

# AILA Africa ReN Newsletter

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## Applied Linguistics and Literacy in Africa and the Diaspora



An AILA Research Network  
[www.aila.info](http://www.aila.info)

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## EDITOR'S COMMENT

Dear ReN members,

Our network is now well into its second year and as a research community, we are thriving. The ReN has steadily grown as we welcomed new members from around the world and from regions in Africa where we previously had no representation, such as Ethiopia. We still have much work to accomplish as we continually aim to inform researchers of our existence, to make our newsletter accessible to Francophone Africa, and hopefully, to eventually also have our website available in African languages.

This issue is packed with opportunities, news and research findings and we hope you'll make the most of them, then pass this issue on to your colleagues and friends. As always, your feedback and comments are very welcome. We look forward to receiving your submissions for our next issue, not later than February 1st, 2009. Until then, please check our website regularly for updates and news of conference, funding and publishing opportunities.

At the AILA meeting in Essen, our ReN voted in new Co-Convenor Dr. Ashraf Abdelahay, who has just completed his PhD at the University of Edinburgh. We also welcomed two new Steering Committee members: Dr. Juliet Tembe (Islamic University in Uganda) and Dr. Mastin Prinsloo (University of Cape Town, South Africa). Finally, in August we shared the tragic news that one of our Research Network's founders and the co-chair, Dr. Pippa Stein of Wits University in South Africa, passed away in August. Dr. Stein left behind her a legacy of social-justice oriented education research and a distinguished contribution to language and

literacy education. Please visit our members' page to read the tributes by Pippa's colleagues, fellow ReN leaders, and friends, Dr. Bonny Norton and Dr. Sifree Makoni:

[www.renafrica.org/who-we-are/en/](http://www.renafrica.org/who-we-are/en/)



Yours,  
Lauryn Oates



## NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM ReN MEMBERS

### **The Africa ReN Convenes in Essen, Germany (August 2008) During AILA Congress**

*Contributed by Lisa Taylor, School of Education - Bishop's University*

The ReN Africa symposia confirmed the theoretical rigour and dynamism of postcolonial African Applied Linguistics and the inclusive, growing community working in this field. Sinfree Makoni framed and launched the day's discussions, arguing for the epistemological advantage of marginality and the need to provincialize Applied Linguistics, recognizing the historical context of its emergence as a discipline and its contemporary limitations addressing the complexity and multi-layered nature of Africa's modern problems. Ashraf Abdelahay explored this sociopolitical complexity in the case of Sudan, in particular the deployment of colonial constructs such as 'indigenous languages' to naturalize racialized political claims in complex ways which elude Eurocentric analysis. Neville Alexander posed the question to the presenters of our own strategic uses of AL as theorists: whether the concept of indigeneity has certain utilities or could be de-racialised in ways which attend to its contextual particularity; Ashraf drew our attention specifically to the ways 'indigenous' is translated as an example for analysis. Ulrike Meinhof argued that the forms of cultural collaboration, mobility and affiliation of African musicians demand conceptual innovation in AL: that 'networks' and 'human hubs' capture the rhizomatic, multi-directional translocality of human connections and experience better than the Eurocentric over-determined trajectories of 'diaspora'. Mastin Prinsloo's examination of the use of written documents in early imperial transactions in South Africa argued for the need to rethink universalist presumptions of literacy as it is opposed to oracy and to examine the heteroglossia of documentary practices in contexts where different understandings (eg. of land ownership, practices of making meaning and binding commitment) apply. Discussion of the papers highlighted the urgency for applied linguists to examine the implications of our epistemic and institutional standpoints in the work we do and the complex contextuality and locality of relations of power that are mediated through language.

### **4th ADALEST Conference, University of Botswana, Gaborone; July 7 – 9, 2008**

*Contributed by: Barbara Trudell, SIL International*

From July 7 – 9, 2008, the Department of Languages & Social Sciences Education of the Faculty of Education at the University of Botswana hosted the 4th conference of the Association for the Development of

African Languages in Education, Science and Technology (ADALEST). The conference, under the theme, 'African Languages in the Context of the UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014)' was held in Gaborone, Botswana on the university campus.

Featured speakers at the conference included Dr. Theophilus Mooko (Dean of Education, University of Botswana); Dr. Eddie Williams (University of Bangor); and Prof. Sozinho Matsinhe (UNISA). In addition, a colloquium was held during the conference, sponsored by the British Association of Applied Linguistics' Language in Africa special interest group.

As an organization, ADALEST has been in existence for eight years. The first ADALEST conference, under the theme: *Development of Indigenous African Languages for Education and Technology in the 21st Century*, was held in Kisumu (Kenya) in 2000. In 2002, ADALEST held its second conference in Pretoria (South Africa). The theme was: *Promoting Education, Science and Technology Through African Languages*. The third ADALEST conference, which took place in Mangochi (Malawi) in 2004, carried the theme – *Making Multilingual Education a Reality for All*. This conference was held concurrently with Malawi's fifth national symposium on language in education.

For more information on ADALEST, email Prof. Gregory Kamwendo at [kamwendog@mopipi.ub.bw](mailto:kamwendog@mopipi.ub.bw).

### **New Resource Bantu Orthography Manual**

*From ReN Member Leila Schroeder, SIL Africa*

The Bantu Orthography Manual is a resource for developing writing systems among the Bantu subgroup of Niger-Congo languages. It offers a strategy for orthography development responding to native speaker intuition. It combines a procedural guide with the condensed advice of a coterie of respected Bantu linguistic experts. It offers readability and write-ability considerations whenever applicable. The Manual has a target audience: linguists gathering phonological and morphological information for orthography development. It uses a participatory approach for data collection and decision making in a workshop setting.

