

AILA Africa ReN Newsletter

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Applied Linguistics and Literacy in Africa and the Diaspora



An AILA Research Network
www.aila.info

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lauryn.oates@gmail.com

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njacintah@yahoo.com

Juliet Tembe, (Islamic University in Uganda/ University of British Columbia)
juliet_tembe@yahoo.co.uk

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wngaka@yahoo.co.uk

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kamwendog@mopipi.ub.bw

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sibongile59@yahoo.co.uk

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Bonny Norton (University of British Columbia)
bonny.norton@ubc.ca

EDITOR'S COMMENT

Dear ReN members,

Welcome to another edition of the newsletter of the Research Network for Applied Linguistics and Literacy in Africa and the Diaspora. Thanks to your submissions and the steady buzz of activity in the fields of language and literacy in African communities, we have an interesting and eclectic issue to present you with—we hope you'll enjoy it.

We're particularly pleased to announce that our website is now available in Swahili, thanks to the volunteer contribution of Paul Kijuu, from the University of Dar es Salaam and SIL Tanzania and Uganda. You can also expect to soon see this newsletter available in both French and Swahili. As always, we welcome any volunteer contributions to translating the website or newsletter into languages spoken in Africa.

A recent highlight for many ReN members was the Pan-African Reading for All Conference, held in August in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Many of us had the opportunity there to network, hear of each other's work and get brushed up on the latest and greatest in efforts to promote reading in Africa. Perhaps you are receiving this newsletter after having signed up after picking up a flyer during the conference.

In the next issue, we will include a new section for announcements from members regarding their achievements, such as degrees awarded, research grants, awards and recognition. Tell us about the successes of a colleague, a student or yourself. Watch for a reminder in March.

Our thanks for all of the information you have generously shared to make this issue, and as always, remember to check the website in between newsletters for other notices and opportunities. This is your forum, after all, and we hope you will make the most of it!

We look forward to hearing back from you on what you've found useful and what you would like to see more of in future newsletters.



Best wishes,

Lauryn Oates
Editor



News and Announcements From ReN Members



Dar es Salaam's coastline at dusk

A Report from the Pan African Reading for All Conference

The Pan African Reading for All Conference, hosted bi-annually, was held in August 2009 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. From across the African continent

and around the world, hundreds of scholars, educators, publishers, writers, literacy and language practitioners, among others converged on the hilly, green campus of the University of Dar es Salaam for four days of workshops, networking, keynotes and exhibits. Among this crowd many ReN Africa members could be counted. Ngugi wa Thiong'o gave one of the conference's keynote addresses, the text of which can now be found on the conference's blog: <http://6thpanafricanrfa.blogspot.com/>. Conference organizer Judith Baker writes, "Ngugi's speeches are masterpieces of analysis which are impossible to summarize, but speak forcefully to the distortion of translation - both for one as a writer and one as a person - and the importance of African languages. Please disseminate them broadly, use them in your classes, respond either in this forum or elsewhere."

The conference's resolutions and recommendations are now also available on-line, and the Organizing Committee strongly encourage the wide circulation of this information to policy-makers, scholars, school administrators, and journalists. The next Pan African conference is planned for Botswana, in 2011.

To receive updates, sign up for the conference's listserv by sending a subscription request to: pan-african-reading-for-all-conference@googlegroups.com



Tanzanian dancers at the conference's opening ceremony

New Publication: A look at Crowding, using the example of Kabiye Roberts, David (2009). Visual crowding and the tone orthography of African languages. *Written Language & Literacy*, 12(1).

Abstract: The effect of Crowding has long been recognized by cognitive psychologists engaged in examining the reading process. Yet it is not generally taken into account by most field linguists involved in the development of tone orthographies for emerging African languages. True, there is a general recognition that diacritic overload is unhelpful, but this has never been articulated with the help of the more precise terminology already on offer from the field of cognitive psychology. Using an experimental tone orthography developed for Kabiye (Gur, Togo) as an example, I postulate that a near-exhaustive representation of tone by means of accents will trigger Crowding. This is a hypothesis that has yet to be tested under clinical conditions. But the aim of this article is to call the phenomenon by its name for the first time and thereby stimulate further research. I also hope to demonstrate by means of this single example the gulf that exists between the cognitive psychology and linguistics. Once we recognize that the gulf exists, we can begin to build bridges.

