Literacy and linguistic diversity in a global perspective: an intercultural exchange with African countries

Contributing authors:

Neville Alexander
Ayo Bamgbose
Carole Bloch
Brigitta Busch
Daniel Coste
Viv Edwards
Arame Fal
Prince Kum'a Ndumbe III
Adama Samassékou

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Foreword

One of the African continent's most pressing problems is to find the right approach to African multilingualism and in particular to the issue of literacy in pursuance of the UN target of "Education for All". Literacy in the mother tongue as well as teacher training are crucial factors in achieving the goals set for the UN Literacy Decade 2003-2012. At the same time, Europe is challenged by the reality of migration. In this context, the promotion of linguistic and cultural diversity is not only crucial to individual empowerment, but also to economic sustainability and social cohesion.

The Project "Literacy and Linguistic Diversity in a global perspective: an intercultural exchange with African countries" was carried out in close cooperation with the Austrian Ministry of Education and the Austrian Commission for Unesco. Through this partnership Austria was seeking to further strengthen cooperation between Unesco and the Council of Europe, on the one hand, and the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz and the African Academy of Languages as the language-policy institution of the African Union, on the other.

I am convinced that this, the very first transcontinental project of the ECML committed to linguistic diversity and literacy in a global perspective, greatly enhanced the Council of Europe's visibility within Unesco and among the most renowned African linguists and contributed to mutually enriching experiences between African and European experts. Europe can significantly learn from the way Africa manages its rich linguistic diversity.

The issue of how to preserve Africa's multilingualism and how to put it in the service of the African continent's sustainable development is - in the perspective of a globalised world - definitely relevant to Europe and the whole UN system. This is why Austria initiated a meeting between the then Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr. Walter Schwimmer, and the President of the African Academy of Languages, Mr Adama Samassekou, in Strasbourg in June 2004. This exchange of views on common objectives has led to a very fruitful cooperation between ACALAN and the Council of Europe's Language Policy Division.

The three regional African projects supported by Austria in the fields of material development (PRAESA, South Africa), community radio (NACALCO, Cameroon) and awareness raising for the use of African languages in school education (AfricAvenir, Cameroon) are excellent examples of grass root initiatives with sustainable results, involving all local stakeholders.

Aiming at sustainability for the Year of African Languages 2006/2007 was the main reason for Austria to submit a resolution to the 33rd Unesco General Conference in October 2005, requesting the UN General Assembly to proclaim the year 2008 "International Year of Languages". The issue is currently under discussion in New York. Such a "UN Year of Languages 2008" would enable very welcome synergies with the "European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008" of the European Union.

If I may conclude with a personal remark, I would like to say that working with Carole Bloch, Brigitta Busch, Neville Alexander, Adama Samassekou, Maurice Tadadjeu and Prince Kum'a Ndumbe III was one of the most valuable privileges of my professional life and I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all of them for their commitment to linguistic and cultural diversity, their wisdom and generosity. The LDL project, with its inherently transcontinental character, has played a pioneer role for the Council of Europe. I sincerely hope that this is an opening for future cooperation between Europe and Africa.

Monika Goodenough-Hofmann
Austrian Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture

5 April 2007

Preface

The publication of this volume by the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) in Graz is the result of a unique collaboration between European and African linguists and language professionals. As such, it is a glowing example of equal exchange between North and South. For that reason alone, it is of great importance to the work of those who would like to see more symmetrical power relations on the planet becoming the norm.

The publication is welcome for another reason, however. At this time, when the African Academy of Languages (ACALAN) as a specialised agency of the African Union (AU) is in the process of giving shape and substance to its strategic agenda on the continent, all successful collaborative projects between our language scholars and other practitioners and those associated with the ECML and the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg) are extremely positive. We believe that partnership between linguists and language scholars and activists in Africa and Europe will go a long way towards realising the vision of the Language Plan of Action for Africa.

Furthermore, the publication is very timely, as 2006/07 was declared by the AU as the Year of African Languages.

We would like to see this publication distributed as widely as possible at all tertiary education institutions on the continent of Africa, in both English and French. We hope that we will eventually be able to distribute it also in African-language versions.

Adama Samassékou
President of ACALAN

Bamako, 11 October 2006

Introduction

Neville Alexander and Brigitta Busch

This publication reflects the concerns and aims of the project Linguistic diversity and literacy in a global perspective (LDL). The project was carried out in the framework of the second medium-term programme of the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) with the support of the Austrian Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, the Austrian Unesco Commission, PRAESA (Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa), AfricAvenir (Cameroon) and NACALCO (National Association of Cameroonian Language Committees). It brought together experts and practitioners in the field of linguistic diversity and literacy from European and African countries with a view to opening a dialogue, to taking a comparative perspective and defining possible areas of mutually enriching co-operation and exchange. Reflecting on other situations allows us to see ourselves and what we know in another light: in the course of the project the focus on Africa raised new questions on European and western perspectives. Moreover, examining the situation of speakers of non-dominant and immigrant languages in Europe revealed that the problems resulting from linguistic hegemony were at the source of processes of exclusion in both continents.

This publication is particular in the sense that it is being distributed largely in Africa and not mainly in Europe. Therefore, there is a special emphasis on African languages and on initiatives of North-South co-operation. 2006/07 was proclaimed the Year of African Languages by the African Union to draw attention to the importance of African languages in promoting social cohesion, inclusion and economic development. The role of African languages in education, publishing and mass media is a special focus within the Year of African Languages.

Establishing effective literacy in the first languages (L1) and bi/multilingual approaches to literacy teaching in early childhood education are now widely accepted as among the most effective ways of ensuring educational achievement for children and of promoting social cohesion in multilingual societies. The promotion of linguistic and cultural diversity is crucial to any serious attempt to realise a truly internationally oriented education designed to equip children to think and operate globally, to deal effectively with linguistic and cultural diversity. The aims of our project were:

- to raise awareness, stimulate and encourage research in the field of materials development for L1 and multilingual education, including guidelines for materials development and work with such materials;

- to foster an intercultural dialogue and exchange of experience and developments between European and African countries;

- to examine the educational and cultural aspects of the management of mother-tongue literacy in African countries and of migrant/minority language literacy in European societies;

- to establish and/or strengthen a network of language education scholars and practitioners in Africa and Europe, in the area of design and production of materials for mother-tongue based bi/multilingual education in primary schools;

- to develop in the framework of the ECML a mother-tongue and multilingual literacy materials website linked to other relevant sites in Europe, Africa and elsewhere;

- to discuss guidelines on materials development for decision makers, multipliers, teacher trainers, textbook authors and illustrators.

The expected outcomes of our project were the establishment of a website with examples of practices and resources for experts, multipliers and teachers, and a set of guidelines for materials developers and textbook authors. Examples of good practice and resources for experts, multipliers and teachers are now available on the Internet – a link to the site, which is hosted by PRAESA (www.tell.praesa.org), can also be found on the ECML website under the title TELL materials. Further information on the project as well as links to other initiatives in the field and to resource materials are equally included in the project website (www.ecml.at/mtp2/LDL).

The scope of this publication

Neville Alexander sets out the framework in calling for an empowering language policy that counters social exclusion and the hegemony of dominant languages, in particular English. Such a policy must be based on the respect for linguistic diversity and the promotion of multilingualism. Neville Alexander demonstrates the importance of maintaining first languages for the sake of cultural diversity, political democracy, economic development, didactic effectiveness and human dignity. He comes to the conclusion that the present efforts within the AU towards an emancipatory language policy can only be successful when African languages are intellectualised, that is present as media of instruction throughout entire education systems including tertiary education.

Ayo Bamgbose's contribution, initially written as the summary of the proceedings of the project's central workshop, which brought together participants from more than 40 African and European countries, underscores the importance of taking a comparative perspective on practices in linguistic diversity and literacy in Europe and Africa. He points out that despite many obvious differences, similar problems are encountered concerning the restricted role and low status of non-dominant languages in education, namely regional minority languages and immigrant languages in Europe and

the majority of the African languages on the African continent. Ayo Bamgbose identifies strategies to enhance the status of these languages, concluding that they must receive more attention especially in education. In his list of possible fields of co-operation the exchange about ongoing projects of multilingual education, the conception and production of literacy materials and children's books as well as teacher training figure prominently.

