



## Applied Linguistics and Literacy In Africa and the Diaspora

## EDITOR'S COMMENT

Welcome to the inaugural newsletter of the Research Network for Applied Linguistics and Literacy in Africa and the Diaspora! We are very pleased to share with you a diverse array of contributions from members in Africa and the diaspora. We hope this first issue is the initiation of a vibrant tradition of information-sharing and communication within our research community. For now, only the article dealing with French-speaking areas is in French. However, we hope to have a French translation of the newsletter available for our Francophone readers by December 2007, which will be accessible on the ReN website. We have started off with overviews of the state of literacy and language education research in three regions of Africa, contributed by the newsletter's Regional Coordinators. For future, we would very much appreciate your suggestions for North Africa Coordinators. We have also profiled several projects, resources, and opportunities of interest that we have relied on in our research practice, and we hope that you will find something new and useful for your own research interests in this first issue.

We encourage submissions from members for the next newsletter, which will be available in April, 2008. Our plan is to produce two newsletters a year, one in October and one in April: please submit region specific contributions to the relevant Regional Coordinator (see Editorial Board above), and news, announcements, resources, events and anything else to the Editor by **February 1, 2008**. In between newsletters, please check our website regularly for news from the ReN, event announcements and other resources we hope

can contribute to your own research. We look forward to hearing from you, and hope you enjoy this first issue. Your feedback and comments are very welcome.

Yours,

Lauryn Oates



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

## EDITORIAL BOARD

### EDITOR AND WEBMASTER:

Lauryn Oates, (University of British Columbia)  
[lauryn.oates@gmail.com](mailto:lauryn.oates@gmail.com)

### EAST AFRICA COORDINATORS:

Jacinta Ndambuki, (University of the  
Witwatersrand)  
[njacintah@yahoo.com](mailto:njacintah@yahoo.com)

Juliet Tembe, (Islamic University in Uganda/  
University of British Columbia)  
[juliet\\_tembe@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:juliet_tembe@yahoo.co.uk)

### WEST AFRICA COORDINATORS:

Dipo Salami, (Obafemi Awolowo University)  
[diposalami@yahoo.com](mailto:diposalami@yahoo.com)

JeDene Reeder (SIL International/Simon Fraser  
University)  
[jedene\\_reeder@sil.org](mailto:jedene_reeder@sil.org)

### SOUTHERN AFRICA COORDINATORS:

Gregory Kamwendo, (University of Botswana)  
[kamwendog@mopipi.ub.bw](mailto:kamwendog@mopipi.ub.bw)

Violet Lunga, (University of Botswana)  
[sibongile59@yaoo.co.uk](mailto:sibongile59@yaoo.co.uk)

### ADVISOR:

Bonny Norton (University of British Columbia)  
[bonny.norton@ubc.ca](mailto:bonny.norton@ubc.ca)



## NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM REN MEMBERS

### History in the Making: Our Africa Research Network is Launched June 2007 in Johannesburg



L to R: Sinfree Makoni, Pippa Stein & Bonny Norton

Our ReN is pleased to announce news of the recent launch of the newly constituted AILA (*Association Internationale de Linguistique Applique*) Research Network (ReN) focused on Africa. The well-attended launch took place on June 30th at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), Johannesburg, South Africa, bringing together a diverse group of scholars working in fields such as literacy, discourse analysis, language and education, language policy, sociolinguistics and health literacy across a range of languages and regions of Africa. Co-convenors of the ReN are Pippa Stein (Wits University), Sinfree Makoni (Penn State University), and Bonny Norton (University of British Columbia). Many thanks to Carolyn McKinney (Wits University) and Ben Afful (University of Cape Coast, Ghana) for organizing the launch.

The primary objective of this AILA ReN is to promote literacy and applied linguistics research among scholars with an interest in Africa and the African diaspora. It also aims



L to R: Violet Lungu, Gregory Kamwendo, Jacinta Ndambuki, George Makubalo, Ban Afful, Sam Andema



Launch co-organizer Carolyn McKinney (Wits University)



Suresh Canagarajah

to raise the profile of this research in both local and international communities. The day was exciting and intellectually invigorating and included keynote addresses by Professors Sinfree Makoni and Suresh Canagarajah and papers from diverse countries internationally. These gave a sense of current research on language and literacy and suggested future directions for research

in their context. Participants also discussed how to expand the network and its activities, and identified possible research collaborations. The new ReN has a website ([www.renafrica.org](http://www.renafrica.org)) where you can read more about the launch, planned ReN activities, and find resources of interest to scholars of language and literacy education in Africa and the diaspora.