Paper on Wolofal Language Available

Contributed by: Dr. El Hadji Mansour Mboup

ReN member Dr. El Hadji Mansour Mboup, an English studies professor working from Bargny, Sénégal has written a paper entitled, "The Wolofal graphy: A literary and spelling recipe in a context of domination". This extract is taken from the paper's introduction: "One of the impacts of Islam and islamicization in Africa, South of the Sahara has been the creation of orthographies with a proliferation of literary and religious writings. In Nigeria, that orthography is called Ajami whereas in Senegal it is referred to as Wolofal. In the following lines, we will first focus on the historical background of the latter historiography which we see as a recipe in a context of domination. The second focal point is a criticism of Wolofal as a human creation and, thirdly, we will look at Wolofal as a literary revolution." For a copy of the paper, please email Dr. Mboup: elhadjimansour@yahoo.fr

ReN Member Profile: Dr. Evariste Ntakirutimana

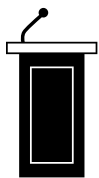
Dr. Evariste Ntakirutimana is currently Associate Professor at the National University of Rwanda. He holds a B.A and M.A in African Languages and Literature from the National University of Rwanda, as well as a PhD in Linguistics from the Université Laval in Quebec, Canada. Évariste's research interests lie in the area of discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, language planning and Policy, lexicology and lexicography, terminology and semantics. Currently, Evariste is working on a Rwandan French database funded by the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF). He is a member of the following associations and networks: EFRARD (Espace





Francophone pour la Recherche et le Développement (www.efrard.org); Lexicology, Terminology and Translation (LTT), AUF Research Network (www.ltt.auf.org); Study of French in French-Speaking Countries (EFF); and the AUF Research Network (www.auf.org). Recent publications include:
(2008a). Cry havoc: Discourse of War in Rwanda, 1994. In *Revue Scientifique de l'ULK*, no 10, 5-20.
(2008b). L'enfant de la rue à travers son langage. in *Études Rwandaises*, no 15, Éditions de l'Université Nationale du Rwanda, Butare, 41-49.
(2008c). Kiswahili nchini Rwanda: Kupanda na kushuka. in *Études Rwandaises*, no 15, Éditions de l'Université Nationale du Rwanda, Butare, 12-21.

Upcoming Conferences



What: Learning and Technology World Forum

When: 11 – 13 January 2010

Where: Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre, London, England

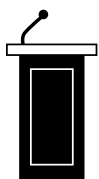
Summary: The Learning and Technology World Forum is the largest educational forum in the world covering schools, further and higher education. The event content

addresses international concerns and is current, relevant and challenging, providing an opportunity to contribute to the strategic development of education worldwide. The main theme for 2010 is 'Re-imagining education' covering enabling regeneration and economic recovery; striving for excellence; and, preparing for the future.

Contact Information: events@latwf.org

Organizers: Becta (Government of the United Kingdom)

Deadline for abstracts/proposals: closed.



What: African Language Teachers Association (ALTA)

2010 Conference: Enhancing African Languages Proficiency to a Higher Professional Level (jointly held with the 13th Annual Conference of the National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages - NCOLCTL)

When: April 22nd - 25th, 2010

Where: Sheraton Madison Hotel, Madison, Wisconsin, USA

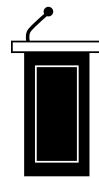
Summary: Presentations may address the linkage between language study and professionalization, curriculum and material development, methodology, bilingual education, heritage language learners, autonomous and self-instructional settings, outreach and advocacy, and the use of technology in teaching languages. Other topics such as teacher training, professional development, research,

and assessment are also welcome.

Contact Information: alta@mailplus.wisc.edu or Tel: 608-265-7902

Organizers: ALTA Secretariat, c/o University of Wisconsin

Deadline for abstracts/proposals: November 30, 2009. Proposals are solicited for individual papers, colloquia, and poster sessions. Proposals should fall broadly within the conference theme, "Enhancing African Languages Proficiency to a Higher Professional Level." Please contact the organizers for full instructions regarding proposal submissions.



What: Somerset International Conference for Librarians and Teachers

When: 15 to 16 March 2010

Where: Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia

Summary: 2010 Conference - Reading Locally, Learning Globally: creating a universal experience - is an academic and practical forum for the promotion of

reading, writing and learning, suited to librarians and classroom teachers of all disciplines.

Contact Information: <http://www.somerset.qld.edu.au/conflib>

Organizers: Somerset College

Deadline for abstracts/proposals: Not available.