Arame Fal explains in her contribution the sociolinguistic situation in Senegal, where French functions as the official language although three quarters of the population do not understand it. The African languages, especially Wolof, have a high vitality in oral communication – including "high domains" such as the proceedings in the National Assembly, mass media and cultural productions. Not all of the approximately 20 African languages spoken in the country have been codified so far and only different educational materials exist for the six that were codified in the 1960s. Arame Fal focuses on the work of the NGO OSAD which promotes the production of literary texts and educational materials in African languages.

Prince Kum'a Ndumbe III reports on the activities of AfricAvenir, an association based in Duala (Cameroon). He describes the NGO's intensive awareness-raising campaign in favour of African languages that was carried out in 2004. This campaign included seminar type "dialogue forums", "African palavers"– popular gatherings in villages and suburbs with performances of proverbs, riddles, stories, songs, etc. – "story telling nights", film presentations, presentations of Christian chorales, a rap competition and a competition where 1 600 schoolchildren displayed their knowledge in African languages. AfricAvenir's activities also encompass a project which aims at the restitution of texts and audio files in Cameroonian languages stocked in European archives.

Carole Bloch focuses on the current project Stories across Africa, which is being carried out in the framework of the African Year of Languages. The project supports possibilities for reading for enjoyment as part of literacy learning and development. It aims at promoting a culture of reading in African languages, at stimulating and supporting the African publishing industry and African literary and visual artists to create and foster the use of children's literature. Beginning with a series of small books for the first reading age, the project wants to create a common store of written children's literature for African children. Based on the experience of the Stories across Africa project, Carole Bloch raises issues of translation and adaption of materials for culturally and linguistically diverse settings.

An example of North-South co-operation in the field of teacher training is discussed in Viv Edward's contribution. The TELL (Training for early literacy learning) materials, initially developed for teachers working in multilingual schools in the UK, were adapted for teachers involved in the implementation of South Africa's new post-apartheid curriculum. Viv Edwards raises several issues of "localisation" that arise when materials are transferred from one setting to another. Some are of a more superficial nature such as the changing of photographs and illustrations to reflect the

local environment, others concern language issues or the omission/addition of topics and activities. The TELL materials are organised in a flexible way, different modules can stand on their own. A handbook for trainers, materials for course participants, templates for activities and overhead transparencies can be downloaded from the TELL website (www.tell.praesa.org).

Questions that arise in analysing and developing teaching and learning materials are the focus of Brigitta Busch's contribution. Discussing the design of manuals for the first year(s) of primary school in a particular bilingual situation, she shows that bilingual materials that simply translate the text body into a non-dominant language do not necessarily reverse the linguistic hierarchy. The increasing emphasis in print materials on visual elements opens new possibilities of integrating two or more languages into a single coherent non-repetitive text. Giving examples of multilingual and multi-variety materials in the production of which members of the LDL project team were involved, she discusses strategies that allow the learner to find his/her linguistic practices represented, which allow for difference and variation and promote language awareness and metalinguistic skills.

Linguistic diversity in Africa in a global perspective[1]

Neville Alexander

The new linguistic world order

Colonial conquest, imperialism and globalisation have established a hierarchy of standard languages, which mirrors the power relations on the planet. Because of the well-known effects of the economic and social status pressures consequent upon the establishment of a linguistic gradient in any local, national and, more pertinently, international, territorial or socio-political unit, the overall effect of this configuration has been to hasten the extinction of innumerable language varieties and to stigmatise and marginalise all but the most powerful languages.[2] Above all, English, in David Crystal's coinage, is a "global language", indeed, the global language.

There is ample statistical evidence to demonstrate the current dominance of English in international trade, finance, world governance and in tertiary education, science and technology, the publishing industry and other domains.[3] The statistics pertaining to the Internet reinforce this perception. According to globstats@global-reach.biz (30 September 2004), 35.2% of all information on the Internet is in the English language, 35.7% in numerous non-English European languages and 32.3% in non-English Asian languages. Non-English African languages do not warrant a mention because they can hardly be said to be "present" on the net at this stage. The yawning digital divide, specifically as it involves the peoples of Africa, could hardly be manifested more eloquently than by this statistical silence. According to Agnes Callamard (paraphrased in Unesco, 2005: 7):

> … while North America holds 6% of the world population and 41% have on-line access to the Internet, less than 1% of the African population, which is 10% of the world's population, has the same. Furthermore, the 29 OECD states contain 97% of all Internet hosts, 92% of the market in production and consumption of IT hardware, software and services, and 86% of all Internet users. …

In considering these statistics, it is important to bear in mind that at some level, the leadership of the peripheral areas of the world are complicit in maintaining this discriminatory status quo. The ultimate question, for those of us who are convinced of the need to plot an alternative route for the human species, is what we, as language

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1   Earlier versions of this paper were published as a PRAESA occasional paper (2003) and in Dias 2004).

2   Crystal (2005: 1-26) discusses the complexities of measuring language death.

3   See, among others, Crystal, 1997 and Phillipson, 2003.

specialists and practitioners, can do in order to strengthen those social and historical forces which are running counter to the apparently unstoppable logic of globalisation. If, as Sonntag (2003: 6), summarising the consensus of modern social science scholarship, avers, it is true that " … [because] hegemony is not totalitarian, there is always a possibility of counter-hegemonic social and cultural construction", the question arises in the African context: how do we assist in the decolonisation of the mind of the billions of people who are held in thrall by the demonstrable "superiority" of the global languages as propagated and prioritised by their own ruling groups and strata? How can we, through language planning and other interventions, initiate or reinforce changes in the patterns of development and in the dominant social relations. These are difficult questions that go to the very heart of the politics of social transformation and that raise all the imponderables about what factors determine, or at least influence, changes in individuals' attitudes and behaviour.

The clearest manner of indicating what is at stake for the people of Africa in a field such as language policy in education, for example, is to pose the question: how can we make the move from the existing situation where the former colonial languages dominate to one where the indigenous languages of Africa become dominant? The answer given to the prior question, namely whether this is a desirable scenario, constitutes no less than the political litmus test of the democratic credentials of the government or of the regime concerned. This is so for the simple reason that the empowerment of "the people", who are after all the beginning and the end of a democratic system, is axiomatically only possible in and through a language, or languages, in which they are proficient. No government in Africa today can claim that the generality of the population has a sufficient command of the so-called "official", that is, former colonial, languages such that they can conduct their essential daily transactions in those languages without assistance. I wish to stress, however, that this question does not derive from some narrow-minded national or ethnic chauvinist imperative. It is based firmly on the ground of (linguistic) human rights in a world where cultural diversity is slowly beginning to be seen as just as important for the survival of the human species as are biological and political diversity respectively.

By way of suggesting a useful approach to the analysis of the issue, it is important that we remind ourselves that the loss of domain by numerous strong languages in favour of English is not a new phenomenon at all. In European countries, for example, languages such as Latin, French and German occupied, indeed monopolised, high status or controlling domains of language for many decades and even centuries, right into the early 20th century For this reason, the fact that, and the socio-historical conditions under which, what became the standard languages of Europe were able to conquer or, in some cases, recapture the domains in question ought to be studied in detail with due regard to the very different dynamics of the information age and the network society.

Why we promote multilingualism

In order to understand the significance of our international commitment to the promotion and maintenance of multilingualism as a defining feature of modern life, it is essential to consider briefly some of the more important implications of this social phenomenon. The entire discussion can be summarised in a 5D-formula as follows. The maintenance and promotion of multilingualism is essential in the modern world because of its implications for diversity, development, democracy, didactics and (human) dignity. Elsewhere, I have dealt in some detail with all five of these dimensions of social life.[1] Suffice it to say, therefore, that:

- biocultural diversity, including, naturally, linguistic diversity, is essential in order to ensure the survival of the human species on planet earth;

- a policy of functional multilingualism in the workplace maximises economic efficiency and productivity and has incalculable cost-benefit advantages over a policy of dominant-language monolingualism in the workplace in multilingual settings. In this context, it is important to state that it is not so-called monolingualism but, in fact, high levels of literacy, regardless of the number of languages involved, that characterise the most successful polities in the era of the "knowledge society";

- without a democratic language policy involving the use of first or home languages as widely as possible in all spheres of society and economy, democracy remains a dead letter in linguistically diverse societies, since participation in decision-making processes tends to be confined to elite layers with proficiency in the dominant languages or varieties;

- mother tongue or, in some circumstances, mother tongue-based bilingual education is the most effective method of educating the young. This fact has added importance in the present context since we know that children can learn to read and write two (and, in individual cases, even more) languages at the same time. Given our commitment to mother tongue-based bilingual education, research on biliteracy is one of the most urgent priorities for enhancing the possibility of realising the goals of promoting and maintaining linguistic diversity and spreading literacy skills as widely as possible;

- since language, specifically the language(s) of primary socialisation, is one of the main pillars on which individual and social identities are founded, depriving a person of the free and spontaneous use of his or her mother tongue constitutes a violation of a fundamental human right and any systematic denial of the exercise of this right by tyrannical or *laissez-faire* regimes can lead to serious civil conflict.