Mastin Prinsloo and Sam Andema



Participants in a session at the launch





### **Call for Submissions: Journal of Reading and Writing**

A new journal, *Reading and Writing*, is being published by the Reading Association of South Africa (RASA), an affiliate of the International Reading Association (IRA). The journal publishes research, discussion, reports, reviews and dialogue concerning literacy and language in multiple environments including early childhood, schooling, tertiary education, workplaces, homes and other social settings. The focus of work published in the journal is on southern Africa, Africa and elsewhere, with the emphasis on southern African and African studies. All articles are submitted for anonymous review by at least two referees before being accepted for publication. Contact the Editor, and ReN member, Mastin Prinsloo of the University of Cape Town for more information: [Mastin.Prinsloo@uct.ac.za](mailto:Mastin.Prinsloo@uct.ac.za)

### **UPCOMING CONFERENCES**

#### **APNILAC 12<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2007: Language, Culture and Power**

When: November 25-29, 2007

Where: Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria

Summary: The conference, as its central theme suggests, explores the critical issues that arise when the concepts of language, culture and power have an interplay of roles.

Contact Information: Prof. J.I. Okonkwo and Anopue, Calistus Cussons

E-mail: [apnilac4conference@yahoo.com](mailto:apnilac4conference@yahoo.com)

Organizers: Association for Promoting Nigerian Languages and Culture (APNILAC)

Deadline for abstracts/proposals: October 31st, 2007

### **3rd International Conference on Language Education**

When: December 4-6, 2007

Where: Manila, Philippines

Summary: This conference will highlight issues concerning the seven spheres of language teaching - matter, methodology, materials, measurement, management, mentors, and mentees.

[www.palt-elt.org](http://www.palt-elt.org)

Contact Information: Prof. Edizon Angeles Fermin  
Organizers: Philippine Association for Language Teaching, Inc.

### **Culture, English Language Teaching and Literature**

When: January 16-17, 2008

Where: Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia

Summary: Culture, Language, and Literature in Global Context: Perspective and Challenges

[www.unika.ac.id/letters/index.html](http://www.unika.ac.id/letters/index.html)

Organizers: Soegijapranata Catholic University

### **FOCUS ON...EAST AFRICA**

*Regional Coordinators: Jacinta Ndambuki and Juliet Tembe*

#### **Research on Literacy and Applied Linguistics in East Africa**

By Jacinta Ndambuki,  
Applied English Language Studies, University of the Witwatersrand



#### **Introduction**

This article examines issues on literacy in the east African region. Mother tongue education emerges as







one of key ways of enhancing literacy rates in the region. However one of the major challenges that remains is how to bridge the gap between literacy theory and practice. Various research organizations have come up with multiple ways of dealing with literacy related issues notably from gender and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) perspectives. While the debate on literacy theory vs. practice could serve as a possible starting point, you are welcome to make your contributions on any issue of interest on literacy and Applied Linguistics in East Africa.

### **An Overview**

An overview of the East African region indicates a wealth of research activity on literacy. A remarkable seminar was organized by the Center for Literacy and Language Development and SIL (Summer Institute of Linguistics) Africa Area staff. Literacy specialists in the research seminar on *Language and Education in East Africa* held in Nairobi in February 2006 agree on the need for a concerted effort on the role of the mother tongue in the enhancement of literacy rates among not only children but also adults. This is conceived within the wider framework of the African Union Language policy that respects all African languages and ensures their equality of status by undertaking to develop African minority languages in parliament and the courts as legislative instruments in serving the public. Some of the research bodies involved in literacy work in the region include SIL International, a faith-based organization that studies, documents, and assists in developing the world's lesser-known languages; Bible Translation and Literacy (BTL) as well as Book Aid International in collaboration with the East African Book Development Association who jointly run the reading tent project with the aim of promoting literacy to school pupils and the wider community in East Africa.

