

## **“Semantic convergence in the Lower Volta Basin (West Africa): a micro area within the Macro-Sudanic Belt?”**

The Lower Volta Basin (LVB) is a lower-tier convergence zone. It is within different layers of macro-areas: The Trans-Atlantic Sprachbund, the Macro-Sudanic Belt and the Fragmentation Belt, and corresponds roughly to the Gulf of Guinea. The region is characterised by linguistic diversity and almost universal multilingualism of the speakers. Some similarities among the languages in the LVB are due to their genetic relationship. They all belong to subgroups of the Kwa (Niger-Congo) family. Other similarities may be universals of human language or be attributed to their environmental surroundings. However, some of the parallel semantic structures in these languages are due to different networks of contact between the peoples and among the languages. Moreover, trade and past hegemonic wars have promoted interactions among the peoples. For instance, throughout the LVB the influence of Akan is evident in some cultural domains, e.g., chieftaincy or the names of days of week. In this talk I will survey some of the shared contact-induced semantic patterns and the related grammaticalization and lexicalization patterns in the LVB languages in domains such as temperature, feelings, everyday physical activities, personhood and perception events. I will explore the extent to which some of the features relate the LVB languages to the Fragmentation Belt, the Macro-Sudanic Sprachbund and the Trans-Atlantic Sprachbund. Methodological issues in the study of areal semantics, especially related to sense discrimination and comparison across languages will be discussed.