The short answer is “sonorants”. My pattern in gathering data in the field, elicited through my then limited communicative ability in Hausa, was to write short descriptive sections as I went along. (As an aside, let me say that the notion promulgated by practitioners of documentary/salvage linguistics that fieldwork should focus on collecting large quantities of factual materials to be analyzed *later* — when and by whom? — is a scientifically absurd way to operate.) In an early write-up of phonological and phonotactic work in progress that I sent to my thesis director, I made a clear distinction between sonorants and non-sonorants in my inventory charts and in rules affecting consonants. Eventually I received a response reminding me that according to the standard generative phonological theory of the day, sonorants did not exist as a natural class. Therefore, unless I was prepared to write an elaborate chapter consisting of well-constructed arguments justifying the treatment of sonorants as a theoretically motivated grouping, I could not use the category “sonorant” in my analysis and description. Being in the field without a library nor with theoretically sophisticated professors and fellow students around to interact with, and struggling to keep a fieldwork project progressing while putting up with day-to-day difficulties such as heat, mosquitoes, random electricity outages, a broken down kerosene fridge, etc., I did not see myself as being in a position to challenge Chomsky & Halle and/or whoever else was dictating the theoretical dogma of the week. And so, in a spirit of pique, I said, “The hell with phonology. The theory will eventually change to incorporate sonorants — this struck me as obvious — and in the meantime, I shall do my thesis on syntax.” That was that. With hindsight, it was a foolish decision because I ended up writing an unreadable, not very good thesis utilizing a theoretical framework that soon became passé when, instead, I could have provided a valuable study of interesting phonological issues in Tera, especially those involving tone alternations and complex consonantal morphophonology.

RMN

*In your early work you focused on historical/comparative Chadic and on the first-hand descriptions of a number of individual previously undocumented small Chadic languages. Now,*

*however, you are recognized as the world's foremost authority on Hausa, a major world language with more speakers than all the other Chadic languages combined. How did this come about?*

PN

This is due to a 3rd unplanned event that occurred by chance. While still in the anthropology department at Yale, I was contacted by the Vice-Chancellor of Ahmadu Bello University, Dr. Ishaya Audu, who offered me a position as the first full-time Director of the Centre for the Study of Nigerian Languages (CSNL), a fledgling research institute. I grabbed it. (Incidentally, I later learned that I was far from being the first choice for the job. It seems that Paul Schachter at UCLA and Petr Zima in Prague had both been approached, as had been Alhaji Dr. Abubakar Imam, a productive and highly regarded traditional Hausa author and editor.) It was a difficult and stressful, but also very rewarding, position with numerous political and ethnic pressures and intra-university conflicts above and beyond the Centre's research agenda, which was still in its formative stages.

Be that as it may, because CSNL was based in Kano, the largest and most important Hausa-speaking metropolis, and because the Centre had already embarked on a practical Hausa-English dictionary project, I naturally became immersed in Hausa, in my administrative work, in practical day to day conversational usage, and intellectually. Gradually, and without being aware of it, my own research turned to questions about Hausa itself. Some years later, I was amazed to discover that *all* of my publications during the previous five years had been on Hausa. I had the enormous advantage of being able to approach Hausa with a Chadic perspective, but Hausa was now the foreground of my work and Chadic the background. This focus on Hausa is reflected in my two most significant books, namely my 700+ page *Hausa Reference Grammar* and my recent *History of the Hausa Language*.

Another consequence of the formative years at the Centre working on the CSNL dictionary was that I, and other members of the Centre research staff, became experienced lexicographers who, over the years, went on to produce other scholarly and practical dictionaries of northern Nigerian languages. The most recent example is our one volume *Hausa–English / English–Hausa Dictionary* published by Bayero University Press, Kano, which is intended primarily for use in Nigeria and elsewhere in West Africa.