Leila, along with her husband Kent, has also led the Literacy Software Testing with the Mbeya-Iringa Cluster, Mbeya, Tanzania. For more information on the Bantu Literacy Tool software, contact Leila at [leila\\_schroeder@wycliffe.org](mailto:leila_schroeder@wycliffe.org) or visit [www.sil.org/silepubs/Pubs/50630/50630\\_BantuOrthographyManual.pdf](http://www.sil.org/silepubs/Pubs/50630/50630_BantuOrthographyManual.pdf)





### **New Publication: Family Literacy: Experiences from Africa and Around the World**

ReN member Snoeks Desmond, along with Maren Elfert, recently edited the newly released "Family Literacy: Experiences from Africa and Around the World" published by UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning and dvvv international (ISBN 978-0-620-40760-1).

Excerpt from the Forward:

*We decided to publish this book because we felt that it is high time to inform practitioners and programme developers, and also policy makers and funders of the relevance of family literacy in Africa. We wanted to show that this practice is known in the region – where the needs are overwhelming – and at the same time we want to offer encouragement in the hope that it will be taken up more systematically, and that more resources and funds will be invested in these programmes.*

For more information, contact Snoeks Desmond at:  
[snoeks@global.co.za](mailto:snoeks@global.co.za)

### **ReN Member of the Month Profile: Nkonko M. Kamwangamalu**

*The following is an excerpt from the Blog of the Non-Native English Speakers in TESOL:* Prof. Kamwangamalu: Let me first tell your readers about my social and academic background. I was born in a rural village in Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of Congo. My entire primary and secondary education was exclusively in French, the official language of the Congo. After graduating from college with a BA in English language and literature, I was offered the Fulbright scholarship to study linguistics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where I obtained the PhD degree in 1989. Then my academic journey as a college professor started, taking me to Singapore, Swaziland, South Africa (my adoptive country) and, finally, to Howard University, where I am now based.

Teaching has been a vocation and a passion for me since childhood. I recall everybody in my village calling me "teacher" long before I even graduated from primary school. It would not be an overstatement to say that I was born to be a teacher. While growing up there were three professions to which the youth of my generation aspired: teaching, priesthood, and medicine. It was fashionable and a mark of a higher social status to be a teacher, a priest or a medical doctor. I decided to become a teacher because, of all the three professions, teaching was what I liked most and was, cost wise, what my parents could afford. I had a passion for mathematics and languages, and I was even a high school math-teacher. It never occurred to me that I would become an English teacher and a linguist. I cannot explain how this happened. However, in hindsight and given the prominence of English in today's world, I think I made the right choice by studying linguistics in English. I was trained in theoretical linguistics and

sociolinguistics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and I published in both areas while a graduate student as well as early in my career as a college professor. However, for the past fifteen years my teaching/research has focused on sociolinguistics. Teaching has been a very rewarding profession for me, for it has opened up my eyes to the world. The profession has allowed me to travel extensively, to visit places that I never dreamt of seeing in my lifetime, and to work with peers and establish a network of friends from various parts of the world. Against this background, I consider myself as an international citizen, as a citizen with no borders, so to speak.

**For the complete interview, visit:**

<http://nnest.asu.edu/blog/2008/04/nkonko-m-kamwangamalu.html>

### **Upcoming Conferences**



**What: Language and Gender in African Contexts: A BAAL Gender and Language SiG Seminar**

**Contributed by:** Dr. Lia Litosseliti, Senior Lecturer in Linguistics, Department of Language and Communication Science, City University

**Organizers:** Lilian Atanga, Sibonile Ellece, Lia Litosseliti, Jane Sunderland

**Date:** Friday, November 14, 2008 (see also details of 'Follow-up Saturday'), 10 am – 5 pm

**Place:** City University, London, UK

**Cost:** £10.00 for salaried participants and £5.00 for non-salaried participants and participants from economically-disadvantaged countries. This includes lunch and tea/coffee.

**Rationale:** To continue networking with colleagues and working on the topic of language and gender in African contexts, see:

<http://groups.google.co.uk/group/gal-africa?hl=en>

**Likely format and style of the day:** The day will consist mainly of workshop and discussion activities, and several short plenary papers. Participants can submit abstracts for these, but do not have to. Participants who do not submit abstracts should be prepared to talk very briefly and informally about their own interest in the topic (see below).

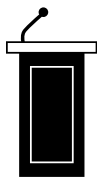
Continuation of the day on Saturday Nov. 15, 2008: Anyone who is interested in actively developing and working on a specific research project in relation to the topic of language and gender in African contexts is invited to attend a continuation of the seminar on Saturday Nov. 15, 9 am – 1 pm. These research projects may be individual or joint, perhaps with others from the group (including those who cannot attend, who will be asked about this in advance), but you will need to come with ideas. This meeting will be at a nearby venue. There will be no further registration fee for this, however tea/coffee and lunch will not be provided.





**Accommodation:** This seminar does not have associated accommodation. We assume that most participants who need accommodation will be able to stay with friends or family. If this is likely to be a problem for you, please email Lia Litosseliti [llitosseliti@city.ac.uk](mailto:llitosseliti@city.ac.uk) and she will be able to suggest nearby accommodation.

**Registration:** If you plan to attend, please email Jane Sunderland [j.sunderland@lancs.ac.uk](mailto:j.sunderland@lancs.ac.uk). Your message should include either (a) an abstract for a short plenary paper (attachment); or, (b) a few lines in the body of the e-mail indicating your interest in the topic (this might be theoretical, professional and/or political). Please also indicate whether you plan to attend 'Follow-up Saturday'.