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1   See Alexander, 2004: 192-200.

The historic task of the African middle classes

Ultimately, we are interested in these insights in order to gauge the nature and the scope of the challenges that face us as we set out to change matters in such a way that the situation begins to favour the empowerment and the economic and cultural enfranchisement of the peoples of Africa and of the rest of the ex-colonial world.

Without any exaggeration, it may be said that what is demanded of the African middle classes in general, and of the African intelligentsia in particular, is no less than Amilcar Cabral's almost forgotten demand that they "commit class suicide". To put it in a nutshell: the African revolution has not been consummated anywhere on the continent. Economic and, indirectly, concrete political independence as well as a genuine and profound cultural revolution have yet to be attained. These desirable goals have, moreover, to be arrived at in a world where the ever tighter integration into the world economy is projected as an inescapable imperative and where any move towards even a modicum of autarchy or "de-linking" in Samir Amin's resonant words is considered to be a kind of national suicide.

The forward-looking political leadership of the continent have recognised the need for a regional closing of ranks in order to acquire the strength and the sense of unity of purpose that will make it possible to bargain for a better deal for the continent at the global tables of plenty represented primarily by institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations Organisation and the World Trade Organization. This is the real political purpose of the idea of the "African renaissance" and of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and related economic concepts. It is also the real reason for the makeover of the Organisation of African Unity in the guise of the African Union. In other words, we are seeing a concerted attempt by the most enlightened sectors of the upper and middle classes of Africa to speed up the modernisation project that began with such great hope and expectations in 1957-60 and that imploded so lamentably after 1973. It remains to be seen whether these moves will do more than entrench the privileges and the rule of the very elites that have ruined the continent and made it into a byword among the nations for inefficiency, ineptitude and simple backwardness.

Be that as it may, at the level of language policy and language use, the post-colonial situation accurately reflects the reality of dependence and secular stagnation. The starkness of the situation is captured best in the simple, matter-of-fact words of the Mazruis (Mazrui and Mazrui, 1998: 64-65):

> … [an] important source of intellectual dependence in Africa is the language in which African graduates and scholars are taught …. [Today], in non-Arabic speaking Africa, a modern surgeon who does not speak a European language is virtually a sociolinguistic impossibility …. [A] conference of African scientists, devoted to scientific matters and conducted primarily in an African language, is not yet possible …. It is because of the above considerations that intellectual and scientific dependence in Africa may be inseparable from linguistic dependence. The linguistic quest for liberation, therefore,

must not be limited to freeing the European languages from their oppressive meanings in so far as Black and other subjugated people the world over are concerned, but must also seek to promote African languages, especially in academia, as one of the strategies for promoting greater intellectual and scientific independence from the West .[1]

In other words, Africa's middle classes have to commit class suicide. This requirement arises from our acceptance of the correctness of the insights of Pierre Bourdieu and his school of how linguistic markets operate. Already in 1971, Pierre Alexandre (1972: 86) had demonstrated how, in post-colonial Africa, one's degree of proficiency in the ex-colonial language has become a determinant of class location and even of class position. The African elites who inherited the colonial kingdom from the ostensibly departing colonial overlords, for reasons of convenience and in order to maintain their grip on power, have made nominal gestures towards equipping the indigenous languages of the continent with the wherewithal for use in powerful and high-status contexts. The result is a vicious downward spiral where the fact that these languages are not used is the cause of their stagnation and of the belief that they cannot be used in these functions. The failure of leadership and the willingness of the elites to follow in the wake of their colonial forerunners are, naturally, reflected in the language attitudes that characterise the generality of the population. Since their role models overtly and repeatedly demonstrate their lack of belief in the capacity of the indigenous languages to fulfil all the functions of a language in all domains of modern life, the people begin to accept as "natural" the supposed inferiority of their own languages and adopt an approach that is determined by considerations that are related only to the market and social status value of the set of languages in their multilingual societies. They fall prey to what I have dubbed a static maintenance syndrome (SMS). This means that the native speakers of the languages believe in and cherish the value of their languages, that is, the vitality of the languages is, within certain limits, not placed in doubt. However, they do not believe that these languages can ever attain the same power and status as, for example, English or French. Ngugi wa Thiong'o has called this condition the "colonisation of the mind".[2] From a linguistic point of view, while the languages continue to be used in most primary contexts (family, community, church, pre- and primary schools), they are kept, as though by some taboo, from being used in all high-status or secondary domains such as science and technology, languages of tuition in secondary and tertiary education, philosophical and social-analytical discourse, among many others. The intelligentsia reinforce this static maintenance syndrome because their relative proficiency in the dominant ex-colonial languages allows them to enjoy what Bourdieu called the "profits of distinction". Sonntag (2003: 6) points out that in

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1   Ironically, the multilingual proficiency of African, and other elites, given the global importance of especially English, is one of their most valuable skills, provided that they are used in order to widen the circles of the beneficiaries of the knowledge society and not, as at present in most cases, to effect "elite closure".

2   Ngugi's views about the cultural and political impact of the hegemony of the colonial languages have been attacked for alleged "linguistic determinism", that is, as deriving from a (very) strong definition of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (see Mazrui and Mazrui, 1998: 53-55). In my view, a careful reading of Ngugi's work as well as his professional practice refutes this construction.

the Anglo-Saxon sphere, such profits are particularly relevant in countries of Kachru's "outer circle", in which she places South Africa, among others.

The intellectualisation of African languages

Against this background, it is clear why the drastic image of "class suicide" is so apt. What is required of the intelligentsia and of students of applied linguistics and language activists is no less than the initiation of the linguistic counterpart of a radical version of NEPAD, that is, the construction of the language infrastructure of the continent as an integral component of the economic development plan and as an inseparable element of the cultural revolution and of the deepening of democracy on the continent. This is an All-African project which, in the domain of language policy and planning, involves what we have elsewhere referred to as the "intellectualisation of the African languages". It is a project that will demand a long-term commitment to language development (corpus planning) and to the use of African languages in all the most powerful domains of social life (status planning), among many other things. As such, it is a long-term, secular process that will test the political will and stamina of the ruling groups of the continent to the full. In this context, the placing and maintenance of African languages in cyberspace as an integral aspect of the virtual reality in which all of us are increasingly "at home" is an essential step if Africa and its peoples are not to be condemned to perpetual outcast status.

Like the electric power grid and the telecommunications networks that are being planned and gradually executed, this intellectualisation project will change the parameters within which all social development on the continent will be able to be conceptualised and implemented. Seen in this perspective, it is obvious that in-depth research on the impact of language use on the economy and of the economy on language use will become decisive since it is on this terrain that the argument for the maintenance and promotion of linguistic diversity will ultimately be won or lost.

My core proposition is that we have to initiate a counter-hegemonic trend in the distribution of symbolic power and cultural capital implicit in the prevailing language dispensation in Africa's education systems. And, let us have no illusions, this is a historic challenge, one which we may not be able to meet adequately. To paraphrase Sibayan (1999: 448), we are called upon to initiate the secular process by which the African languages will gradually eliminate the dominance of English in the controlling domains of language or, at the very least, share those domains with it. In this connection, we have all been heartened by the very welcome developments at the level of the AU, where the African Academy of Languages has become one of its specialised agencies.

It follows that what we have to propagate immediately, intensively and continuously is the rehabilitation of mother-tongue education within the context of a bilingual educational system where the other language in most cases will be English. In other

words, mother-tongue education from the preschool right through to the university with English as a supportive medium, or in some cases, certainly at university level for some time into the future, also as a formative medium. Every African language department at every university or technikon has got to propagate and support this particular demand. The failure of post-colonial African states to base their educational systems on the home languages or at the very least on the languages of the immediate community of the child, more than any other policy or practice, explains the fundamental mediocrity of intellectual production on our continent. We have to persuade our communities about the potential of African languages as languages of power and languages of high status. It is our task as language activists and professionals to do this, it is the task of the political, educational and cultural leadership of the continent to do this and to create the conditions that will make it possible to realise this proposition.