RMN

*Of your many papers, our dear friend the late Russ Schuh and I agree that your feminatives in Hausa paper was a truly phenomenal piece of research, one in which you took seemingly ordinary data that everyone had known for a century and came up with an elegant analysis that in some sense was simple, but without your creative and original mind was impossible to see. Could you briefly explain the essence of this paper for the general non-Hausa specialist linguist?*

PN

Hausa has an inflectional/derivational suffix marking feminine gender that typically appears as **-(i)ya** or **-(u)wa**, sometimes simply **-a**, e.g. (tone and vowel length not marked): **shudi** 'blue', *fem.* **shudiya**; **dogo** 'tall', *fem.* **doguwa**; **tsoho** 'old man', *fem.* **tsohuwa** 'old woman, mother'; **Bahaushe** 'Hausa man', *fem.* **Bahaushiya** 'Hausa woman'. There is nothing unusual or surprising here. What is interesting is the existence of a very large number of functionally non-derived

feminine nouns that contain these suffixes. These are ordinary common nouns covering a wide range of semantic spheres, most of which have nothing to do with real world sex or femininity. Examples from the hundreds that exist include **bishiya** *f* ‘tree’, **gaskiya** *f* ‘truth’, **kibiya** *f* ‘arrow’, **tsintsiya** *f* ‘broom’, **zuciya** *f* ‘heart’, **kunya** *f* ‘shame’, **kwarya** *f* ‘calabash’, **bobuwa** *f* ‘a biting fly’, **garkuwa** *f* ‘shield’, **guguwa** *f* ‘whirlwind’, **shamuwa** *f* ‘stork’, **tsakuwa** *f* ‘stone, gravel’, **garwa** *f* ‘large metal container’, **yunwa** *f* ‘hunger’. Hausa scholars had naturally, and casually, assumed — as would any first year student doing workbook problems — that these can be analyzed simply as lexically frozen bimorphemic feminine nouns composed of a masculine stem plus one of the feminine suffixes, e.g. **bishiya** ‘tree’ < \***bishi** *m* + **-(i)ya**; **kunya** ‘shame’ < \***kuni** *m* + **-(i)ya**; **guguwa** ‘whirlwind’ < \***gugu** *m* + **-(u)wa**; **yunwa** ‘hunger’ < \***yunu** *m* + **-(u)wa**. The explanation seemed so obvious that no one gave it much thought and no one stopped to ask, “Why in the world did this happen? What would be the motivation for such large numbers of, but not all, masculine common nouns to alter themselves grammatically from masculine into feminine, and why before the change would there have been so few feminine nouns in the language?” And then the light bulb went on and the idea hit me. Yes, \***bishiya** does come from **bishi** plus **-(i)ya** and **guguwa** comes from \***gugu** + **-(u)wa**. But contrary to what had been assumed for the past hundred years, the underlying stems were not originally masculine: they were already feminine, i.e., \***bishi** *f* and \***gugu** *f*, respectively! The process was *not* inflection or derivation, rather it was explicit phonological marking, i.e., ‘overt characterization’. One was not changing masculine words into feminines, but rather overtly marking feminine words such that they were immediately recognizable phonologically as feminine. A word that convincingly illustrates this is Hausa **tunkiya** ‘sheep’. The underlying stem **tunki** (actually \*/**tumki**/) has cognate forms throughout Chadic and can be reconstructed as such for Proto-Chadic. Significantly, in related Chadic languages, this generic word for sheep — which in the plural includes both ewes and rams — is *always* grammatically feminine without exception. The form **tumki** as a masculine noun does not exist (there being separate and unrelated lexemes for ‘ram’). Once pointed out, the explanation for these ‘feminatives’, i.e., intrinsically feminine nouns with suffixal feminine endings attached, seems obvious. But to come to that solution required an intellectual leap of imagination to overcome the mass of facts and the received knowledge of the day. I am pleased that colleagues whom I respect appreciate this paper since it presents a radically different picture of Hausa structure and historical development from what was previously thought.

RMN

*Many people are not aware of this — and you have studiously avoided self-promotion — but in addition to your important descriptive and historical work in African linguistics, you have made major theoretical contributions to general linguistics. Without being too modest, tell us something about these.*

PN

I am not sure that my ideas have been so original; nevertheless, it is probably fair to say that I have managed to have an impact on linguistics as whole by presenting phenomena in a clear, concise, and straightforward way. Moreover, in two cases I have introduced convenient terminology that has caught on and been widely adopted. The first important concept the recognition of which I

brought to the attention of general linguists was ‘syllable weight’ (a term I coined). All linguists of course knew of the opposition between open and closed syllables, but general phonologists had failed to appreciate the enormous importance of the opposition between heavy and light syllables, an active feature both in Hausa and numerous other Chadic languages. Classicists, for example, who studied metrical phenomena, were aware of the opposition — although not the terminology — but syllable weight had escaped the attention of linguists doing modern phonology, among other reasons because the standard theory failed to appreciate the theoretical importance of the syllable itself.