**What: Reading Association of South Africa 2008 Conference**

**When:** November 7 – 9, 2008

**Where:** University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood Campus, Durban, South Africa

**Summary:** 2008 Theme – Readers for Life

**Contact Information:** <http://rasa2008.ukzn.ac.za/>

**Organizers:** Reading Association of South Africa

**Deadline for abstracts/proposals:** Passed

**What: 22nd Conference of the Linguistic Association of Nigeria**

**When:** November 9 – 13, 2008

**Where:** El-Kanemi Hall, University of Naiduguri

**Summary:** Theme – Language Policy, Planning and Management

**Contact Information:** email Dr. Balarabe Zulyadaini at [zulyadaini2000@yahoo.com](mailto:zulyadaini2000@yahoo.com)

or Chairman: Prof. C.M.B. Brann at [cmbbrann@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:cmbbrann@yahoo.co.uk)

**Organizers:** Dept. of Languages and Linguistics, University of Naiduguri

**Deadline for abstracts/proposals:** September 30, 2008 (passed)

*Contributed by: Dr. Wale Adegbite, University, Ile-Ife, Osun State*

**What: Highlights - First Intergenerational Literacy Learners' Conference Held in Uganda**

**When:** January 27 – 30, 2009

**Where:** Agobia Church, Nyai Village, Micu parish, Aroi Division, Arua District, Uganda

**Summary:** Theme - Literacies in Livelihoods and Development: Bridging the Divides. The purpose of the conference is to mobilize local communities and other stakeholders to support and promote the concept of

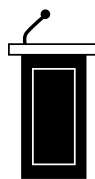
multiple literacies for attaining sustainable livelihoods based on the principles of non-formal/lifelong learning and indigenous practices. It will offer a platform for the ordinary poor people of diverse origins who will be the focus of the event, to share their experiences in

relation to the conference theme as they interact with the various stakeholders. The conference will lay a foundation for evidence-based learning where every stakeholder will participate and take action for bringing about positive change in the lives of the poor.

**Contact Information:** (256) 772 411304/(27) 73 299 5632; [wngaka@gmail.com](mailto:wngaka@gmail.com)

**Organizers:** Willy Ngaka – Conference Convener; Dr. Rogers Ayiko – Co-convener and coordinator Fund-raising activities; Dr. George Openjuru – Chair Technical, Planning and Presentations Committee; and Christopher Yiki – Secretary Organizing committee

**\*Help Support this Event:** We, the organizers of this conference wish to extend our appeal for financial, material or social resources for support of any magnitude to ensure the success of this conference. This will be the first such event in the history of the West Nile region and is unique in its grassroots origins and emphasis on the participation of poor people. Since the conference venue is a village and not a five star hotel, it means most of the participants from other parts of the country will share accommodation with host communities as part of the learning and experience sharing process. The greatest challenge for us is therefore in the area of transporting the participants and feeding them, due to soaring food and fuel prices. We are therefore requesting assistance to go towards transport, food, translation, report production, and communications. Each contribution will be formally acknowledged on the ReN website.



**What: The 6th Pan-African Reading for All Conference**

**When: August 10 – 14, 2009**

**Where:** The University of Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania

**Summary:** Theme is "Literacy for Community-based Socio-economic Transformation and Development"

**Contact Information:** [2001@yahoo.com](mailto:2001@yahoo.com) or [cbp@raha.com](mailto:cbp@raha.com)

for more information and to obtain the proposal and/or registration forms

**Organizers:** Local Planning Committee, 6th Pan African RFA Conference, P.O. Box 78245, Dar es Salaam.

**Deadline for abstracts/proposals:** December 31, 2008





## FOCUS ON...WESTERN AFRICA

Regional Coordinators: Dipo Salami and Kate Adoo-Adeku



### A Brief on the 5th Pan-African Reading for All Conference (August 2007)

By: Prof. Kate Adoo-Adeku, University of Ghana

This conference was the fifth in a series organized in Africa, which serves as an international forum for participants from the continent and around the world, and addressed the theme of Literacy for Human

Liberation with five sub-themes:

- Literacy for Educational Development
- Literacy for Political and Economic Emancipation.
- Literacy for Social and Health Liberation.
- Literacy for Gender Empowerment and
- Literacy for Adult Empowerment.

The conference objectives were to:

- Promote education for all through the habit of reading to reach the world.
- Promote sustainable development using reading to reach the world.
- Use literacy as a tool for human liberation

At the conference, each African Reading Association presented a country report, including Ghana, Nigeria, Togo, Kenya, Ethiopia, Liberia, Mali, Guinea, Swaziland, Tanzania and Botswana. The associations highlighted recent development, achievements, the challenges, and the plans for the future. Importantly, best practices were shared. Participants enjoyed a keynote address from Barbara Walker, president of the IRA, a presentation from Dr. Chinwe Mnuodnogu on the topic of literacy for gender empowerment, and the opening from Ghana's Deputy Minister of Education focused on the links between reading and peacebuilding. Over 90 teachers from Ghana and beyond participated in a workshop at the conference, Reading and Writing for Critical Thought. Teacher lecturers, professors and graduate students collectively presented more than 200 research papers on literacy.

This conference witnessed one of the largest participation levels of any International Reading (IRA) conference in Africa, numbering 460, run by a team of 60 volunteers, with 26 participating countries. The gender representation was females 66% and males 34%. The conference identified several key emerging issues, including:

- Library and distance learning facilities for prisoners are necessary for their reform and rehabilitation;
- There is a need for a policy to integrate functional literacy

throughout all empowerment programmes targeted at people infected with HIV/AIDS;

- African Reading Associations must sensitize teachers on the need for continuous study and re-training on new methods in reading and teaching literacy;
- Early instructional practices towards mother tongue literacy is critical in order to promote effective language communication at school.