FOCUS on... West Africa



Resource: Virtual Library on Educational Research in West and Central Africa

The Virtual Library of the Educational Research Network for West and Central Africa (ERNWACA) offers bibliographic references to several publications related to educational research in West and Central

Africa. ERNWACA's mission is to promote African expertise in order to influence positive practices and educational policies. Education is an engine that leads to transformation and competitiveness in Africa where educational research should spur the development of education systems. Visit them here: www.ernwaca.org



Book Making Project Takes off in Ghana

Organized by the International School of Art, Business and Technology of Ghana, the Ghana Book Making Project sends volunteers to the West African nation to help children write and author their own books, supporting students to develop good writing strategies and creative story telling techniques. The program has a website showcasing the project:





www.makingbooksgivinghana.org/ and the books produced by the children can be viewed here: <http://ghana.realelibrary.com/index.php/RealeBooks/browse/>.

Founding president of the International School of Art, Business, and Technology in Ghana, Jonathan Thurston is interested to hear from people involved in other bookmaking programs or wishing to start their own bookmaking program. Contact him at jonanthanthurston@gmail.com



Oxfam Report: West Africa's Literacy Challenge

"From Closed Books to Open Doors: West Africa's Literacy Challenge" calculates the scale of the literacy crisis in West Africa, and explores what should be done about it. West Africa has the lowest literacy rates in the world. The report is launched in the context of the 2009 Global Week of Action on education, which focuses on literacy and lifelong learning, and the UN international conference on adult education, taking place in 2009 for the first time in 12 years. In West Africa, there are 65 million young people and adults who cannot read and write – more than 40% of the population – and 14 million children aged 7 to 12 who are not in primary school. Illiteracy is shutting these people off from the jobs, economic opportunities, good health and engagement in democracy. The consequences for them, their communities and their countries, is devastating. But the literacy crisis can be dealt with, and the doors to these rights opened. In the formal education system, there must be an effort to fill the gap in trained teachers, calculated at over three quarters of a million trained teachers. At the same time, governments need to put much greater priority on providing real opportunities to learn to read and write outside school, such as in adult literacy classes and youth training centres.

Read the recommendations and download the report here:
<http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/policy/education/closed-books-open-doors-west-africa.html>



FOCUS on... Francophone Africa

New Publication: Numéro spécial des Annales "Cultures écrites en Afrique" (Special issue of the French journal Les Annales on "Written cultures in Africa")
Contribué par: Aïssatou Mbodj-Pouye,

ATER, EHESS, Centre d'études africaine

Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales - 64e année –2009/4 - Cultures écrites en Afrique

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JULIEN BONHOMME – Dieu par décret. Les écritures d'un prophète africain

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<http://www.editions.ehess.fr/revues/numero/-b8e7df1af2/>

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http://www.armand-colin.com/revues_num_info.php?idr=27&idnum=328906



New Paper: Linguistic Competency and Science Learning

Contributed by: Evariste Ntakirutiman

Abstract. A recent collective research aimed to analyze the relationship between linguistic competencies and sciences learning in Rwanda demonstrated that the relationship between both disciplines is a positive and a significant one. As a participant at the research, I asked myself if it is the same case with the second language that I will call L2 for greater convenience. Analysis of data collected from Rwanda National Examinations Council revealed also that the results in sciences are correlated with the L2 competencies. This fact led me to assert that you cannot promote sciences learning when you don't pay full attention to the languages. Learning and knowledge transfer depend always on languages. Education is all the time influenced by the language policy in force in a country. To request a copy of the full paper, entitled "Pour bien apprendre, il faut bien comprendre", please email Evariste at evantaki@gmail.com.





Report from Benin on a Workshop on African Languages in Teaching

Contributed by: JeDene Reeder, ReN Africa Francophone Editor

In 2007, Benin formally adopted a policy, yet to be implemented, which calls for the use of Beninese languages at every level of the education system. On May 11, 2009, the Center for Advanced Studies of African Society (CASAS) and Labo Gbe organized a scientific workshop on "African Languages in Teaching in Benin: Problems and Perspectives." This workshop, held in Cotonou, Benin, brought together a number of concerned linguist-professors, government representatives and other interested parties to discuss issues regarding the implementation of this policy. Among the 19 presenters were ReNAfrica members Prof. Toussaint Tchitchi and JeDene Reeder, each of whom presented a paper and also gave a formal response to another paper. The workshop moderator was Professor emeritus Dr. M. Igue, former head of CENALA (the National Center for Applied Linguistics).