In a conversation on the challenges of literacy, Prof. Okoth Okombo, of the University of Nairobi, raised concern over an apparent gap between literacy theory and practice in the region. Research institutions such as the Ford Foundation and the Inter-University Council of Eastern Africa (IUCEA) have moved towards partnerships with the local communities to address issues affecting them in their daily lives. The regional and sub-regional approach of New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) has seen the growth and development of regional bodies such as the East African Community (EAC). On the whole, there appears to be a shift towards the documentation of local knowledge and appeal to the ordinary to explain reality.

### **Information and Communication Technology (ICT)**

ICT continues to preoccupy research activity in the region. The African Virtual University (AVU), is a World Bank Distance Education project in Sub-Saharan Africa involving the East Africa countries, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania; Ghana to the West and Zimbabwe in the South. The mission of this project is to use modern technology to increase access to educational resources throughout Africa with the hope that the use of information technology will enable higher education institutions to supplement their existing programmes with resources from a global 'Virtual University'. The involvement of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in ICT projects in the region is also remarkable.

### **Gender**

Gender is also a core part of current research in the East Africa region as seen in the activity of the Departments of Gender and Women's Studies (Makerere University); the Institute of Women and Gender Development Studies (Egerton University,





Kenya); Isis-Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange (ISIS-WICCE) and other institutions in the region. Representation of women in politics appears to be the most recurrent theme in most of the work to date on women and politics, with a significant shift from representation in terms of numbers to the more minutiae of the ways in which language features in all of this.

### Popular Culture

Popular culture is also increasingly becoming an avenue for understanding language identity and politics in the region with a special focus on short text message (SMS) and sheng (a mixture of Swahili and other Kenyan languages) as well as a proliferation of e-journals.

### Publications

Some of the most stimulating reads are; *'East Africa: In search of National and Regional Renewal'* (Ed. Yieke, F.) which outlines the challenges facing the East African peoples as well as the Africa continent by bringing together historical and contemporary experiences in relation to East Africa discourses, practices and historiographies. Sylvia Tamale stands out as one of the most prominent scholars in the region with her book; *'When Hens begin to Crow: Gender and Parliamentary Politics in Uganda'*. Various journal publications are also available, notably: the Journal of Eastern African Studies (British Institute of Eastern Africa); Egerton Journal; Nairobi Journal of Literature; the Eastern Africa Journal of Humanities and Sciences; Kenya DAAD Scholars (KDSA) African Journal of Science and Development; *Jahazi*: East African Journal on Culture, Arts and Performance, among others. Upcoming conferences include the Kenya DAAD Scholars' (KDSA) Annual Conference on *'The Role of Politics in the Development of Education, Science and*

*Technology* to be held at Egerton University, October 18-19, 2007.

### Conclusion

This article has briefly explored research activity on literacy and education in the East African region. It underscores the importance of mother tongue education in literacy research pointing out an apparent mismatch between literacy theory and practice. Your contributions will therefore undoubtedly provide potential ways of dealing with this and other related aspects of literacy.

*To submit a short article, event announcement, or other news for the East African Region, please contact Jacinta Ndambuki ([njacintah@yahoo.com](mailto:njacintah@yahoo.com)) and Juliet Tembe ([juliet\\_tembe@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:juliet_tembe@yahoo.co.uk)) by February 1st, 2008. We welcome submissions from the region and around the world, and hope to hear from you soon.*

### FOCUS ON...WEST AFRICA

*Regional Coordinators: Dipo Salami and JeDene Reeder*

*Français*

### Un aperçu des recherches faites en l'Afrique francophone

*JeDene Reeder, étudiante doctorale à l'Université "Simon Fraser" et membre de la SIL*

Je commence par une bienvenue chaleureuse aux lecteurs francophones et une invitation à contribuer vos expériences à cette colonne. Je sais bien que je ne connais pas toutes les recherches qui sont en train ni toutes les réunions pertinentes dans l'Afrique francophone. Je compte sur vous nos chers lecteurs de me mettre au jour.





Nous savons que la recherche en linguistique appliquée contribue au développement de l'Afrique. Deux domaines de recherche importants sont l'usage des langues africaines en éducation, soit formelle, soit informelle ; et l'orthographe des langues africaines.