*Informez-nous de votre recherche ! Envoyez-nous deux paragraphes de votre recherche sur l'éducation langagière ou sur l'alphabétisation en Afrique, avant le 1er février, 2009, pour l'inclusion au prochain numéro (les régions de l'ouest et central). Contactez l'éditeur : Dipo Salami (diposalami@yahoo.com).*

*To submit a short article, event announcement, or others news for the West and Central African Regions, please contact Dipo Salami (diposalami@yahoo.com) by February 1st, 2009. We welcome submissions from the region and around the world, and hope to hear from you soon.*

## FOCUS on... Francophone Africa

Regional Coordinator: JeDene Reeder



*Nous nous engageons à inclure dans notre communauté de recherche les chercheurs francophones et surtout les Africain(e)s. Nous aimerions alors augmenter la contribution de nos membres francophones au bulletin de ReN et à notre site Web. Notre but comprend, en fin de compte, la publication du bulletin en anglais et en français. À cette fin, nous invitons*

*les chercheurs francophones à soumettre les articles et les petits mots de leur recherche et aussi celles qui peuvent faire les critiques des œuvres françaises.*

*Nous cherchons un(e) deuxième coordinateur(trice) bénévole pour le contenu français, ainsi que d'autres personnes de bonne volonté qui peuvent nous proposer du contenu français et qui peuvent traduire le contenu anglais pour nos lecteurs francophones. Si vous est disponible pour ce travail bénévole, ou si vous connaissez quelqu'un qui pourra nous aider, veuillez contacter Mme REEDER JeDene à [jedene\\_reeder@sil.org](mailto:jedene_reeder@sil.org)*

We are currently seeking Francophone contributors to the ReN newsletter and website. We are committed to including Francophone Africa researchers in our research community and our aim is to eventually publish the newsletter in English and French. We have a post vacant for a second volunteer Coordinator





for the French content, and also seek other volunteers to help us identify French content and translate English content for French readers. If you can help, or if you know of someone who may be interested, please contact JeDene Reeder: [jedene\\_reeder@sil.org](mailto:jedene_reeder@sil.org)

## FOCUS ON...SOUTHERN AFRICA

Regional Coordinators: Gregory Kamwendo and Violet Lunga



### Blogging South Africa: A Foreign Teacher Writes Home

Alexandra Abraham, a volunteer teacher supported by Education Without Borders, is a Canadian of Dutch and Guyanese descent who has lived and researched around the world, is currently teaching in the township of Guguletu in South Africa and blogs about her experiences at [ndisafunda.za](http://ndisafunda.za). Ndisafunda is a Xhosa word meaning 'I am still learning'. For a fresh and personable account of South Africa, visit <http://ndisafunda.blogspot.com/>.

### Assessing the 'Takalani Sesame' Project: Findings from an Evaluation Report

The *Takalani Sesame* Project is a multimedia and multi-lingual educational programme that includes a television series, a series of radio programmes, and an outreach programme featuring a print component. An evaluation of the program sought to assess its impact on 3- to 6-year-old children who were not in structured preschool. Collaborators in the effort included the Sesame Workshop, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) Education, The Department of Education, with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and Sanlam. The evaluation's research questions were as follows:

- *To What Extent Is Takalani Sesame Making a Difference to the Children's Learning and Development?*
- *Takalani Sesame Is a Tool That Assists Both Teachers and Learners. How Effective Is It an Educational Enhancement or Support for Teachers/Caregivers?*
- *How Has Takalani Sesame Impacted on Children's Knowledge of HIV and AIDS, Their Attitudes to People and Affected and Infected by the Disease and Their Own Self-Esteem?*
- *How Does the Language Use in the Programmes affect Children's Learning?*

Participants consisted of 175 children, 89 parents, and 20 caregivers (i.e., a Department of Education's Early Childhood Development

(ECD) practitioner/teacher). The children lived in a rural South African setting and had no prior exposure to *Takalani Sesame*. Children in the experimental group received one of four interventions: (a) viewed 16 TV episodes without caregiver mediation; (b) viewed 16 TV episodes with caregiver mediation; (c) listened to 16 radio episodes without caregiver mediation, or (d) listened to 16 radio episodes with caregiver mediation. Mediation by caregivers involved supplementing the learning outcomes targeted during an episode with prescribed activities. Each caregiver was trained and provided with mediation materials. Children in a "control" group were not exposed to *Takalani Sesame*.

The evaluation found the impacts to be significant and made a series of recommendations for altering the program. One of the recommendations regarding language use suggested implementing "a language strategy that focuses on the three primary African languages (isiZulu, seSotho and isiXhosa), and English. This may help to improve children's understanding of, and attentiveness to, the programme."

Read the full summary of findings and recommendations on Soul Beat Africa: [www.comminit.com/en/node/70364/38](http://www.comminit.com/en/node/70364/38) or download the full report.

To submit a short article, event announcement, or others news for the southern African Region, please email Gregory Kamwendo at [kamwendog@mopipi.ub.bw](mailto:kamwendog@mopipi.ub.bw) and Violet Lunga at [sibongile59@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:sibongile59@yahoo.co.uk) by August 1st, 2008. We welcome submissions from the region and around the world, and hope to hear from you soon.

## FOCUS ON...EAST AFRICA

Regional Coordinators: Jacinta Ndambuki, Willy Ngaka and Juliet Tembe



### A new working group on multilingual education in East Africa

Contributed by: Barbara Trudell, SIL International

In February 2008, a working group was formed in Nairobi to focus on the use of African languages in education and learning. This group, comprised of about 20 scholars, government education representatives and NGO representatives in Kenya, has evolved into a research and advocacy network for multilingual education (MLE). Its primary aim is to influence understanding, policy and





practice for MLE in Eastern Africa and Kenya in particular. The strategies adopted by the group are advocacy, knowledge sharing and research, coalition building, and the implementation and tracking of on-the-ground action that promotes the use of African languages in educational settings.

Activities of the group so far have included discussion sessions on language, ethnicity and nationhood and on the contexts of bilingual and multilingual education; efforts to begin collecting resource materials on language and education; and the drafting of a discussion paper on MLE in Africa, commissioned by the UNESCO education office in Nairobi. For more information, email Dr. Margaret Muthwii [mmuthwii@biblesocieties.org](mailto:mmuthwii@biblesocieties.org) or Dr. Barbara Trudell [barbara\\_trudell@sil.org](mailto:barbara_trudell@sil.org).