African languages and cyberspace

The tasks alluded to here become enormously more challenging but also more realisable in the context of the new information and communications technologies that are transforming the entire world. The general effects of these epistemologically revolutionary developments have been analysed by many scholars, especially in respect of the electronic media. Besides the specific pragmatics-related effects on especially written text, some of the socio-psychological consequences require careful attention from all who are concerned about the proliferation of ethnic and other group prejudices. On the one hand, it is more than obvious that the availability of the Internet as a tool enables smaller linguistic communities, if they have access to the necessary hardware and software, to take their virtual places alongside all the peoples of the world and to preserve their languages as expressions of modernity. This fact, among many others, indicates that linguistic globalisation, that is, the hegemony of English, is by no means a linear process and that it cannot be taken as a foregone conclusion. There is also no doubt that the Internet is beginning to serve as a kind of linguistic archive for endangered and even extinct languages and that this capacity is of the utmost significance for the preservation of the cultural heritage of all of humanity.

This heritage orientation towards the Internet is in some sense backward-looking and it is, therefore, pertinent to ask how we can best use cyberspace in order to enhance the status and accelerate the use of our languages in all the controlling domains. In this connection, under the aegis of ACALAN, there are the beginnings of important work, especially in respect of the promotion of training in computational linguistics and of terminology development and standardisation for science, technology and other fields. However, the really significant issues have to do with freedom of access to the Internet, the curtailment or, preferably, the outlawing of any obstruction to the Internet whether this emanates from governments or from private sources. As victims of the digital divide, African scholars and people tend on principle and for reasons of self-interest to

be in favour of the maximum of freedom in respect of the Internet and of the digital environment generally.

These are by their very nature not simply technological questions; they are, in fact, political questions par excellence, and the burden of addressing them falls squarely on the shoulders of those who wield power in the world. It is clear, whichever way we approach the matter, that it is in the interest of the periphery to mobilise all those global forces that tend towards more equitable access and use of the planet's resources within the framework of an ecologically responsible code. Specifically with regard to the maintenance and promotion of multilingualism and cultural diversity through the use of the Internet, it is essential that we approach the question in terms of some notion of the optimal balance between local needs and global imperatives. The depressing and disgraceful situation that obtains in respect of the Internet presence of African languages has to be addressed urgently. For African writers, poets and other artists that cannot afford print publishing for all the reasons that we know, the Internet provides the perfect point of entry for the initial dissemination of their works. As such, it can help to create the readership and the publishers' market that can bring about the change in the market value and, thus, in the status of the languages of the continent. The leadership of the African Academy of Languages and of its related associations is essential if we are to make a success of the long journey ahead of us.

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Language and literacy issues in Africa

Ayo Bamgbose

The outcome of a comparison of practices in linguistic diversity and literacy in Europe and Africa would seem, at first sight, to be predictable as it could be assumed that it would turn up more differences than similarities. For one thing, the languages in Africa that are marginalised, particularly in education, are languages indigenous to each country, whereas the languages that have low status in Europe are regional minority languages as well as immigrant languages.[1] For another, since Europe is highly developed, one would hardly expect that funding would be a constraint. Experiences shared during the project, however, indicate that funding of instruction in minority and non-dominant languages is a problem not only in Africa but in Europe as well.

Factors that are common to both Europe and Africa include restricted role and low status of the languages, inadequacy of literacy materials, difficulty in finding and recruiting teachers, indecision and controversy about whether to use the languages as media of instruction, and, if used, what the duration of such use will be and which subjects will be taught in what medium as well as the problem of transition to the use of a dominant language as a medium. This catalogue of problems is a familiar one in early childhood and primary education in Africa. The fact that the same problems are encountered in Europe more than justified the rationale for the project.

Factors that are largely peculiar to Africa are the low level of language development (with many languages hitherto unwritten and several in need of vocabulary expansion so that they may be used in a wider range of domains), outdated and one-size-fits-all materials, initial literacy in an imported official language (such as English or French), and premature abandonment of the mother-tongue medium, usually after the first two or three years of primary education. Most of these factors are responsible for the underdevelopment in education in many African countries.

A constant feature of life in Europe is the presence of immigrant populations. There are three categories of immigrants: long-domiciled immigrants who have largely been integrated into their host communities, recent immigrants (including migrants and guest workers and their dependants) and refugees. Two conventional approaches are adopted in dealing with immigrant populations: One is to subject them to the "melting pot" theory, that is, to require that they be fully integrated with the host community. The other is to provide for pluralism in recognition of the multilingual and multicultural reality, which their presence represents. While the "melting pot" theory may have

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1   In a survey of such languages, Guus Extra and Durk Gorter (2001) refer to them as "the other languages of Europe". Strictly speaking, "immigrant languages" is only a compressed form for "languages of immigrants", since it is people rather than languages that migrate.

worked well for long-domiciled immigrants, it is not feasible for the other two categories of immigrants. The challenge for the state is how to ensure that the education of immigrant children takes account of their languages, while at the same time providing opportunities for the children to proceed to secondary and tertiary education in the language of the host community. With regard to refugees fleeing from conflict zones or natural disaster, there is no alternative to using their languages in the education of their children. Refugees, particularly in Africa, are usually kept in refugee camps and catered for by government or humanitarian agencies. It is accepted that they are likely to be going back to their original homes after the cessation of hostilities. Hence, unless provision is made for the children to receive or continue their education in their languages, there is the danger that they will become misfits when they return to their home community.[1]

Language status question

A recurrent theme in the project was the low status of non-dominant languages, particularly regional minority languages, immigrant languages and African languages. Since the effect of low status affects practically all African languages and large populations of speakers of these languages, they will be used as the focus of this discussion of language status. Three questions will be considered: first, how is low language status manifested? Second, what are the causes of low language status? Third, how can the status of these languages be enhanced?

Low status of African languages is manifested in non-use or minimal use in education, poor funding of language instruction, failure to harness them for information and mass participation, and neglect in the formal economy.

Up till recent times, there are many African countries, mainly former French colonial territories, which have a policy of using French as a medium of instruction for the African child from its first day in school. Even in the other countries, mainly former British colonies, that have the opposite policy of using an African language in the education of an African child, such use is generally limited to the lower classes of the primary school. Certainly, the impression conveyed is that African languages are not worthy to be used for education at all or only useful as a means of gently easing the child into the world of learning in a foreign medium.

Poor funding of language instruction is shown in the lack of attention to the teacher-training component of language education and inadequate supply of materials. Generally, teachers are not given any special training for teaching African languages because there is a mistaken notion that all it takes to teach a language is to be able to speak it. Often, teachers are posted to areas where they do not speak the local languages, thereby making nonsense of a mother-tongue education policy. There is a

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1   The classification adopted here is taken from Bamgbose (2000: 15-16).

general shortage of language teachers. In the case of imported official languages, this problem is solved by intensive teacher training and special incentives for teachers of English or French. However, in the case of African languages, those languages for which teachers are not available are dropped in the curriculum or waivers allowed for them. Materials are often not enough or antiquated. The excuse that is often given by officials is that there are too many languages and the cost of producing material in all of them is prohibitive. It will be shown later that this excuse is no longer tenable.

It is a well-known fact that speakers of imported official languages constitute a small minority of the population of all African countries. Yet the language policy of most African governments is to provide information mainly in the official languages. The effect of this practice is the exclusion of the majority of the population and a negation of the democratic principle of mass participation. Although radio and television programmes in African languages exist, their content is negligible compared with the information disseminated in the imported official languages. Exceptions to this are occasional mobilisation for voting during political campaigns and the fight against the dreaded pandemic of HIV/Aids. If wisdom can prevail in conducting the campaign against HIV infection using the languages that the masses know well, why cannot other valuable information about health, politics, the economy, the environment, and civic rights also be disseminated in African languages?