### **L'usage des langues africaines en éducation**

En août au Bénin, la Direction du Développement et de la Promotion des Langues Nationales sous le Ministère de l'Éducation Primaire, l'Alphabétisation et les Langues Nationales a organisé une réunion des linguistes, enseignants, ONGs et fonctionnaires. Ils ont discuté comment le Bénin peut faire entrer l'utilisation des langues nationales aux écoles. Les séances plénières ont abordé les questions de l'importance des langues maternelles dans le développement de l'enfant et de la problématique du choix des langues à introduire et leur potentiel linguistique et didactique. Les Béninois et leurs invités ont aussi profité d'une présentation des expériences des autres pays africains qui ont inséré l'enseignement en langues nationales dans les systèmes éducatifs formels. Plusieurs groupes de travail ont examiné des questions soulevées.

Au Guinée-Conakry, un projet de recherche vient de commencer qui vise à comparer cinq sortes différentes des écoles, parmi eux plusieurs qui offrent des programmes bilingues. Dr YERENDE Eva de l'Université de Texas à Arlington étudiera les usages de l'alphabétisation liés à chaque langue utilisée dans chaque type d'école ; soit le français, soit l'arabe, soit le maninkakan, soit les autres langues guinéennes. Une facette intéressante de la littératie et la bi-littératie dans ces langues est la présence de plusieurs systèmes d'écriture. Parmi eux se trouve l'alphabet n'ko, un alphabet crée par un Guinéen, KANTÉ Souleymane, pour les langues africaines.

### **L'orthographe des langues africaines**

L'usage des langues africaines aux écoles est difficile si les langues ne restent qu'orales. Toutefois, l'adaptation des systèmes d'écriture qui ont été créés pour les langues européennes soulève souvent certaines difficultés car les structures linguistiques et phonologiques des langues des familles linguistiques africaines sont bien différentes que l'indo-européen. Le développement des orthographe est donc un champ de recherche important.

Il y a deux volets principaux de la recherche concernant l'orthographe. D'abord, il est essentiel de vérifier et/ou améliorer la lisibilité des langues africaines, surtout ceux qui sont les langues à ton. La SIL, en collaboration avec des comités de langues locales, est en train de faire de telles recherches pour plusieurs langues, par exemple l'aja (Togo et Bénin) et le kabiyè (Togo). Ensuite, des chercheurs essaient d'assurer l'utilisation de chaque orthographe par le plus gros nombre possible de locuteurs d'une langue ou des langues apparentées. Le travail aux langues gbé par le Dr CAPO au Laboratoire international gbé est un exemple.

### **Conclusion**

Les recherches à l'utilisation des langues africaines aux systèmes éducatifs et à la matière de l'orthographe des langues africaines ne sont que deux exemples du travail que la linguistique appliquée peut faire afin de soutenir le développement économique et social de l'Afrique. Nous examinerons ensemble les autres possibilités aux futures éditions de ce bulletin selon vos contributions.

*Si vous souhaitez faire paraître un bref article, l'annonce d'une manifestation ou d'autres nouvelles de la région Ouest, veuillez les adresser à Dipo Salami ([diposalami@yahoo.com](mailto:diposalami@yahoo.com)) et JeDene Reeder ([jedene\\_reeder@sil.org](mailto:jedene_reeder@sil.org)), pour le dernier délai pour une insertion*





*dans le prochain numéro de notre bulletin : le 1er février, 2008. Nous attendons avec intérêt vos contributions et nouvelles, qu'elles soient de la région ou du vaste monde. Ecrivez-nous!*

*English:*

## **A Glance at Research Happening in French-speaking Africa**

*by JeDene Reeder, doctoral student at Simon Fraser University and member of SIL*

I would like to begin by giving a warm welcome to French-speaking readers and an invitation to submit your contributions to this column. I know I am not aware of all the current research nor pertinent meetings in French-speaking Africa. I am counting on you, our dear readers, to get and keep me up-to-date.

We know that research in applied linguistics contributes to the development of Africa. Two important areas of research are the use of African languages in formal and informal educational settings, and the orthography of African languages.