## THIS ISSUE'S FEATURE ARTICLE

### Reviving a Reading Culture through Community Libraries in Uganda: the Experiences of URLCODA Rural Community Library Project in Arua, Uganda

By Willy Ngaka; Jasindo Afebu; Alex Ndama and Magdalene Yia

**Introduction:** This paper describes an initiative by the Uganda Rural Literacy and Community Development Association (URLCODA) to revive and promote a reading culture among rural people through a community library project located in the Arua district of Uganda. The paper includes an overview of URLCODA, the problem statement, project aim, a description of project activities, beneficiaries, challenges and notes for the way forward.

**URLCODA: Overview** URLCODA is an indigenous NGO operating on the principles of virtual volunteerism with a view into tapping scarce human resources from around the world to respond to the various needs of rural people, including through physical and online services to rural communities. Its main aim is to promote intergenerational literacy among rural communities as a tool for achieving socio-economic transformation. The organization pays specific attention to the high rates of rural illiteracy. Over the past few years URLCODA has mainly focused on:

- intergenerational literacy education in rural areas with a focus on livelihoods
- promoting girl-child education
- supporting orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in selected primary schools
- community involvement in education in primary schools
- community health literacy to enhance access to primary healthcare by rural poor

In undertaking these activities with the help of its virtual volunteers,

URLCODA believes that success in improving poor people's living conditions can only be achieved if people are equipped with literacy and numeracy skills that equip people to engage in processes to improve their living conditions in which interaction with written texts is unavoidable.

### Problem Statement and Aim of the Community Library

Libraries have historically served as custodians of information and knowledge used for various purposes. Unfortunately, libraries tend to be better accessed and utilized by literate people, who constitute the minority of the rural population. The situation is further compounded by the fact that most libraries are located in urban areas not easily accessible to rural communities. This urban bias in terms of library location has not only alienated rural communities around their usage of information and access to knowledge; but also made the realization of their potential as alternative means of improving rural people's livelihoods very difficult. Even in rural areas, most schools lack libraries. Even for those with libraries, communities often remain detached from schools. Furthermore, the last few decades have witnessed a marked deterioration in reading culture among people of all ages. In Uganda, this is seen in the large percentage of pupils who complete primary school without attaining the desired reading and writing skills, even in their mother tongue. The introduction of universal primary education (UPE) which has tremendously stepped up pupil enrolment in schools has worsened an already bad situation, as standards, performance and quality seems to have deteriorated following the introduction of this policy. URLCODA volunteers believe that there is an urgent need to bring together parents, pupils, school managers/administrators, local leaders, government officials



Fig. 1: A URLCODA intergenerational literacy class



Fig. 2: URLCODA team giving out scholastic materials to needy girls, Aroi sub-county.





and community members to work together. This is why URLCODA has adopted an intergenerational approach to literacy learning by involving all community members through a library in which learning to read and write is pegged to activities of interest to communities. This explains the basis upon which the community library was conceived.

The aim of the project therefore is to improve the reading culture among the rural residents across generations. The community library hopes to mobilize people to take part in library activities by tying most of the project activities to using the library; encouraging school-community interactions through various activities that emphasize reading; involving communities and schools in local reading materials production, and making savings and credit part of the library activities so that people are motivated to sustain their interest to use the library as they get involved in small scale businesses through the savings and credit schemes offered. These strategies offer an opportunity to tackle the problem of literacy skills development from different angles instead of leaving it to the teachers and schools alone. Hence, the community library which is situated within the community, but outside the schools, is expected to uniquely and strategically take the communities to the schools and bring the schools to the communities, thereby creating a conducive environment in which we should, in the long run, be able to create literate societies.

**What are the Activities of the Project?** The initiative started in 2006 and now in its third year, offers several activities designed to attract and sustain interest in practicing literacy and numeracy skills. This approach was adopted in response to the general lack of interest in reading and how this cascaded downwards to affect children's school performance. It was found that parents were open to being involved in certain activities which could be tied to the library, such as income-generating projects, a savings and credit scheme, football for women, men, children, youth and the disabled; various games such as playing cards, board games, building alphabet letters with mud, and making local handicrafts to sell. When people come for the activities, they start by using the library and then they are given time to move onto the other activities. The library coordinator helps them in areas where they need assistance. There are two other volunteers who also come to help those who need instructions with the alphabet. Initially the library used to operate on Sundays only, but the days increased to two per week. Recently, the initiative received a grant of US \$1,000 from the Uganda Community Libraries' Association and this is likely to boost the morale of the users and the number of days can be increased. The library will be able to buy more books, furniture and lighting to enable use of the library past 6 pm.

The program has also set up satellite libraries, referred to as "reading corners", in two primary schools. The reading corners' activities are co-ordinated by a teacher from each school on

a voluntary basis to help pupils who struggle with reading. URLCODA provides corner books and organizes monthly visits with some of its intergenerational literacy learners to go to the schools where the pupils will share ideas with people who are not in their school but who use the community library. In this way, participating parents begin to develop an interest in monitoring their children's performance and supporting their literacy development. The hope is to expand this program to allow communities to contribute to improving the learning environment in schools.

The local reading materials production is one of the most interesting aspects of the project. Very elderly members, alongside youth, women and children are compiling all the proverbs in Lugbara into a book, one in English and another in English and Lugbara, to support those learning Lugbara. It is anticipated that book sales may generate some revenue to sustain the group and the library.