In most African countries, the formal economy (banking, commerce and industry, mining, manufacturing and multinational corporations) is dominated by the imported official language. The effect of this is the exclusion of the majority of the population from contributing to the formal economy other than as consumers. Suppose the situation is reversed and African languages are also employed in the formal economy, it is obvious that the level of participation will increase and so will the productive capacity. Even if it is admitted that African languages are widely used in the informal economy (such as in the markets, cottage industries and subsistence farming), the fact still remains that the quantum of contribution will be much greater, if such use is extended to the formal economy. The net effect of failure to use the African language resource not only in the formal economy as well as in other domains is underdevelopment that remains a burden to all African nations.

There are many reasons why African languages have a low status, but only three will be the focus of this chapter. These three are: the dominance of African languages by imported colonial languages, the attitudes of the elite and lack of political will.

The dominance of imported official languages can be traced back to colonial language policies, which gave pride of place to these languages as the languages of administration, legislation, law, communication, education and the economy. Post-independence administrations have largely continued these policies and relegated African languages to informal and non-official domains. Coupled with the dominance of the imported official languages is the hegemony associated with them, which generally translates into their aggressive promotion, particularly by agencies devoted to the propagation of these languages. Aid in form of personnel, materials, training, and

funding is easily available for them, while African languages have to make do with meagre and inadequate resources. The net result is that African languages continue to be further disadvantaged.

The failure to promote African languages is in part due to the attitude of the elites that are beneficiaries of a policy that promotes official languages such as English or French. Not only do the English-educated elites benefit, they ensure perpetuation of the advantage by sending their children to prestigious English-medium fee-paying schools, where the children may be taught some French as well. In this connection, it can be observed that the English-educated elites are not averse to bilingual education for their children provided one of the languages is not an African language. It must be conceded that negative attitudes arise mainly from the historical experience of domination and the resulting psychological values. However, speakers of African languages, both elites and non-elites, need to cultivate positive attitudes to their languages, if these languages are to be promoted and used in a wider range of domains.

In addition to the causes already identified, a major reason why African languages are not actively promoted is lack of political will. This manifests itself in poor articulation of language policy, policy formulation without definite implementation strategies, building of escape clauses into policies, and policies that are not backed by provision of enabling funds. It used to be thought that the greatest obstacles to the enhancement of the status of African languages are practical ones, such as funds, personnel or materials. Experience in many countries has shown, on the contrary, that perhaps the greatest constraint is lack of political will. It is this that is largely responsible for the lip service that is paid to the importance of African languages, while, in practice, imported official languages continue to be dominant in most African countries.

There are several ways in which the status of African languages can be enhanced. First, because African languages are at different stages of development, there is need to adopt appropriate language development strategies. For languages that are yet to be reduced to writing, there is need for devising of orthographies, for those that are already written, there may be need for orthographic reform and terminology development, and for all languages, there is need for literary and other texts. Second, African languages need to be empowered through their use in expanded domains. Unless these languages can be used in several domains, without their users requiring translation into an imported official language, the incentive to acquire knowledge through them will not be strong. Third, a necessary corollary to use in wider domains is intellectualisation of these languages. Any time there is a division of labour between African and European official languages such that the latter are for higher academic pursuits and the latter for cultural and artistic expression, a wrong impression is automatically created that African languages are not suitable for higher academic functions. Some ways of achieving intellectualisation include the translation of the constitution and laws of the country as well as major works into African languages and the use of these languages at the tertiary level of education.

Fourth, there is need for attitudinal change on the part of the elites as well as speakers of each language so that there will be justifiable pride in using the languages for non-intimate and formal purposes. Fifth, political will on the part of policy makers and implementers is a necessary requirement for success. Sixth, European nations, particularly the former colonial masters, need to accept responsibility for the current plight of African languages, since the origin of their marginalisation dates back to the colonial period. African leaders have been making demands for reparation and debt forgiveness. There is need to go beyond the economic aspect of these demands to the human development aspect. For example, there is no reason why African debtor nations should not be required to devote a substantial proportion of the forgiven debt to education, including the use of both African languages and imported official languages side by side in bilingual programmes not only for primary but for secondary and tertiary education as well.

Early childhood education

Early childhood education in a multilingual situation is characterised by a variety of practices including the use of one language for initial literacy only, biliteracy, mother-tongue based literacy,[1] dual or multilingual medium, etc. Given the range of practices, it is clear that no single fixed model can be adopted for all situations. Whichever model is adopted, the minimum requirement is that every child should be taught in his/her mother tongue or a language that the child already speaks by the time he/she enrols in the primary school. To insist on this is not only a matter of language rights, it is a linguistic requirement related to concept formation as well as a psychological requirement related to the cultivation of self-confidence, self-worth and identity.

Two recurrent deficits in reports from different countries concern inadequacy of language teachers and materials. As far as the production of materials is concerned, the well-worn arguments about cost are no longer feasible, given developments in technology, which have made possible desktop publishing and facilitated availability of fonts. In addition, new methods of producing materials for smaller languages have been evolved, including co-editions and bilingual/multilingual texts.

In discussions on the use of African languages on the African continent and regional and immigrant languages in Europe, the focus is often on problems, constraints and inadequacies. But there are also positive examples such as the biliteracy project in South Africa in which children learn to read and write in at least two languages simultaneously (Bloch and Alexander, 2003) or the PROPELCA project in Cameroon which began as a small experiment involving literacy in four African languages and has now expanded to literacy in as many as 38 languages. The significance of the

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1   Against the conventional term, "mother-tongue education", Neville Alexander introduces this term to emphasise that more than one language may be involved as long as it includes the mother tongue.

PROPELCA project is that, from the base of zero use of an African language in literacy and as a medium of instruction, it has broken new grounds and introduced such use.

A similar zero base is that of primary education in Burkina Faso in West Africa. A former colony of France, Burkina Faso had until recently a language policy of French only as a medium of instruction at all levels of education. In 1994, a project was started with the use of African languages as media of instruction in primary schools along with French. The primary school certificate examination has shown an overwhelming superior performance by the children in the project schools as compared with the children taught only in French. For example, in the 2004 examination, children in the project schools recorded a success rate of 94.59% as compared with the national average success rate of 73.73%, giving a clear superiority rate of 20.86%.[1] The result of this outstanding performance is that the government has been forced to admit that the case for bilingual education is compelling, and it has now accepted it as a policy. Parents have also embraced it and there are now considerably more applications for enrolment than there are places. Some important lessons are to be learnt from this experience. First, the high success rate and the fact that there are no repeaters or dropouts is evidence that the language medium is a major variable for success. Second, educational authorities are more likely to be persuaded by hard facts as shown in the performance of the project children than papers and abstract presentations on the value of mother-tongue education. Third, parents will opt for what is perceived to be in the best interests of their children. The reason many parents opt for English-medium early education is that they believe that it is bound to give their children a head start. If this belief can be shown to be erroneous and a viable alternative can be presented to them, they will opt for this alternative as parents in Burkina Faso have done.

Co-operation: possible areas, framework and networking

In the course of the project different areas of co-operation were identified:

- comparison of linguistic context and policy support. In particular, a fertile area of co-operation is the situation of African languages as compared with immigrant languages in Europe, with particular reference to their valorisation, teaching and use;

- compilation of ongoing projects with their description and outcomes. It is remarkable that similar problems are being tackled in different countries without researchers in one country being aware of the efforts and the outcomes in other countries;

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1   The report of this project is presented in a pamphlet, "L'education bilingue au Burkina Faso", published by the Ministère de l'Enseignement de Base et de l'Alphabétisation, reporting the situation as of 25 November 2004.

- exchange of information on design, preparation and supply of literacy materials;

- support for projects on children's books;

- exchange of publications and technical reports;

- awareness campaigns about literacy and education in a child's first language;

- possible joint projects and /or support for critical pilot bilingual/multilingual education projects.

A further step from co-operation is formalisation through networking. Some of the strategies for networking include the following:

- building on current links with the African Language Academy, ACALAN;

- compiling a directory of language educators and literacy experts;

- exploiting ICT facilities such as database and websites for contact and information;

- organising periodic review meetings;

- arranging sponsored visits and lecture tours.