### **The Use of African Languages in education**

In Benin, the Office of the Development and Promotion of National Languages under the Ministry of Primary Education, Literacy and National Languages organized a meeting of linguists, teachers, NGOs and civil servants this August. Together they discussed how Benin could implement the use of national languages in schools. Presentations in the general sessions introduced the topics of the importance of mother tongues in childhood development and of how to go about choosing which languages are best suited, linguistically and pedagogically, to be used in Beninese schools. The Beninese and their guests also benefited from a presentation on the experiences that other African countries have had with the introduction of

indigenous languages into their education systems. Several working groups then spent time examining the issues raised.

In Guinea-Conakry, a research project has just begun which seeks to compare five different types of schools. Several of these offer bilingual education programmes. Dr. Eva Yerende of the University of Texas at Arlington will study the uses of literacy as they relate to each of the languages used in these schools, which include French, Arabic, Maninkakan, and other Guinean languages. One interesting aspect of literacy and bi-literacy in these languages is the presence of several different scripts. Among these is the N'ko alphabet, which was created by a Guinean, Souleymane Kanté, especially for African languages.

### **The Orthography of African Languages**

The use of African languages in the schools is problematic if the languages remain strictly oral. Nevertheless, the adaptation of writing systems developed for European languages creates certain difficulties since the linguistic and phonologic structures of the African linguistic families are so different from Indo-European. Orthography development thus is a significant field of research.

There are two principal strands of orthography research. First is the testing and/or improvement of the readability of African languages, especially those which are tonal languages. SIL is currently carrying out this work in conjunction with language committees of several languages, such as Aja (Togo and Benin) and Kabiye (Togo). Next, researchers are trying to ensure that each orthography can be used by the largest possible number of speakers of a language or language continuum. The work on Gbe languages by Dr. CAPO of the International Gbe Laboratory is one example of such work.







## Conclusion

Research on the use of African languages in educational systems and on the issues of how to write African languages are only two examples of the work that applied linguistics can do to support the economic and social development of Africa. Together we will examine the other possibilities which you suggest in future editions of this newsletter.

*Informez-nous de votre recherche ! Envoyez-nous deux paragraphes de votre recherche sur l'éducation langagière ou sur l'alphabétisation en Afrique, avant le 1<sup>re</sup> février, 2008, pour l'inclusion au prochain numéro. Contactez les éditeurs : Dipo Salami ([diposalami@yahoo.com](mailto:diposalami@yahoo.com)) et JeDene Reeder ([jedene\\_reeder@sil.org](mailto:jedene_reeder@sil.org)) pour l'Afrique francophone (les régions de l'ouest et centrale).*

*To submit a short article, event announcement, or other news for the West African Region, please contact Dipo Salami ([diposalami@yahoo.com](mailto:diposalami@yahoo.com)) and JeDene Reeder ([jedene\\_reeder@sil.org](mailto:jedene_reeder@sil.org)) for Francophone West and Central Africa by February 1st, 2008. We welcome submissions from the region and around the world, and hope to hear from you soon.*

## FOCUS ON...SOUTHERN AFRICA

*Regional Coordinators: Gregory Kamwendo and Violet Lunga*

### Establishing a Network on Projects Directed at Promoting African Languages in South(ern) Africa

*By Vic Webb, University of Pretoria*

During recent informal chats between Rosemarie Wildsmith-Cromarty (UKZN) and myself (Vic Webb), the need for co-operation between South and southern African linguists involved in research and development projects directed at



promoting was discussed. We agreed that the overarching aim of all these projects would be served if the scholars involved in these projects somehow co-operated with one another. In this way, we could avoid duplicating work, we could learn from each other (also from each other's mistakes) and we could even discuss the possibilities of collaborating. As a consequence, Rosemary organized a special session during the LSSA/SAALA/ SALT conference which took place at Potchefstroom at the beginning of July during which participants could provide information on their projects to one another, present findings and, also, discuss the way forward.

The following papers were given:

The Translatability of Academic Discourse Across Languages (Rosemary); Terminology vs. Concept Development through Discourse (Esther Ramani); The Sociolinguistic Development of African Languages at UP (Vic Webb); Multilingualism and Development of African Languages (Thembinkosi Mabila); isiZulu-English Dual-Medium Instruction Pilot Course Study at Mangosuthu Technikon (Sandiso Ncobo). Several other papers outside of Rosemary's panel also dealt with related issues.