The stated general objective of the workshop was to promote frank exchanges between specialists regarding the place of Beninese languages in education, and to propose a framework for the subjects to be taught using the national languages which can then be used to develop teaching materials. However, while questions such as of the readiness of Beninese languages to be used in education and of the type of use (subject vs. language of instruction) were addressed, the questions of specific language choice and actual content of didactic material were not. Most people present took for granted that the national languages need to be in the schools, and many believed that the insertion of languages as subject matter was only a step towards using them as languages of instruction. This particular debate did crop up frequently during the comment/response times.

Topics included the history of Benin's education and language policies, as well as those in other parts of Africa; implementation strategies and other means of promoting the use of national languages (all local languages are considered to be national languages in Benin); the role of local languages in development efforts; the role of various ministries as well as that of University of Abomey in the implementation of the policy; and issues of standardization and modernization.

Workshop participants finished the day feeling as though many good exchanges had taken place even though few of the stated specific objectives of the workshop had been attained. A desire on the part of participants for follow-up workshops was made clear. A collection of the papers presented during this workshop is being published by CASAS.

Les contributions francophones nous ont fait vraiment plaisir. Veuillez soumettre votre contribution pour le prochain numéro, soit un

rapport sur votre recherche ou une conférence, soit une critique d'un oeuvre française. Veuillez aussi inviter des collègues francophones de joindre notre réseau.

– Votre coordinatrice régionale



FOCUS on... Southern Africa

THIS ISSUE'S FEATURE ARTICLE

Digital literacies among Botswana youth at risk: Documenting community life and imagining social futures

Contributed by: Theresa Rogers (University of British Columbia); Penelope Moanakwena (University of Botswana); and Brigid Conteh (University of Botswana)

Introduction. This case study is an extension of a larger research project, The YouthCLAIM project, that explores arts and media production as literacy practices among marginalized youth. The site for this case study is a remote residential alternative school in northwest Botswana that serves boys who have not succeeded in formal primary schools due to a range of academic and behavioural issues. The boys range in age from 12 to 18 and are given a chance to finish their primary schooling while also learning agricultural and building trades and other skills, such as music and information technology (see Van Rensburg's "brigade" model in Botswana, Coles, 1985).

Theoretical Framework. This project explores the affordances of digital production as new literacies. Literacy "has now come to mean a rapid and continuous process of changes in the ways in which we read, write, view, listen, compose and communicate information" (Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear, & Leu, 2008). New literacies include interactive technologies—as part of the new media landscape—providing increased opportunities for youth to develop the competencies to participate in contemporary culture (Jenkins, 2006). In this study, we are particularly interested in the ways digital tools and multimodal authorship support the use of genre, literacy strategies (such as planning, composing and sequencing narrative), and visual literacy skills (such as framing and perspective) among youth with minimal print literacy skills. In addition, we are interested in the reflections of youth on the relationship of video production and what the New London Group called social futures – designing of curricula that impact or help to imagine the students' community, public and workplace futures (New London Group, 1996; 2000).





The Study. We conducted a qualitative case study (Stake, 2006) of digital filmmaking among boys in a residential alternative school. Bana Ba Metsi ("Children of the Water") School is located next to the Okavango river near Ngarange in the northwest district of Botswana. It has approximately 48 boys currently enrolled. The school's mission statement states the following: "Bana Ba Metsi School's purpose is to provide an opportunity for youth at risk to develop understandings, skills, attitudes and personal qualities through the dignity of learning and work, in order to re-enter



the formal education system and become productive members of the community"

The school serves youth who have problems (i.e. antisocial behaviours) that have interfered with their primary-level education. Many also have low literacy skills and

limited English proficiency. All of the students spoke Setswana (the national language). In this study, all procedures were explained in both Setswana and English and students spoke among themselves in Setswana.

Procedures. We worked with 18 youth (ages 14-17) from Standard Six across four days (3-4 hours per day). Days one and two – 9 youth, and days three and four – an additional 9 youth, split into filmmaking groups of 4 and 5. On Day One, the research team:

1. Showed a sample film
2. Explained framing and perspective briefly
3. Introduced possibility of using documentary or imaginative genres
4. Explained storyboards and gave them out
5. Created groups, comprising a director in each group. Other role suggested were photographer and editor but sometimes the director did most of the work, depending on group.

Groups then planned with storyboards and then went out to take their photographs.