Way forward

In order to further pursue the objectives which have been the focus of the project, it will be necessary to intensify current efforts, experiment with new strategies and learn from experiences elsewhere. In particular, the following steps are suggested:

- intensification of language development efforts and simplified computer-based strategies of production of language teaching materials;

- generalisation and dissemination of results from existing projects and possible adaptation in comparable situations;

- local and regional workshops for trainers of language educators;

- support for ACALAN's Plan of Action with regard to compilation of language policies, comparison and adaptation of instructional materials and promotion of African languages;[1]

- collaboration with Unesco in getting member states to renew their commitment to mother-tongue education;

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1 For a list of items in ACALAN's Plan of Action, see ACALAN's Special Bulletin of January 2002, pp. 26-27.

- initiative to provide a language policy component to NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development).

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OSAD's experience in the publishing of books in national languages

Arame Fal

OSAD, the Organisation Sénégalaise d'Appui au Développement (Senegalese Development Support Organisation), a recognised NGO, began working as an association in 1993. Its activities comprise primarily the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of literacy programmes, and teacher training.[1]

In this paper, I shall first of all outline the sociolinguistic context in Senegal and then look at OSAD's experience in publishing literacy material in national languages, with particular emphasis on literature.

Sociolinguistic context[2]

Senegal has a population of almost 10 million, according to the initial results of the 2002 census. French is the official language of the country, although three quarters of the population do not understand it. It is the language of administration, all levels of education, the justice system, the press, public signs, the formal business sector, etc. All government documentation and laws are written in French.

Senegal has 20 or so indigenous languages, all of which are destined to acquire national language status once they have been codified, that is, once a spelling system has been devised, as stipulated in Article 1 of the constitution. For the time being, there are some 15 that meet this criterion. Of these, there are six so-called "first-generation" languages: Wolof (spoken by 70.9% of the Senegalese population according to the official figures from the 1988 census), Pulaar (21.1%), Sereer (13.7%), Manding (6.2%), Joola (5.2%), and Soninke (1.4%). These languages were officially ascribed an alphabet in the very first years of independence, in 1968 to be exact. They are used in literacy education and some of them are being tried out in formal education. Four of these languages (Manding, Pulaar, Soninke and Wolof) are spoken in other countries as well and have national language status in Gambia, Guinea, Mali and Mauritania.

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1   For further information, please consult www.komkom.sn/osad.

2   Cf Fal, A., "The Language Question in Literacy Teaching and Basic Education: The Experience of Senegal", in *Towards a Multilingual Culture of Education*, Unesco Institute for Education, Hamburg, 1995, pp. 391-416.

Each of these first-generation languages has been described, usually in academic theses or papers, in Senegal, in the countries where the same languages are spoken and in American and European universities, giving an overview of the phonology, lexicology and grammatical structure of the language in question. These studies have paved the way for applied research which is so necessary for the practical use of national languages in the modern sector, particularly education. This research work has included general dictionaries, terminological dictionaries, spelling dictionaries, grammar books, and textbooks in various disciplines. Using these documents as a basis, other types of applied research can be carried out in a relatively short space of time by means of computer applications.

The national languages, and Wolof in particular, are very much alive in oral communication; they are widely used in all aspects of daily life, in the audiovisual media, religious sermons (both in Islam and Christianity), advertising, etc. They are the preferred language of the songs of singers with worldwide acclaim such as Baaba Maal (Pulaar), Youssou Ndour (Wolof) and Turekunda (Manding). Every day they are making further headway and inroads into the public sector, topical debates, training seminars for the non-formal business sector, press conferences, etc.

Wolof, which is spoken in all regions of Senegal, is widely used in the speeches made in the National Assembly, but its impact will remain limited until additional steps are taken such as literacy programmes for elected representatives, the translation of regulatory texts and documents, etc. Quite apart from this need in the National Assembly, such practical steps should also be taken for regional and local councils so that these first-generation languages can be fully taken into account in order to bring about genuine democracy.

Education at all levels is in French. However, in certain periods, for example in 1978 and 2001, there have been attempts to introduce national languages into primary schools. What is disconcerting about these experiments, which have taken place in most of French-speaking Africa, is that they always seem to start anew and are never fully carried through. None of these experiments has subsequently been extended more widely. Furthermore, the fact that the national languages are limited to the first two or three years of primary education does nothing to promote their technical development – it is well known that it is only by swimming that you learn how to swim. The deliberate option to avoid the terminological difficulties and problems in adapting the language to scientific expression – which in point of fact all the world's languages have had to cope with – has prevented these languages from developing.

The literacy programme which has been running for more than thirty years has still not reached cruising speed, despite the significant funding injected at the beginning of the 1990s by different donors (World Bank, CIDA, German co-operation, etc.) for new classes and textbooks in the national languages. Its impact is negligible in daily use. The only newspapers written in these languages (for example in Wolof and Pulaar) are generally tied in with literacy initiatives, and are not published on a regular basis. Which is why it is vital to take effective steps to promote newspapers comparable to

those written in French. Now is the time to incorporate, in accordance with arrangements yet to be decided, the national languages into journalism colleges in order to bring about a systematic and professional solution to the problems journalists encounter in modern-day communication. The generally positive work (in information processing, mastery of the language, lexical enrichment, etc.) accomplished by journalists with the advent of private radio stations around 1993 and 1994 has had a profound impact on citizenship education for the non-literate. This should now be repeated in the press sector. If this were done, the low print run of newspapers could be considerably increased (in Senegal, for example, around 20 000 copies of newspapers are printed for a population of some 10 million; this is very small). And it would also be a way for the media to perform its duty in terms of information and education.

What OSAD does

When OSAD began its work to combat illiteracy at the beginning of the 1990s, there were clear shortcomings which needed to be tackled. I shall discuss in particular two of these, namely the inappropriate teaching approach and the very few publications available in the national languages.

Adult literacy programmes simply replicated the first two years of primary school education, using the same material, the same teaching approach and the same pace, despite the fact that the learners in question were radically different. On the one hand, we had courses for 6 to 7 year olds who in most cases were being introduced to the language of instruction (French) at the same time as they were learning the basics – reading, writing and arithmetic. On the other, we had adults who spoke the language perfectly, sometimes even better than the teacher, and who knew how to count (some of them were in fact very gifted in mental arithmetic, as anyone can see in dealings with some non-literate traders). Which is why OSAD sought to come up with an approach geared to the target audience. Subsequently, it focused on designing basic modules which would achieve the objectives set; these were, a syllabary, an arithmetic book, handbooks to help teachers use the textbooks and a writing book, showing the different stages in reproducing a letter of the alphabet.

From the feedback obtained, the learners assimilate what they are taught after five to six months of teaching, three hours per day, five days per week. Clearly, the phonological approach of the spelling system adopted makes things considerably easier. In point of fact, it is beneficial to differentiate between the spelling system adopted for the national languages and the French spelling system. The difficulties in French spelling are partly due to the fact that the same phoneme can be represented in writing in several different ways. For example, the phoneme /k/[1] is represented by several different letters: the letter *k* in kilo /kilo/, the letter *c* in corps /kor/, the letter *q*

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1   Phonemes are enclosed within slash marks.

in coq /kok/, the combination *qu* in époque /epok/, and *ch* in écho /eko/. Furthermore, the same letter can represent several phonemes, for example the letter *c* represents the phoneme /k/ in corps /kor/ as indicated above, but it also represents the phoneme /s/ in the word lacet /lase/. Phonological spelling, based on the principle that each phoneme corresponds to one letter, makes learning to read and write much faster, as has been shown by the Senegalese experiments with using national languages which began in 1978. Although these experiments were ill-prepared in terms of teacher training, the involvement of the key players and the production of teaching material, after the first year of primary school spelling had been mastered, whereas after five or six years of attending school in French, pupils have far from mastered spelling. In upper primary and even secondary education, much of the syllabus is still devoted to exercises designed to develop correct spelling, sometimes to the detriment of more formative subjects, such as art and an introduction to science and technology, etc.

In parallel to developing these basic instruments, OSAD has also been working on making available adequate and regularly updated documentation, enabling literate learners to find relevant information in their field of activity or to satisfy their interest in fiction. It has focused on two priority areas: non-specialist health care information material, as there is a severe shortage of education resources for the non-literate population, and promoting literature in the national languages so as to broaden the population's interests, in addition to its impact on awareness-raising activities. OSAD does not totally ignore the requirements for technical training in other sectors such as market gardening, project management, environmental protection, etc., but for the time being they are left to operators working on the ground. The latter can, moreover, ask for relevant modules to be drawn up at any time.