### During discussions in the panel, the following possibilities were considered:

- (a) That a network be established of interested researchers;
- (b) That information be distributed to participants in the network on their projects, dealing with issues such as:
  - (i) the aims of the research projects
  - (ii) methods used
  - (iii) progress
  - (iv) findings and products;
- (c) That the construction and maintenance of a webpage for the projects be considered;
- (d) That funding be sought from PanSALB.







**You are hereby invited to submit comments on this proposal and to join the proposed network. To get involved, or learn more, please contact those persons currently willing to undertake this initiative:**

Rosemary Wildsmith Cromarty: [wildsmithR@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:wildsmithR@ukzn.ac.za)

Vic Webb: [vic.webb@up.ac.za](mailto:vic.webb@up.ac.za)

Esther Ramani: [ramanie@ul.ac.za](mailto:ramanie@ul.ac.za)

Michael Joseph: [bilingualmj@hotmail.com](mailto:bilingualmj@hotmail.com)

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

*Informez-nous de votre recherche ! Envoyez-nous deux paragraphes de votre recherche sur l'éducation langagière ou sur l'alphabétisation en Afrique, avant le 1<sup>re</sup> février, 2008, pour l'inclusion au prochain numéro. Contactez les éditeurs : Gregory Kamwendo ([kamwendog@mopipi.ub.bw](mailto:kamwendog@mopipi.ub.bw)) et Violet Lunga ([sibongile59@yaHoo.co.uk](mailto:sibongile59@yaHoo.co.uk))*

## RESEARCH CORNER

### New in West Africa: Women Writing Africa

The West Africa Research Centre, based in Dakar, will publish a collection of written and oral narratives organized into six regional anthologies for each of the North, East, Southern, Central, West, and Sahel regions; as well as a series of individual books by and about African women. This 'cultural reconstruction project' is aiming to restore African women's voices to the public sphere by documenting women's history of self-conscious literary expression. The project approaches writing broadly, capturing songs, praise poems, significant oral texts, fiction, short stories, drama, letters, and journals. [www.warc-croa.org/wwa.htm](http://www.warc-croa.org/wwa.htm)

### A Stock-taking Research on Mother Tongue and Bilingual Education

The Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) and UNESCO's Institute for Education (UIE) undertook a study last year of mother tongue and bilingual education entitled 'Optimizing Learning and Education in Africa – the Language Factor: A Stock-taking Research on Mother Tongue and Bilingual Education in Sub-Saharan Africa', by Hassana Alidou et al (2006). The work's main finding was that current systems cannot deliver success, and the authors list recommendations for what needs to change, including calling for the design of new programmes and materials which would eliminate the gap between early literacy and academic literacy; L1 education to be extended through Grade 6; and for all teachers to be trained in literacy and language development. The full report can be downloaded from:

[www.adeanet.org/biennial-2006/doc/document/B3\\_1\\_MTBLE\\_en.pdf](http://www.adeanet.org/biennial-2006/doc/document/B3_1_MTBLE_en.pdf)

### Blogging as Research: Sociolingo Africa

Sociolingo Africa is perhaps one of the most concentrated sites in cyberspace on topics related to African languages, bringing together a seemingly overwhelming collection of news articles, photos, funding opportunities, links, research articles and more on topics ranging from literacy, language policy, language education, mother tongue instruction, indigenous rights, threatened languages, and more. The site is created by a dedicated blogger based in Mali and is constantly updated. Find articles in one of the hundreds of theme-based or country-based categories. Sit down with a coffee mug, as once you visit this site, you may find yourself there for a while! [www.sociolingo.wordpress.com/](http://www.sociolingo.wordpress.com/)





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, 2008 for inclusion in our next issue. Contact the Editor: [Lauryn.oates@gmail.com](mailto:Lauryn.oates@gmail.com)

## IN THE FIELD

### Introducing: The African Language Teachers Association

The African Language Teachers Association (ALTA), hosted by Ohio University, USA, is an organization dedicated to the teaching and learning of African languages. Its membership is open to individuals and organizations that share this interest. ALTA manages an un-moderated listserv. To learn how to join, visit: [www.ohiou.edu/alta/](http://www.ohiou.edu/alta/)

### Teaching Resource for Educators in Africa

Check out UNESCO's *Handbook for Literacy and Non-Formal Education Facilitators in Africa*. The handbook starts at the earliest stage of introducing a literacy program, in the first module looking at community sensitization and how to enter a community. Other modules focus on identifying learner needs, running a community-based learning centre, facilitating adult learning, assessing learning achievement, and capacity-building for sustainability. The handbook is available free of charge from UNESCO and can be freely used and distributed, provided UNESCO is acknowledged as the source. UNESCO has also produced a similar handbook for formal education.