My second contribution was in clarifying the nature of ‘pluractional’ verbs, namely verbs that express multiplicity or plurality of *action* in time or space or in their effect on multiple objects. Scholars, especially those working on native American languages, had long been aware of plural verbs; on the other hand, standard descriptions often confused and conflated verb forms that semantically were inherently plural, i.e., ‘pluractional’ (my term), from those where the plural form was part of a conjugational system as reflected, for example, in nominative-accusative agreement. My contribution was in identifying pluractional verbs *qua* pluractional by providing a distinctive label for these verbs as opposed to European type concordial forms.

In the course of doing African linguistic research I have made a few additional contributions of greater or lesser general applicability. For example, my work on ideophones — which outside of Africa are often called expressives or mimetics — raised questions about whether ideophones necessarily constitute a discrete, self-contained class, as often uncritically assumed, or whether there is a cline such that words in whatever part of speech may be more or less ideophonic. In this regard, there is an unusual phenomenon in Hausa whereby augmentative adjectives have normal adjectival shape in the singular (e.g. **fándáméemèè** / **fándáméemiyáa** ‘huge’ (*m/f*)) but have corresponding plurals (e.g. **fándámáa-fàndàmàa** (*pl.*)) that are ideophonic and violate various phonological rules of the normal prosaic language.

In addition, I have contributed to the study of tone, a favorite interest of mine (incidentally having been a piano tuner when I was younger). Insights of mine include (a) the naturalness of polar tone (tones opposite to that of a neighboring tone), which some theoretical phonologists tried to eliminate; (b) the ambiguousness of contour tones — falling tone, for example, potentially being a unit or simply high+low fused onto a single tone-bearing unit; and (c) the distinction between ‘tone-integrating’ and ‘tone-non-integrating’ affixes, the former overriding lexical tone, the latter being dominated and overridden by lexical tone or at least impervious to it.

## RMN

*In addition to your impressive research output, you have been actively involved in academic editing, most significantly in founding the successful Journal of African Languages and Linguistics, now well into its 40th year, and also in book editing, e.g. your influential volume on linguistic fieldwork. You have been outspoken about what in your opinion constitutes good vs. bad editing (both of journals and scholarly collections), namely, what is required to be an effective editor. What would you say is essential to being a competent and successful academic editor?*



PN

Most academic editing in linguistics (and I assume other humanities and social science fields as well) is poorly done. In my remarks here, I am focusing on scholarly editing, not on copy-editing, which is a technical job typically done by staff with those particular skills. To do scholarly editing well requires (a) know-how, (b) discipline, (c) commitment, and (d) intellectual curiosity. The initial problem is that most scholars who become journal editors, let's say, are chosen for the task because of their research reputations. These individuals generally have had no training in editing, have not had the opportunity to work side by side with an effective editor in order to see how the job should be done, nor have they ever read a book on the subject. They just jump right in. These scholars invariably mean well, but asking an untrained amateur to do a demanding professional job leads to the kind of incompetence we unfortunately witness all the time.

Second, the job requires discipline, especially with regard to time management. For example, we all know of editors who feel sorry for young scholars who have submitted hopelessly inept papers and thus spend hours pointing out their deficiencies and how they can be improved — often with encouragement to resubmit (*mon Dieu!*). Such well-meaning scholars deserve our admiration for being kind human beings, but earn an F as editors. Third, having agreed to serve for a given period of time, the editor has to commit himself or herself to doing the job fully and dutifully even if this means neglecting other academic activities that the editor would normally view as having a higher priority. Journals too often get far behind schedule because the editor is treating the job as a pastime, i.e., attending to it whenever he or she has the time, time that usually doesn't exist given the academic demands of a 24 hour day. The reality is that academic editors tend to enjoy the supposed prestige that goes with the “editor” title, but have little psychological commitment to doing what is really required, nor do they have a sense of shame when they fail to produce a quality journal in a timely manner. Finally, a good editor must be intellectually curious about what is going on in the field in question. Contrary to very common practice, the editor should read through every new paper that has been submitted to the journal *before* allowing the paper to be sent out for peer review. This should be done not only out of intellectual interest, but because the choice of an appropriate reviewer depends crucially on appreciating what the submitted paper is all about. Moreover, if a paper is hopelessly bad, i.e., the editor recognizes from reading it that it clearly is not publishable, then the editor has a duty not to waste the time and effort of reviewers who do unpaid manuscript reviewing as a professional service. Of course, editors should not abuse their authority and select or reject papers in an arbitrary manner; on the other hand, one shouldn't confuse impartiality and even-handed treatment with vacuous and wasteful procedures applied thoughtlessly and automatically for no reasonable purpose.