On Day Two, the research team:

6. Taught the boys the skills of video editing with iMovie.
The groups then edited their films and took any additional photographs
7. The team then briefly introduced video filming.
The groups edited in their video clips and completed the films with titles, credits, etc. These seven steps were repeated on days 3 and 4 for the remaining 9 students.



Data sources included participant observation of process with documentation (notes, photographic and video documentation); artifacts – films and storyboards; and focus group interviews. The preliminary analysis included observed processes in

relation to storyboards and films (affordances of digital filmmaking) and analysis of focus group interviews (perspectives on digital filmmaking and social futures). Findings include the four films:

- Life in Bana Ba Metsi
- Building a House in Bana Ba Metsi
- Animals around Bana Ba Metsi
- Bana Ba Metsi Project (Activities around the school)

Affordances include understanding of the documentary genre; and engagement with narrative planning, composing, sequencing, revision. We observed that the youth took pictures randomly and opportunistically and were able to then use their storyboards and sense of narrative structure to re-sequence the films. Only one group (3) needed coaching for this process. Visual literacy skills were also applied: framing and perspective were used, as well as editing for visual effect. The students viewed themselves as filmmakers, often directing those they photographed or filmed.

Social futures. There was an expressed desire to continue and to teach others in the school community. Participants articulated possible connections to future livelihoods, both in the near and distant future. Below are some sample quotes:

With the equipment available, we can continue to try this on our own and teach other students at BBM.

[Filmmaking] is like other skills, like carpentry, and will be useful for the Design and Technology course at Secondary School

These are useful knowledge and skills and could be one's livelihood...

...With more development of the skills one could even have a business.

Conclusions. Few of the youth had ever used cameras, and it seemed none had used computers, yet they learned the skills of photography and documentary digital filmmaking quite rapidly. They developed well-sequenced narrative structures, appearing to have little difficulty planning and composing their films. They said that they had not been aware of the internet before but were interested in sharing their films more broadly so that "people will learn about the school and how we live." As another youth said, "I don't think there is a school like BBM in this country because we also learn skills such as building." In fact, the strong desire to





share their experiences seemed to be the motivation for using the documentary genre; however, they also expressed lack of familiarity with doing imaginative narratives and may have been influenced by our example as well. We hope to follow up within the year to see whether the youth have continued to make films and to see if the films become available on the Bana Ba Metsi website.

We view digital video production as a powerful example of engaging at risk boys in new literacy practices that support their literacy development and their communication skills and opportunities, and encourage them to imagine productive social futures.



FOCUS on.... East Africa

Publication: International Collaboration in the Kenya Literacy Project

Abstract. This collaborative venture between US educators and a Kenyan community aims to increase educational opportunity for rural students, establish

developmentally and culturally appropriate practices for rural Kenyan settings, and inform policy.

Mutuku, Moses., Dunn, Maylan. and Wolfe, Randi. "The Kenya Literacy Project: An International Collaboration Addressing the Primary School Achievement Gap Between Rural and Urban Students" Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, <Not Available>. 2009-05-25
http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p35987_index.html



The Intergenerational Literacy Learners' Conferences in Uganda

ReN member Willy Ngaka has been organizing intergenerational literacy learners' conferences in the remote districts of Uganda annually, as part of his PhD research, now completed, and through his involvement with the Uganda Rural Literacy and Community Development Association (URLCODA). One of the strategies URLCODA employs to promote literacy is by mobilizing learners from all regions of Uganda and of all ages to engage in discussions on issues of literacies and livelihoods through rural based conferences. The next conference will be held January 18 - 22, 2010 in Nansololo village, Namasagali, Kamuli District (Uganda), with the themes of Literacies, Poverty, Environmental Degradation, Food Security and Culture: Challenges for Local Adaptation to Climate Changes in Uganda. To request a copy of the report documenting findings from the 2009 conference, please contact Willy Ngaka at wngaka@gmail.com.