The handbook can be accessed at: [www.unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001446/144656e.pdf](http://www.unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001446/144656e.pdf)

## WHAT'S NEW IN TECHNOLOGY

### Recognizing and Rewarding ICTs for Development: The Stockholm Challenge

The Stockholm Challenge is an international competition which recognizes significant and innovative contributions to development which utilize information and communication technologies (ICTs). The 2008 programme features six category awards: a global village, culture, economic development, education, environment, health, and public administration. Finalists are invited to attend a conference in Stockholm held by Challenge organizers, and to attend the prize ceremony in the Stockholm City Hall from May 18 - 22, 2008. The conference for finalists includes a programme of workshops, conference, study visits and social gatherings which bring together inspiring ICT entrepreneurs, researchers and students from around the world to share their experience and knowledge with each other. Category winners receive a cash prize, but all finalists have an invaluable opportunity for networking, learning and publicizing their project at the Challenge. Applicants can submit their projects to the jury on-line from January 1st to December 31, 2007 at: [www.stockholmchallenge.se/](http://www.stockholmchallenge.se/)

Two of the five winners in 2006 were African projects: the Kilinux software localization project in Tanzania (Education category) and the African Conservation Network, a pan-African initiative (Environment category).

### African ICT Project Profile: The Kilinux Software Localization Project

A Stockholm Challenge winner in 2006, Kilinux is a software localization project, localizing open source software (the Linux Operating System) into the Kiswahili language, along with other office applications and making Kiswahili Linux a tool for ICT research. The project was launched with the creation of a Kiswahili information technology glossary, provided





by computer experts, then submitted to linguistic experts for translation. Computer experts then built the final product after all strings were translated. Today, OpenOffice.org 1.1.3, Mozilla Firefox 1.0.3, Jambo OpenOffice 1.1.3, Jambo Mozilla Firefox 1.0.3. Jambo OpenOffice 1.1.3 are available in Kiswahili. The project also works to assist Kiswahili Linux users to develop their own programs.

According to the project's website, the founders see Kilinux as building upon Tanzania's commitment to being a "pathfinder country" in implementing the Genoa Plan of Action of the G8 Digital Opportunity Task Force. Kilinux is a fascinating and important contribution to strengthening local languages in Africa, and is significant in that its methods are replicable for localizing software in other African indigenous languages, particularly Bantu languages. Learn more: [www.kilinux.udsm.ac.tz](http://www.kilinux.udsm.ac.tz)

### **Innovation in the use of ICTs in Africa: IDRC Projects in Africa**

Canada's International Development Research Centre has five projects supporting innovation in the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in Africa. These projects include:

- Connectivity Africa, a programme resulting from the 2002 G8 Annual Summit;
- Communities and the Information Society in Africa Program, an initiative which increases the capacity of sub-Saharan communities to apply ICTs to their own social and economic development; and
- The Acacia Initiative.

Of particular interest to language education and literacy researchers, the Acacia Initiative is designed as an integrated program of research and development, and demonstration projects to address issues of

applications, technology, infrastructure, policy, and governance. Now more than a decade old, the project aims to demonstrate how ICTs can enable communities to solve their development problems in ways that build firmly on local goals, cultures, strengths, and processes; and to build a body of knowledge capable of identifying the policies, technologies, approaches, and methodologies instrumental in promoting the affordable and effective use of ICTs by marginalized communities, such as women. Learn more about Acacia's research results and outputs to date, including results in education: [network.idrc.ca/en/ev-10568-201-1-DO\\_TOPIC.html](http://network.idrc.ca/en/ev-10568-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html)

### **PUBLICATIONS, RESOURCES AND TOOLS**

Featured website: The Africa On-Line Digital Library  
The Africa On-Line Digital Library's goal is to adopt the emerging best practices of the American digital library community and apply them in an African context. From AODL's homepage: *The AODL benefits a wide variety of scholars, students, and institutions by producing multilingual, multimedia materials for both scholarly research and public viewing audiences. AODL serves scholars and students conducting research and teaching about West and South Africa as well as teachers and students of African languages in both the United States and Africa. It also provides a valuable model for creating and distributing a diverse array of materials in a region with very limited electronic connectivity.*  
[www.aodl.org](http://www.aodl.org)