RMN

*Before closing, I want to ask you about your foray into the field of law. It is not well known in linguistic circles that, on approaching retirement age, you obtained a degree in law (graduating summa cum laude) and that you remain a member of the Indiana Bar. What's the story here?*

PN

From the time that I was a boy, I had a more than trivial interest in law. Back in high school days, I read the autobiography of Clarence Darrow, a famous U.S. defense attorney in the early 20<sup>th</sup>

century, which introduced me to ideas of legal fairness, due process, and the importance of standing up for the underdog and being vigilant about protecting civil liberties and human rights. I was particularly taken by Darrow's role in the Scopes "Monkey Trial", which involved a major conflict about the teaching of evolution in the schools (later dramatized in the terrific American play, *Inherit the Wind*). Years later I had first-hand experience dealing with the intricacies of legal rules and legal thinking when I as a secular pacifist chose to apply for conscientious objector status. I don't remember when I was first introduced to the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union], but I am a lifelong member, and later when we were in Indiana I became a member of the organization's State Board. At some point during my years at Indiana, the university decided it wanted to offer general education courses that were not strictly disciplinary in nature. So in addition to my standard postgraduate courses in historical linguistics and linguistic fieldwork, I began offering courses for first and second year undergraduates on topics such as "freedom of speech" and "language and law". These courses were extremely successful and I thoroughly enjoyed teaching them; but I had the nagging feeling that I didn't really know what I was talking about. When I finally finished my encyclopedic *Reference Grammar of Hausa*, in all modesty my magnum opus, the question was, "What next?" The answer that emerged was, "Go to law school". At first my intention was just to take a few courses in my specific areas of interest, but being a glutton for punishment, I decided to see if I could handle the full J.D. law degree. This I managed to do in three years along with my class cohorts, an accomplishment that involved going to law school full time while carrying out my full-time professorial duties.

I truly enjoyed the study of law. My fellow students all seemed to hate law school but wanted to be lawyers, whereas I had no desire to be a lawyer but loved the intellectual freshness and rigor of law school. In many ways law wasn't that different from linguistics in that both fields involve identifying and juggling facts and concepts, determining relevance, and finding the best (if not always ideal) solution to the problems at hand.

I never did become a lawyer in the sense of putting up a shingle and opening a law practice; however I did put my acquired know-how to good use. First, I was able to obtain a position as Copyright Specialist in the library at the University of Michigan where I provided assistance for scholars faced with publication problems. Second, back in Indiana, I served from time to time as a usually *pro-bono* counsel representing faculty, staff, and students who were being mistreated and/or denied procedural due process by self-important university administrators. (Unfortunately, law as interpreted by Indiana University apparatchiks was far from being as regular or honest as Grimm's Law!) I won my share of cases, lost others, but ultimately found the stress of fighting windmills more than I could cope with and thus reluctantly gave it up.

Interestingly, my training and experience in law recharged my intellectual battery, so to speak, which admittedly had been running down. The result, ironically, was that having "quit" linguistics to do law, I again became increasingly active as a linguist. In the twenty or so years since beginning law school, I have published seven new books plus numerous other writings.

RMN

*You have often said that you cherish the memory of having been able to interview Joseph Greenberg, but that you yourself are not comfortable being at the other end, although, in fact, you did participate in a wide-ranging interview with Alan Kaye some fifteen years ago. I therefore*

want to thank you for agreeing to be our interviewee and for sharing your many insightful observations and thoughts with us.

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