Profile: The Children's Book Project for Tanzania

The Children's Book Project for Tanzania (CBP) was started in 1991 in response to Tanzania's acute shortage of books for children, and the lack of adequate skills among book sector personnel to produce these reading materials. CBP set out to assist with the production and distribution of relevant reading materials and to encourage and support indigenous authorship. The Project has been supported, at different periods, by international donor organizations with interests in education and books, as well as by a number of Local organizations that have also supported specific activities organized by the Project. The Project's vision is to develop a strong reading culture amongst Tanzanian school children that is sustained by effective reading skills and provision of appropriate and quality reading materials. They seek, in collaboration with publishers, to produce children's books in Kiswahili so as to improve accessibility to a variety of reading materials, and in collaboration with teachers, to improve children's reading and writing ability and skills. Read the catalogue of books, activities of the Project, and how to support it here: <http://www.cbp.or.tz/>



New Research: Language and the Law in Burundi

Author Jean Baptiste Bigirimana in "Language and law: The right to the mother tongue in a French and Kirundi diglossic context in Burundi" finds the emergence of a claim to a right to the mother tongue based on the critical role played by the mother tongue in building sound and sustainable development, out of respect for national laws and international legal instruments, and also in the context of ongoing universalization of human rights. As a result of colonization, the French language has imposed itself for a century on Burundi and ended up occupying a position of domination, compared to Kirundi and the other languages in the area. Over the years, after having supplanted Kirundi as the language of the law, it has continued to spread, so that today it remains de facto the language of the administration and of many other essential fields related to the life of a Burundi nevertheless broadly monolingual — despite the limitation, indeed the rejection, of its hitherto official status in the 1992 constitution and the recently (2005) adopted constitution. Baptiste Bigirimana finds that the emergence of the claim to the mother tongue raises an obvious internal contradiction, given the goals of a "francophonie" concerned, in principle, with ensuring a respectful partnership with local languages in Africa and elsewhere, but, in practice, given the prevailing Kirundi-French diglossic situation in Burundi, still perceived as a colonial vestige because of the cultural aura and weight of the French language. Accordingly, a key component in the reshaping of post-colonial Burundi is a kind of linguistic and social hybridization, which the management of multilingualism, as well as its political implications,





must take into account going forward. Read his article here:

www.ingentaconnect.com/content/jbp/lplp/2008/00000032/00000001/art00002

Research Corner

Research Fellowship Opportunity: ICTs and Public Access

Newly launched, the Amy Mahan Research Fellowship Program to Assess the Impact of Public Access to ICTs consists of up to 12 Research Fellowships of up to 22,000€ each and specialized guidance to enable emerging scholars to carry out their own new and original research study examining the impact of public access to information and communication technologies (ICT). Emerging developing country researchers from Africa, the Middle East, the Asia Pacific region and Latin America and the Caribbean are invited to apply for a Fellowship. They may submit their application and conduct their research in English, French, Portuguese or Spanish. The deadline for applying is Midnight Eastern Standard Time, 31 December 2009. The Program is an eighteen-months project sponsored by Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and managed by Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona, Spain, in collaboration with scholars from Universidad de San Andrés, Argentina and the University of the Philippines, Manila.

Detailed information is available at www.upf.edu/amymahan/.

Recommended Tool: UCLA Language Materials Project

The Language Materials Project (LMP) is an on-line bibliographic database of teaching and learning materials for over 100 Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTLs). The LMP, which is funded by the US Department of Education International Education and Graduate Program Service, was created in 1992. Ten African countries are represented in the database: click on the African continent in the map on the homepage to browse:

<http://www.lmp.ucla.edu/>

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 March 1st, 2010 for inclusion in our next issue.

In the Field

Fueling an African Publishing Sector: The African Books Collective

Responding to the constraints that African publishers were experiencing in financing, marketing and distributing their books, and the dearth of African published materials in the North, the African Books Collective (ABC) grew from a meeting of African book publishers that took place in 1985. They predicted that

collectively, it would be possible to strengthen the economic base of independent African publishers and meet the needs of Northern libraries and other book buyers. Operations began in 1989, after securing sufficient support from funding agencies. ABC seeks to strengthen indigenous African publishing through collective action and to increase the visibility and accessibility of the wealth of African scholarship and culture. ABC is a non-profit Oxford-based, worldwide marketing and distribution outlet for over 1,000 titles from Africa - scholarly, literature and children's books. It is founded, owned and governed by a group of African publishers, and its participants are 116 independent and autonomous African publishers from 19 countries. Support from funding agencies is received for development of publishing capacity in Africa; and resource materials are published for the African book and publishing communities. Michigan State University Press is ABC's North American partner, handling marketing and distribution in the US and Canada. MSUP has a university press mission. The scholarly publishing arm of Michigan State University, it helps to carry out the institution's land-grant mission through the publication of research and intellectual inquiry that make significant contributions to scholarship in the arts, humanities, sciences, and social sciences. Browse their 10 categories, check out new titles and order on-line:

www.africanbookscollective.com.