Lastly, the savings and credit scheme promotes women's income-generation through small scale business management. The initial



Fig 3: Volunteers with Mingoro Primary school pupils during a visit to the Reading Corner there.

seed fund was granted to the women by the initiator of URLCODA as a reward for the women's group winning a football match, in the modest amount of the equivalent of US\$20. The group decided to contribute more money and to

start borrowing it for business activities at an interest rate of 15% paid when the funds are paid back monthly. The group elected a chair, secretary and treasurer who operate independently of URLCODA.

In summary, the activities integrated with the library help motivate users to read, and promote literacy as a result.

**Challenges:** The greatest challenge to date is the question of sustainability. The organization does not have its own revenue source and relies on volunteer services. Funds are needed to keep the library running, such as: (i) purchasing new books and games; (ii) engaging a full-time library manager; (iii) supporting the savings and credit scheme; and (iv) motivating members in their







efforts to continue with local reading materials production. Any organization or individual interested in supporting this initiative is asked to contact Willy Ngaka: [wngaka@gmail.com](mailto:wngaka@gmail.com) or Phone: (27) 73 299 5632 or (256) 772 411304.

**Willy Ngaka** is a lecturer at Makerere University, the initiator of URLCODA and one of the REN coordinators for East Africa Region. Willy, who is an active member of the International Reading Association and also an invited member of Golden Key International Honour Society, is currently finalizing his PhD programme focusing on Community and Adult Literacy Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa.

**Jasindo Afehua** is the Coordinator for URLCODA's Rural Community Library Project and teaches at Mingoro Primary School in Arua district.

**Alex Ndama** coordinates the Reading Corner of Mingoro Primary School, a component of the URLCODA's Rural Community Library Project. He also teaches at Mingoro Primary School.

**Magdalene Yia** coordinates the Reading Corner of Micu Primary School. She is the Deputy Headmistress of Micu Primary School

*To submit a short article, event announcement, or others news for the East African Region, please email Willy Ngaka [wngaka@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:wngaka@yahoo.co.uk); Jacinta Ndambuki [njacintah@yahoo.com](mailto:njacintah@yahoo.com) or Juliet Tembe [tembehirome02@gmail.com](mailto:tembehirome02@gmail.com) by February 1, 2009. We welcome submissions from the region and around the world, and hope to hear from you soon.*

## RESEARCH CORNER

### Finding Synergies: African Mother Tongues and ICTs Research Group

Following the e-Learning for Africa Conference in Accra in May 2008, several participants have formed an informal research network on African Mother Tongues and ICTs. To date, the group shares information via email, and hopes to keep each other informed of each other's research findings and seeks opportunities for collaboration. To sign up to the list, contact: [lauryn.oates@gmail.com](mailto:lauryn.oates@gmail.com)

### Recommended Resources: African Languages and Voice Technologies

The following blogposts related to how African languages can be used in voice recording and voice recognition systems to enable farmers to ask questions in their own language about crops and crops diseases was compiled by Francois Stepman, Communications and Public Awareness Specialist at the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) in Ghana, and member of the new African Mother Tongues and ICTs Research Group.

- [The African Enterprise Challenge Fund and rural media](#). Video interview with the CEO of AECF
- [African languages technology offers new opportunities](#). Video interview
- [Kenya launches interactive voice service system and agriculture information service](#)
- [Interactive voice service systems for farmers should be rolled out over the whole continent](#)
- [Lifelines India](#)

For more information about Voice Systems for Farmers, email Francois Stepman at [fstepman@fara-africa.org](mailto:fstepman@fara-africa.org) or visit [www.fara-africa.org](http://www.fara-africa.org).

### Abstract: The Two Kabiye Orthographies By Dave Roberts, SIL Togo

"Two orthographies have been developed for Kabiye, a Gur language spoken mainly in Togo. The first aim of this paper is to provide an accurate historical summary concerning their development, teasing out some of the sociolinguistic issues which led to their separate evolution. Following this, I present the results of a comparative analysis, based on a text sample. I demonstrate four major types of difference: level of representation (shallow or deep), dialect choice, diacritical tone marking and word boundaries. For each of these I explain by what criteria each party arrived at its decisions. Locally, I hope that this analysis will contribute to well-informed choices should the Kabiye orthography ever be rectified in the future. But beyond this, the Kabiye experience will be of interest to anyone developing orthographies in other languages. With access to a varied stock of case studies such as this one, we will be in a better position to refine the existing principles of orthography development which can then be applied cross-linguistically."

For: "The two Kabiye orthographies: a sociolinguistic and linguistic comparison". In *Written Language & Literacy*, 11 (1), pages 49-72. A preliminary version of this article was presented at the Pan African Reading for All conference, University of Legon, Ghana, August 6 – 10, 2007.

*Tell us about your research! Send us a short profile (one paragraph) of the research you are undertaking on language or literacy education in Africa by February 1, 2009 for inclusion in our next issue.*

## IN THE FIELD

### Program Profile: Osu Children's Library Fund

The Osu Children's Library Fund has been active since 1991, introducing Ghanaian children to the world of books, when this network of community libraries evolved from story-telling sessions under the backyard tree of founder Kathy Knowles. The Fund supports





the establishment of libraries stocked full of children's books and also includes literacy classes for adult and children who are not able to attend school. The Fund currently supports six community libraries in Ghana, including a library at a school for the blind in Akropong, and one library converted from an old shipping container. The Fund also supplies and supports other community and school libraries in Ghana, as well as supporting initiatives in the Philippines, Zimbabwe and Tanzania. Each community library is run by a dedicated librarian, backed by a team of volunteers in Canada. Check out the variety of ways in which you can support Osu: [www.osuchildrenslibraryfund.ca/](http://www.osuchildrenslibraryfund.ca/)

## WHAT'S NEW IN TECHNOLOGY

### Talking to the Pros: The Skinny on Deep

The Digital Education Enhancement Project (DEEP) was a research and development programme investigating the use of new information and communications technology (ICT) for teaching and learning. It worked in schools serving disadvantaged communities in different parts of the world from 2001-2007. The following is an interview with Tom Power, Co-director, The Digital Education Enhancement Project at the Open University.

