

Project title:**Africa-China relations: from cross-cultural communication to comparative linguistics****Principal investigator: Adams Bodomo****Project summary:**

Africa - China relations have quickly developed within the first decade of the 21st Century. Indeed, it may be said that 21st Century Africa-China relations began in 1997 with the Asian financial crisis, which was quickly followed by China's entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO) in December 2001. This period saw a substantial increase of ordinary Africans coming into China to buy goods for resale back home in Africa, and some even settled down with their own business. At the same time there was a substantial increase in Chinese investments in Africa, which has led to the presence of more than one million Chinese residing on the African continent. This 21st Century Africa-China relationship was dramatically illustrated at a Forum for Africa China Cooperation in Beijing in 2006 with a massive presence of almost 40 African heads of government, far more African leaders attended than at anywhere else apart from the United Nations Headquarters. There exist several levels of conceptualizing international relations, including government-to-government and people-to-people relations. Traditional, mainstream international relations emphasize government-to-government relations as is naturally the case for current conceptualizations of Africa-China relations. However, with the intermingling of Africans and Chinese on both the African continent and in China, a people-to-people approach to the study of this phenomenon comes to the fore, and this project seeks to do just that. The project focuses on two important aspects: cross-cultural communication and comparative linguistics. Cross-cultural communication, or intercultural communication as it is sometimes called, seeks to understand how people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds interact when they meet, and is a key concept in traditional disciplines such as linguistics, anthropology, sociology, and communication studies. Building on earlier work by me and my colleagues in this field, this project will seek to understand how ordinary Africans and Chinese, such as traders, sportsmen, and students interact when they meet. Any cross-cultural communication environment is like a laboratory for comparative linguistics, which deals with a systematic analysis of language

structures and language functions in the environment of language contact. This project, also building on earlier work by me in language description and formalization, will seek to systematically study and analyze various African and Chinese language structures based on cutting edge theoretical linguistic methods of language analysis. This project is crucial for a better understanding and promotion of Africa-China relations.