Launch of Second Annual Baobab Prize, to Encourage Literature for Young Readers

On July 31, 2009, the Baobab Prize, an international literary award established to encourage the writing of African literature for young readers, launched into its second active year. In the first year, nine African countries applied and writers ranged in age from eleven to sixty-four years. The Baobab Prize invites entries of unpublished African short stories written for audiences either 8-11 years or 12-15 years. In 2009, the prize will award \$1,000 to the best story in each category and \$800 to the most promising young writer (18 years and below). Also all short listed stories are considered for possible publishing. The Prize is open to African citizens of all ages. Ramatoulaye Shagaya, Senegalese co-founder of the prize says, "the mission of the Baobab Prize is to identify the literary giants of the next generation and produce classic stories that will be appreciated for years to come. This year, we want to challenge African writers to unleash their imagination. Tell us a story we've never heard before. A winning story this year will be a story that stands out." The winners of the inaugural year of the Baobab Prize, 2008, were Lauri Kubuitsile from Botswana with *Lorato* and her *Wire Car*, the best story written for readers aged 8-11 years; Ivor W. Hartmann from Zimbabwe with *Mr. Goop*, the best story written for readers aged 12-15 years, and Aisha Kibwana from Kenya, the most promising young writer with *Strange Visitors That Took her Life Away*. The Baobab Prize has ambitious dreams about the future of African literature. It envisions that in ten years bookstores all over





the world will be brimming with top quality African stories written for children. This Prize is made possible by funds provided by Bryn Mawr College, The Global Fund for Children and members of the Baobab Prize administrative team. To learn more, contact Deborah Ahenkorah at baobabprize@gmail.com or visit <http://baobabprize.googlepages.com>.

What's New in Technology

Recommended Resource: Observatory on ICTs in Education

The Observatory, part of the Pan African Research Agenda on the Pedagogical Integration of ICTs, is an open knowledge-sharing resource for research on the pedagogical integration of ICT. Three search functions are available: Simple Search — which allows you to view indicators from institutions in a single country, Advanced Search — which allows you to compare indicators in different institutions and countries, and Summary Search — which allows you to browse a mapping of ICT in education summaries from the institutions and countries participating in the project. Visit them here: http://www.observatoiretic.org/default/use?language=en_CA



Free Publishing Software: Make Your Own Books

RealeWriter (pronounced "Really Writer") is a software application for Mac OS X and Windows XP/Vista used to create RealeBooks, and available free of charge. The software allows one to create RealeBook ("reb") files, share them with others on the Internet, and print standard-sized RealeBooks. The free publishing software, as well as books others have created are found at: <http://www.realebooks.com/index.php/RealeWriter>

Publications, Resources and Tools

Publication: Family literacy: Experiences from Africa and around the world

Desmond, S. and Elfert, M. (2008) Hamburg, UIL. 142 pages
In Africa, intergenerational learning is rooted in local cultures. Family literacy as an educational approach is relevant and can be highly motivating for learners as it creates a tight and warm symbiosis around learning with mutual support. Download the PDF document here:

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001829/182923f.pdf>



Profile: The International Journal of Linguistics

Contributed by: Amy Li, Editor - International Journal of Linguistics

The International Journal of Linguistics (IJL) is a peer-reviewed international online journal, published by Macrothink Institute. The journal encourages and publishes papers in the field of linguistics, including theoretical linguistics, descriptive linguistics and applied linguistics. In addition to the broad area of language research, the creative approaches to language learning and teaching are also involved, leading linguistics to a higher level of cognitive development. The linguistic research contributes to cooperation of people groups throughout the world. Abundant and professional resources of linguistics are needed to meet a wide and infinitely varied range of communicative goals. From this perspective, the journal aims to improve the communicative power of language and consolidate the national language communicative tool available to speakers. The IJL also provides opportunities for sharing resources among the academic community. Learn more here:

<http://www.macrothink.org/journal/index.php/ijl/>



UNESCO's Discussions on Literacy: Multimedia Tools

UNESCO's multimedia resources include a collection on literacy issues. Watch a video from 1945 recording the establishment of UNESCO, with then British Minister of education Ellen Wilkinson, reading the newly founded constitution of the organization, a 1990 documentary about the founding of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, or a French video called "Lorsque le monde parlait l'arabe" describing the age of invention, innovation and exploration of the Arabs from the 8th - 12th centuries. Browse the resources here:

www.unesco.org/archives/multimedia/index.php?page=1&s=films&id_page=65&pattern=ED/EO/KMS

New Book: Language and Power

Edited by Birgit Brock-Utne, Gunnar Garbo,
"Language and Power: The Implications of Language for Peace and Development" is available for order at www.africanbookscollective.com.