**ReN:** Can you introduce our readers to your teacher professional development work at the Open U?

**Tom:** *The Open University had partnered with institutions in Egypt and South Africa prior to DEEP, working together on large scale Open Distance Learning (ODL) programmes for teacher professional development, often in very resource challenged contexts. At the time DEEP began, we were also in the middle of a large scale UK project looking how ICTs could enhance teachers personal professional development, and their classroom practice. DEEP really brought these two things together to explore the potential of new technologies for enhancing teacher professional development.*

**ReN:** In which countries in Africa did the project take place?

**Tom:** *DEEP worked with urban schools in Cairo, Egypt, and rural schools in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. Although the two contexts were very different, in lots of ways, the schools served similarly disadvantaged communities.*

**ReN:** What were the project's research questions?

**Tom:** *The project's overarching research questions focused upon the impact of ICT on learner achievement and motivation and teachers' pedagogic knowledge:*

- How does ICT transform the pedagogic knowledge and practice of teachers and the communities in which they work?

- What is the impact of ICT-enhanced and ICT-transformed strategies on pupil achievement and motivation?
- How can teacher education and training be developed to exploit the potential of ICT to - ensure teacher capacity and quality?

*These questions focused upon improvements in the quality of learning in schools and communities and placed educational content, processes and outcomes at the centre of the investigation.*

**ReN:** In what specific ways were new technologies being used to enhance teacher PD?

**Tom:** *We used a range of mobile technologies, including mobile phones, PDAs, digital cameras and laptops to provide teachers with a set of tools for their personal development and classroom practice. When you list the technologies, it sounds like a lot, but actually we were working with quite small amounts of equipment, compared to typical ICT interventions. For example, we worked with a pair of teachers from each project school; each teacher had a PDA (with a little camera), and they shared a laptop. Teachers also used their own mobile phones.*

*We provided professional development workshops, and a set of professional development activities and classroom resources on the digital devices. The professional development activities gave teachers opportunity to develop new curriculum and pedagogic knowledge and practices, and the devices and classroom resources gave them new tools to use in their teaching.*

*The focus of the workshops and materials was to explore how ICTs could make the teachers practice more efficient, or extend or transform the kind of learning activities that they could engage their students in.*

**ReN:** What were some of the key challenges your team faced in introducing the application of ICTs to teacher development?

**Tom:** *The main challenge is to enable the teachers to see the possibilities, or to understand the affordances, that the new tools offer them as teachers of literacy, or numeracy or science. They need support in terms of professional development opportunities, peers support, and materials to help them explore, over a period of time, how these tools can serve their core curriculum practices.*

**ReN:** If you could pick only one, what would be the most compelling lesson learned from the project?

**Tom:** *To be honest, the one that strikes me most is that, despite often living and working in very difficult conditions, teachers really want to be good teachers. They want to provide the best opportunities for learning that they can for their pupils. The role of teacher education is to help them*





*develop the knowledge and skills to do that, but as well as professional knowledge and skills, teachers also need professional tools. I think what the teachers in DEEP demonstrated was that, even in disadvantaged rural communities, mobile ICTs can be a powerful addition to the teachers professional toolkit.*

*Following on from that, I think the next part of that lesson is that having professional tools and networks, and enhancing professional knowledge and practices, can make a substantial contribution to the professional identity of the teacher - to their sense of dignity, respect and agency. All these things together can radically transform the experiences of teaching and learning.*

**ReN:** Is there a particular initiative which stands out as especially successful in its use of new technologies for teacher education that you can tell us about?

**Tom:** *I think one of the major successes was to say to the teachers and pupils, from the beginning, that they would present their learning to a real audience, to parents, pupils and the wider community. To our surprise and delight, the teachers in South Africa choose to hold this presentation in one of the rural schools. They brought together principles, teachers, pupils and parents from all the project schools, and many members of the local community, together with representatives from the local University, the department of education, and the press. Having this event to work towards really motivated both the teachers and the pupils.*

*Being a rural school, there were no facilities, so presentations were made in a temporary marquee erected in the school field, with a little off-road motorbike [www.eRanger.com](http://www.eRanger.com) providing electricity, PA and data project facilities for the presentations. The participants' sense of pride in what they had achieved, and where they had achieved it, was palpable.*

**ReN:** Where can our readers learn more?

**Tom:** [www.open.ac.uk/deep](http://www.open.ac.uk/deep)

## PUBLICATIONS, RESOURCES, & TOOLS

### African Family Literacy Newsletter to be Launched

*From Kate Parry, Department of English - Hunter College, CUNY*

After the North-South Exchange on Family Literacy meeting held at the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) in Hamburg at the end of 2007, some delegates met to discuss the establishment of AFLAG – African Family Literacy Action Group. To use the momentum, we thought it would be good to launch an international e-newsletter. We hope in this way to broaden the interest in family literacy in all parts of the world and to use the newsletter to keep in touch with those at the Hamburg meeting as well as those who were not able to

attend. We would like to send this newsletter out four times each year. The newsletter will be compiled by Snoeks Desmond (member of the AFLAG) and Maren Elfert (UIL) and supported and disseminated by UIL, but it is not a formal UIL newsletter. To hear of developments so far or to get involved, email Snoeks Desmond at [Snoeks@global.co.za](mailto:Snoeks@global.co.za) and Maren Elfert at [m.elfert@unesco.org](mailto:m.elfert@unesco.org).

### Book Announcement: Literacies, Global and Local Edited by Mastin Prinsloo and Mike Baynham Contributed by: Maureen Kendrick, Language & Literacy Education Dept., University of British Columbia

The articles collected in this volume draw on or relate to a body of work that has become known as the 'New Literacy Studies', which studies literacy as situated semiotic practices that vary across sites in specific ways that are socially shaped. The collection offers a body of empirically and theoretically based papers on literacy ethnography as well as providing engagements with critical issues around literacy and education. The articles offers complementary perspectives on research and theory in literacy studies and include research perspectives from Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, as well as North and South America. The researchers are all concerned to take the work of the New Literacy Studies further by expanding on its conceptual resources and research sites.