### **Forthcoming Book: The Handbook of Educational Linguistics**

The Handbook of Educational Linguistics, in 44 chapters from a diversity of contributors, aims to give an overview revealing the complexity of







this growing field while remaining accessible for students, researchers, language educators, curriculum developers, and educational policy makers. The volume covers diverse theoretical foundations, core themes, major findings, and practical applications of educational linguistics and highlights the multidisciplinary reach of educational linguistics. Coming soon from Blackwell Publishing. For more information, please visit [www.blackwellpublishing.com/book.asp?ref=9781405154109](http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/book.asp?ref=9781405154109)

### **Collection on Mother Tongue Instruction in Africa: id 21 insights education**

The September 2006 issue (#5) of "id 21 insights education", an international development research newsletter produced by the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex, was devoted to the topic "Mother tongue first: Children's right to learn in their own languages." The full newsletter issues can be downloaded here: [www.id21.org/insights/insights-ed05/insightsEdn5.pdf](http://www.id21.org/insights/insights-ed05/insightsEdn5.pdf)

## **BOOK REVIEWS**

*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.*

### **New Language Bearings in Africa: A Fresh Quest.**

J. M. Muthwii and A. N. Kioko (Eds.), Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters, 2004, 156 pp., ISBN 1-85359-727-9. (hdb) US\$44.95

Reviewed by Juliet H. Tembe, *Department of Language and Literacy Education, University of British Columbia*

Originally published in: *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education*, 1(4), 1–5 Copyright © 2007, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

**Excerpt from Tembe's review:** Muthwii and Kioko's (2004) *New Language Bearings in Africa* is a collection

of essays by scholars from across Africa, offering insightful and engaging discussions of key research and issues concerning language education in Africa. The recurrence of key issues helps to emphasize the importance of certain shared challenges that cut across the continent. In this review, I give an overview of each of the chapters and then offer my view on the future direction of the teaching of indigenous languages and English in Africa.

What this essay offers is clear evidence of the potential role of mother tongue use in complementing second language acquisition, alongside their intrinsic value in furthering students' sense of identity and belonging. What educationists, policy-makers, and politicians need to focus on is how to integrate within education the languages of wider communication, such as English, with the African indigenous languages to curb low levels of literacy.

Read the full review at: [www.leaonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15595690701564004](http://www.leaonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15595690701564004)

### **Women, Literacy and Development: Alternative Perspectives**

Anna Robinson-Pant (Ed.), 2004 London and New York, Routledge £60.00, 259 pp. ISBN 0-415-3239-1

Reviewed by Bonny Norton, University of British Columbia, Canada.

Originally published in: Norton, B. (2005). Review of A. Robinson-Pant (Ed.), (2004), "Women, literacy, and development: Alternative perspectives." *Compare: Journal of Comparative Education*, 35(3), 347-349.

**Excerpt from Norton's review:** On October 26th, 2004, Uganda's leading newspaper, The New Vision published a brief article on women's participation in local government. The article indicates that most women local counsellors in the country have difficulty using English, which in turn hinders their ability to communicate and document records; further, the





'gender unfriendly' organizational culture of councils, as well as socio-economic constraints like lack of transport, further compromise women's ability to participate in political decision-making. The issues raised in this article provide a window on the central themes of Anna Robinson-Pant's timely edited volume *Women, Literacy and Development: Alternative Perspectives*. In this book, Robinson-Pant provides a forum for scholars in different regions of the world to document a relationship that has long been of central concern to educators, policy-makers and development workers, all of whom would find the insights from this book invaluable.

A sobering finding for many authors is that women in development contexts do not suffer primarily from a lack of reading and writing skills, but from ongoing struggles with poverty and patriarchy. *Women, Literacy and Development* speaks persuasively on these issues to researchers, policy-makers and practitioners.

To receive a copy of the full book review, please visit the Publications page of [www.lerc.educ.ubc.ca/fac/norton/](http://www.lerc.educ.ubc.ca/fac/norton/)