October Book Review

Everyday Literacies in Africa, Ethnographic Studies of Literacy and Numeracy Practices in Ethiopia

Authors: A. H. Gebre, A. Rogers, B. Street, G. Openjuru;
Published by Fountain Publisher Ltd, Kampala in 2009
ISBN: 978-9970-02-975-4

General subject matter: adult literacy, ethnographic approach to literacy

Review by: Dr. Agatha. J. Van Ginkel, Consultant for Education and Development - SIL International Africa Area





This book describes how ethnographic approaches to adult literacy and numeracy programs give insight in which literacy practices 'illiterate' adults are already involved. It argues that these literacy practices should be part of a literacy and numeracy program to truly start the learning from where the learners are and integrate their existing knowledge and practices in the program. It consists of two parts; the first part describes what an ethnographic approach to literacy is and gives some case studies of ethnographic approaches to literacy. The second part of the book describes the findings of the case studies and attempts to draw some conclusions for what these findings mean for adult literacy and numeracy program.

Part 1, chapter 1. In order to understand better what literacy and numeracy mean in the rural and urban contexts, the authors decided to embark upon an ethnographic study. They wanted to know what people 'know' and how this knowledge can be used during literacy and numeracy learning. They argue that while most adult literacy programs will say that they start where the adult learner is, including the knowledge and experience of the adult learner, the reality is that many literacy programs treat the



'illiterate' adult learner as someone who does not know anything about literacy. However, 'illiterate' adults do have knowledge about numeracy and are involved in literacy tasks. An ethnographic approach to literacy and numeracy would give insight into the hidden knowledge that adult

learners have about literacy and numeracy. They start from the understanding that people are already engaged in literacy practices and they would like to know how to build on these practices. They distinguish between a literacy event and the literacy practice. The former is a one-off occurrence involving text. The latter is a repeated behaviour that shapes literacy events.

The methods used to collect ethnographic information were: observation, collecting documents and artifacts, photography and video, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions. The book reports on ten case studies about literacy practices in Ethiopia. These case studies are interesting to read and show how literacy and numeracy practices are a part of 'illiterate' adults' lives.

The second part of the book looks at the implications of the findings of the case studies for adult literacy and numeracy programs. The authors start by writing out their findings, their conclusions of the case studies. They discovered that many people are involved in different literacy practices in different settings and even in different languages and scripts. They also noticed that the literacy practices people are involved in are different from those taught in literacy and numeracy classes. For example, people use different strategies to calculate maize

grains than for sticks. The calculations are often done by estimation rather than with exactitude.

The next question the authors address is how to integrate the local literacy and numeracy practices in the classroom. How can a literacy and numeracy program start from where the learners are, and from what they know and do? They suggest the CRB approach: collect, reflect and build on. This approach can be used within an existing curriculum or to develop a new approach altogether.

To collect, the facilitator will collect information from the participants for each topic to cover. This will be done through visits, observations, interviews, and through both informal and formal meetings with people. The learners can help the facilitator. Although the learners might initially feel they have nothing to contribute, by being involved in collecting (giving) information their view of themselves will change, their confidence will be built up as their ideas, experience, knowledge and practices are valuable. The next stage is to reflect. All the information collected about literacy practices about a certain topic gives the facilitator and learners plenty of food for thought. What is being done? Who is involved in it? Who creates these practices and for what purpose? How can they be improved? The last stage is to build up. While discussing the literacy practices the facilitator will seek opportunities to expand these ideas and introduce new knowledge that builds in these practices. The facilitator can use the textbook, but can also develop additional activities for the learners.

The book also illustrates how an ethnographic approach can be used to develop a literacy program, using an example from India.

Evaluation. The book is easy to read and I would recommend it to everyone involved in adult literacy and numeracy programs. The strength of the suggested approach is that one gets a much better understanding of how 'illiterate' adults are already involved in literacy practices and how to build upon those. The challenge in applying this approach will be to find facilitators who are capable enough to implement it. Especially in minority communities, many literacy facilitators are minimally educated themselves and might not have the confidence or ability to be such an innovative and creative facilitator. In such cases, the program developer could still include an ethnographic approach before designing the program and then make use of the current literacy practices by including this knowledge in the curriculum and/or in the textbook. This way, less confident facilitators will be able to include this knowledge as well.

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.