[AILA Applied Linguistics Series, 2] 2008. vii, 218 pp. To order, contact the John Benjamins Publishing Co.: [www.benjamins.com](http://www.benjamins.com)

### New Publications in African Linguistics and Education from CASAS

The Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society (CASAS) has just released the following titles:

- A Unified Standard Orthography for Shona-Nyai Language Varieties - CASAS Monograph Series No.83 (R39.90/US\$7/£4): A spelling system for all the Shona-Nyai varieties By: P. Alfandega et al
- Manyorero Matsva Omutauro WechiShona Akavandudzwa MuBotswana, MoZambiki NeZimbabwe (CASAS Monograph Series No.84, R39.90/US\$7/£4): Shona translation of Monograph No.83 By: W. Magwa
- A Unified Standard Orthography for TshiVenda (CASAS Monograph Series No.226, R39.90/US\$7/£4): A spelling system for all the TshiVenda varieties in Southern Africa By: N.M. Musehane et al
- Edikisyonari Lo Ateso (CASAS Book Series No.48, R136.80/US\$18/£10): A dictionary for the Ateso Language spoken in Uganda By: S.P Ongodia
- Bedo Jarafrika (CASAS Book Series No.52, R114.00/US\$15/£8): Dhopadhola translation of "Being Afrikan" By: M. Rukuni, Translation by: P. Oketcho

To submit an order, contact Ms. Michelle Booysen: [michelle@casas.co.za](mailto:michelle@casas.co.za)





## OCTOBER BOOK REVIEW



**Recension de Lezouret, Lise M. et Chatry-Komarek, Marie. (2007).  
*Enseigner le français en contextes multilingues dans les écoles africaines. Paris : L'Harmattan.***

*Cette critique est faite par JeDene Reeder, la SIL Togo-Bénin et la Faculté de l'Éducation, Université Simon Fraser.*

Ce livre, basé sur des recherches au Tchad et au Ghana, est dirigé vers ceux qui sont concernés par l'éducation des enfants africains en contextes multilingues, et surtout les enseignants. Toutefois, ce livre a des choses intéressantes pour les formateurs, les parents, les faiseurs d'opinion et d'autres personnes qui s'intéressent à l'état de l'éducation en Afrique.

*Enseigner le français en contextes multilingues dans les écoles africaines* comprend trois parties ainsi qu'une préface par Danièle Moore. La première partie discute les préalables pour une mise en œuvre de l'éducation bilingue de qualité. La deuxième examine ce qui est nécessaire pour l'enseignement dans la langue officielle du pays. La troisième partie est écrite pour les enseignants et leurs formateurs. Elle comprend les stratégies et les techniques qui aideront aux élèves à acquérir la langue officielle dans ses formes orales et écrites.

Tous les chapitres incluent des exercices d'autoévaluation sur des attitudes et sur des pratiques. Des listes des lectures conseillées, qui se trouvent à la fin de chaque chapitre, sont aussi utiles. Ces listes incluent les œuvres en français ainsi qu'en anglais.

Ce livre touche les aspects sociolinguistique et sociolinguistique d'une éducation multilingue. J'ai trouvé la discussion des politiques linguistiques et éducatives très pertinente à cette question. En plus, la discussion des attitudes vers l'enseignement en langues africaines est bien recherchée. Les étapes à prendre pour effectuer un changement dans ces domaines sont bien conçues, toutefois, la situation locale modifiera leur mise en œuvre précise.

Cet œuvre reconnaît que le français (ou autre langue officielle) est normalement une langue étrangère à l'enfant africain, même si l'enfant est déjà plurilingue à son arrivée à l'école. Ses suggestions s'appuient sur cette réalité. Néanmoins, les auteurs écrivent d'un point de vue européen. Les modèles de l'éducation bilingue expliqués sont des modèles basés largement sur les réalités des pays d'immigration. Certains spécialistes africains en éducation (que j'ai écouté lors du Conférence des Langues et de l'Éducation en Afrique en 2006 à Oslo) contestent la validité de ces modèles pour l'éducation africaine. Il y a aussi un exercice à Chapitre 5 qui vise à démontrer l'importance des langues pour l'identité et à indiquer où se trouvent

les francophones. Je ne vois pas l'utilité de cet exercice pour la majorité des Africains qui sont déjà sensibilisés à ces questions.

Je recommande ce livre à tous ceux qui s'impliquent dans l'éducation des enfants en l'Afrique sub-saharienne. C'est une bonne révision pour ceux qui connaissent déjà les questions et les défis de l'éducation de qualité en Afrique, et une bonne introduction pour ceux qui ne commencent qu'à travailler dans ce domaine. Les enseignants et leurs formateurs profiteront des suggestions très pratiques pour l'enseignement d'une L2.

### **English synopsis:**

This book is based on research undertaken in Ghana and Chad. It is aimed primarily at educators, but any who are interested in quality African education that includes more than one language will find pertinent and interesting information. In its three sections, the authors discuss both sociolinguistic and pedagogical aspects of the multilingual aspect of education in Africa. However, while the information is well researched and documented, it is written from a Northern viewpoint, which may hinder its acceptance in some quarters.

Useful elements of the book include self-evaluation of attitudes and practices, and a bibliography (with references to both French and English works) at the end of each chapter. For teachers, the third section is filled with techniques and suggestions for teaching a second language, whether it is an official language or French as an additional language (as in Ghana).

*If you have recently had a book review published and would like to include a link to it in an upcoming issue of the Africa ReN newsletter, please contact the Editor.*