As far as non-specialist health care information is concerned, OSAD seeks to translate parts of the WHO programme, producing information and training modules for the majority of the non-French-speaking population. It has produced handbooks on the expanded programme on immunisation, breastfeeding, safe motherhood and nutrition. Forthcoming productions will cover AIDS and malaria.

The approach adopted involves working throughout the whole process with specialists who speak the language in question. Once the content has been decided on, translation work can begin and terminological problems sorted out following additional research. A similar approach has been adopted for arithmetic.

Literature in the national languages

Although it is deeply unfortunate, very little emphasis is placed on literature in the literacy programmes. The reason for this is that some of the operators have a narrow, productivist view of functional literacy, so much so that the only documents acceptable in their eyes, apart from the textbooks teaching the basics of reading and writing, cover

the topics of relevance to the operator in question (environment, management, market gardening, etc.).

The fact is, however, that it is extremely important to cultivate the pleasure of reading through works of fiction, not forgetting that such works can provide useful discussion subjects during classes. Contrary to what is generally thought, some of the national languages, particularly Wolof and Pulaar, have a well-established written literature. Below, I shall focus on the literature written in Wolof, which is most familiar to me. It is written using both Arabic characters (Wolofal) and Latin characters.

Literature in Arabic script

Wolof written literature began in Islamic teaching centres and used the Arabic alphabet which the marabouts (Muslim spiritual guides) adapted to the sounds of the language, incorporating letters for sounds which do not occur in Arabic (for example, /p/ and /ñ/). This writing system is called Wolofal.

Initially, this literature was familiar only to those who could read Arabic or, orally, perhaps to a small section of the population who had paid attention to the poems sung by the beggars visiting the houses in some of the larger towns such as Saint-Louis. It became much more widely known with the advent of cassettes, largely thanks to the significant efforts of members of the major religious brotherhoods in Senegal who promoted this literature and produced and sold cassettes.

The poems recited at the *Gàmmu* (commemoration of the birth of the prophet Muhammad) and *Màggal* (commemoration of major religious events), organised regularly not only in Senegal but also in the United States and Europe, also had a profound impact.

The themes addressed are not merely religious, whereby the poets expressed their allegiance to their personal marabout, but also social, dealing with problems such as drought and its consequences, the conduct of women, love, etc. Senegal's difficult economic situation in 1929 greatly influenced the poet Moussa Ka in *Xarnu bi* (*The Century*). The works of these masters have inspired many Wolof popular singers and this is an effective means of making them better known. The transliteration into Latin characters of works by Serigne Moussa Ka and Serigne Mbaye Diakhaté (another Mouride poet) by the Laboratoires de Linguistique et d'Islamologie at the IFAN (Institut fondamental d'Afrique noire) has enabled this literature to become more widely known not only among French-speakers (academics, teachers, civil servants, etc.), but also among the newly literate, taught to read the Latin script. These works have also influenced authors who write using the Latin alphabet.

Literature in Latin script

The authors who write in the Latin alphabet include the renowned French-speaking writer Cheikh Aliou Ndao (author of *Buur Tilleen*, a novel in Wolof, later translated into French and published by Présence africaine), and Assane Sylla, who in addition to his own works has translated the poems of, amongst others, Leconte de Lisle and Victor Hugo. These are the pioneers who in Grenoble in 1958, under the auspices of Cheikh Anta Diop, and with the participation of Abdoulaye Wade, President of Senegal, Saliou Kandji and others, created the first syllabary in Wolof, *Ijjib Wolof*. Subsequently, Mamadou Diarra Diouf and Cheikh Adramé Diakhaté wrote on themes dealing respectively with the ill-treatment of women (*Yari Jamono*) and emigration to Europe (*Janeer)*.[1] In this latter work written in 1997, the author, somewhat ahead of his time, deals with a subject which is now topical in both Europe and Africa, and in particular Senegal, the departure point for the dugout boats which brave the Atlantic Ocean. In *Doomi golo* (literally, "the monkey's children"), Boubacar Boris Diop, another great name in French-speaking literature, takes a critical look at the government of transition which has been in power in Senegal since 2000.

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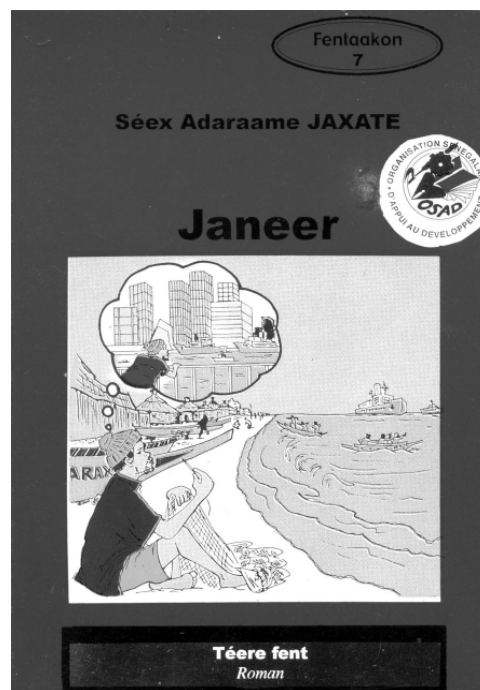
1   A Wolof word meaning mirage.

Mame Younousse Dieng, a headmistress who in the 1960s translated the Senegalese national anthem into Wolof, is the author of the novel *Aawo bi* (*The First Wife*), and a novel in French, *L'ombre en feu* (*The shadow aflame*), shortlisted a few years ago for the Grand Prix du Président de la République literary prize. Kura Saar did not attend French school, but had literacy lessons in Wolof. At present she works as a shrimp seller in the Elisabeth Diouf market in Dakar. Her poems deal with the evils of colonialism, arguing against *xeesal*, "the artificial whitening of the skin". Mame Ngoy Cissé is a secretary at the Institut fondamental d'Afrique noire. Through working on Wolof texts for publication, she mastered how to write it, giving her an excellent opportunity to record the folk tales told her by her mother in *Liggéeyu ndey: añub doom* (*A Mother's Work, A Child's Wage*). Ndey Daba Ñaan, secretary and then literacy project co-ordinator, describes in *Séy Xare* (*Marriage is a Battle*) the difficulties faced by married couples, highlighting a husband's physical violence against his wife.

Most of the authors mentioned are members of the Union of Writers in National Languages (UESLAN) whose president is Cheikh Adramé Diakhaté, a French teacher at the Abdoulaye Sadji lycée in Rufisque, near Dakar. This association, founded in the early 1990s, works tirelessly to promote literature in the national languages, via lectures and radio broadcasts.

The publications are bought by NGOs involved in literacy programmes, research teachers, and private individuals from both the formal and non-formal education sectors. The works are published by a small team of OSAD founder members, all voluntary workers, with the help of a paid secretary responsible for typing and formatting. There is generally a print run of 1 000 copies, for obvious reasons of the limited funds available, but for most of the titles there have been several reprints. Here I would like to pay tribute to Mariétou Diongue Diop, former director of books and reading, who extended the Publishing Assistance Fund, formerly restricted to French language literature, to cover the national languages. Alongside OSAD, other organisations are involved in literature in the national languages, mainly Pulaar. Two examples are Ared and Papyrus.

Bilingual publications in French and the national languages produced by various bodies (IFAN, Ch. A. Diop, Enda-Tiers Monde, etc.) are becoming more widely available. Recent examples are *Les Jumeaux de Diyakunda*/*Séexi Diyakundaa* (Falia-Editions-Enfance, 2002), *Il était une fois en Europe …*/*Benn bés la woon …*, a collection of tales in European languages (French, Dutch, Czech, German, Luxemburgish)/Wolof, published with the participation of Groupe Culture Europe, 2002 (European Centre for Modern Languages, ECML, Graz). It was because of the shortage of children's books with an African content that the Bibliothèque – Lecture – Développement (BLD), a partner of the Canadian charity organisation CODE in Senegal added a publishing dimension to its programme from 1996 onwards. In order to promote the national languages, all its publications are bilingual: French-Wolof and French-Pulaar. The

books published include titles by Ngaari Mawndi, *The Fantastic Bull, Djinns of All Colours* and *The Daughter of the Black Pharaoh*.

This rather incomplete overview was intended just to show that literature in the national languages is beginning to emerge, and OSAD has contributed significantly to this by seeking from the very outset not only to depart from the productivist logic which excluded literature from the material intended for the newly literate, but also to impose a degree of quality for books in the national languages.

OSAD intends to continue its publishing work to meet the needs expressed in all fields that are essential for the population's basic education. With the advent of the decentralisation policy and the urgent need to train local councillors, many of whom are not literate, it has started work on drafting a handbook on citizenship education.

Raising citizen awareness in the learning of African languages: approach and experience of the AfricAvenir Foundation in Cameroon

Prince Kum'a Ndumbe III

Introduction

"I can speak and write my language. Can you?" is written on the T-shirts of the staff, trainees and voluntary workers at the AfricAvenir Foundation in Douala. In Cameroon, under German, then English and French administration, pupils, students and teachers spoke and wrote their own languages less and less, because of the goal of French and English bilingualism that became a national policy, the idea being to safeguard the French-speaking and English-speaking legacy of the old Cameroon. There is no place for the languages of Cameroon themselves either in the government structures or education; this, according to official arguments, is for the sake of progress and rapid development. AfricAvenir strongly takes issue with a French-English bilingual policy in a multilingual country with 279 languages. There is some research and learning of the languages of Cameroon confined to academic departments in just a few universities. The teaching of some of the country's languages in a very few pilot schools is thanks entirely to the "foolhardy" courage and apparently senseless devotion of certain pioneers.[1]

The bottom line for AfricAvenir is that in a multilingual country such as Cameroon, speaking, writing and communicating in one's mother tongue is a fundamental citizen's right and the very basis for multilingualism and economic development, founded on its own achievements and international support. The people of Cameroon are not monoglots, their day-to-day experience has always been multilingual and not bilingual, in strictly French-English terms. The imposition of French and English, both of which are foreign to Cameroonians as regards structure, way of thinking and vision of the world, alongside the exclusion and total marginalisation of the Cameroonian languages, is akin to the intellectual, cultural and spiritual "genocide" of our people. Such "genocide" may be conscious or unconscious, but it is still "genocide".

A people that loses its language or languages is a people that loses is words, and when a people loses its words, it loses its soul and its vision of the world. When this happens, the community in question becomes lodged in dependence that lasts until it recovers its words and begins to articulate its past, present and future, nationally and

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[1] Cf. the work of Professor Maurice Tadadjeu (1990, 1997) and his teams at the NACALCO (National Association of Cameroonian Language Committees) in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

internationally. Linguistic colonialism is not an opening, it is the planned destruction of the personality, psyche and dreams of the colonised or post-colonised, all wrapped up in fine words about emerging from dialectal barbarism, about access to the modernity of the universal languages. But in Africa, we know that a baobab, if it is to reach for the skies, must establish its roots deep in the soil of its ancestors. And even in the modern Africa of today, when things become important and serious, all our rituals take place in our own languages. French and English disappear, almost magically, from our sacred places. It is above all when the divine is an import or extroversion that the language underlying the ritual is European. Our language conveys the dynamism of the world which is at the very heart of modern Africa, it traces the contours of the rehabilitation and rebirth of the African people in their dignity and in their present-day and future creations. It is our languages that will form the basis of our imagination and of the inventiveness of the modern African world. Our education system will one day have to learn from this African renaissance. This will require courage and wisely calculated fearlessness from the politicians who care about the future of the nation. Civil society too must shoulder its responsibilities, launch a debate on why it is necessary to use our languages, bring the debate out of the university language laboratories, inform public opinion and force the issue upon politicians.[1]

The global approach method with dialogue forums and African palavers

The global approach method

What is the best approach to take vis-à-vis the public authorities that have opted for French-English bilingualism and to raise the awareness of citizens who have been educated in this narrow and exclusive bilingualism without marginalising oneself? We have chosen the global approach method,[2] which means taking a holistic approach to an issue, viewing it from many angles, drawing on a variety of means, involving both the relevant players in the different social strata and international partners. The issue is not dealt with for just two or three days, but over a long period, sometimes lasting several months.

The global approach is addressed not only to the general public, but also to policy makers, the economic sector, and primary, secondary and higher education; it involves parents too and a conscious effort is made to make diplomatic missions, key partners in

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1 Consult the special edition of the *Dialogue Forum* on national languages, cf. *Dialogue Forum – Journal d'AfricAvenir – Foundation for Development, International Co-operation and Peace*, Vol. 2/2004, Douala, December 2004/January 2005.

2 Kum'a Ndumbe III, "African Renaissance, Development Cooperation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution – The Global Approach in Political Science and Research on African Politics – A Training Program for Development Experts and for Master's Degree", AfricAvenir, Douala/Berlin, 2001.

our country, aware of the issue. European internees, whether engineers, economists or political scientists, have been closely involved in the implementation of the project on Cameroonian languages and have found it to be of significant academic interest and personally rewarding. They have become aware of a situation, the gravity of which had escaped them. Previously they had thought that it went without saying that Africans used European languages (and that this was a great advantage for them). Their reports are most informative.[1]

In the global approach, the media is seen as a means of support, information and education. The buildings of the AfricAvenir Foundation with its multi-purpose rooms, the Cheikh Anta Diop library and its website (www.africavenir.org) are made available for issues to be addressed and also provide a forum for reflection, research, expression, dialogue and meetings to analyse problems and come up with viable solutions.

Dialogue forums and African palavers

The dialogue forums are held in French or English and are somewhat like seminars with a moderator or panel of experts in front of the auditorium. However, in the forums, the expert introduces the subject to an extremely mixed audience of all ages, including other experts, professionals, people of average education, students and the unemployed. The moderator must therefore ensure that the language he uses is readily understandable, even when dealing with a complex subject. In general, even the youngest members of the audience who take the floor are not interrupted; the principle of listening to what everyone else has to say is on the whole upheld.

Some four dialogue forums on the question of national languages were held between February and March 2004. The emphasis was placed on the role of folk tales in national languages in the transmission of values and knowledge, on the use of national languages as the main languages of instruction and on folk tales as a means of introducing our languages into the educational system. These lively debates attracted many people and it was sometimes difficult to bring the debates to a close after four hours of exchanges.

The African palavers are held in the Cameroonian languages of the region, often outdoors, with the audience and the speaker all seated in a circle. Everyone is allowed to speak at length in their own language or the language of their choice, without being interrupted. Sometimes, translation is necessary, either into the dominant language of the area, or into English or French. Unlike the dialogue forums, much use is made of proverbs, riddles and songs; folk tales may be summarised or a few dance steps may be used to agree with or refute an argument. African palavers are held in town districts and villages and deal with the same subjects as those debated in the dialogue forums.

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1   Report by Christof Mauersberger, Free University of Berlin (www.africavenir.org).

Art as a means of awareness raising

Folk-tale afternoons in nursery schools

We organised five folk-tale afternoons with traditional dances in the nursery schools of Bonaberi and Bonanjo in Douala. It was the first time that these schools had groups of storytellers in the Cameroonian languages, in Wolof and in French come to tell stories to the children and get them dancing to local songs.

Folk-tale evenings

The folk-tale evenings were organised in February, March and April 2004 with the "Jeki la Njamba Inono" epic, told by Gaston Eboumbou's Bongongi ba Bele Bele group. The epic was recited in four episodes on four evenings with traditional Duala music to the accompaniment of drums, Mikeng,[1] songs and dances. The tale was transformed into an ornate spectacle, a dance in the pure African tradition. One thing struck us: the audience also comprised people from other regions of Cameroon, Germans and Austrians, but everybody stayed for the full three or four hours of a show entirely in Duala.

The same thing occurred on 21 February during the folk-tale evening by Babacar Mbaye Ndaak in Wolof at Douala and Kribi. This storyteller from Dakar in Senegal gave just a brief explanation of the tale at the beginning, and the rest was self-evident. And the same thing happened a third time on 9 October at an evening of folk tales in Duala, Bassa, Ewondo and Tpuri. The brief summary at the beginning was sufficient, and the audience who spoke different Cameroonian languages always joined in with the storyteller's refrains.

The power of folk tales to unite people was seen in Kribi in late February when Cameroonians, Senegalese, Germans and Austrians gathered on the shores of the Atlantic Ocean, each one reciting folk tales from their own country. Several months later, we were pleasantly surprised to find the Wolof tale translated into German and the Austrian tale from that evening performed in Dakar in Wolof. In 2006, Babacar Mbaye was invited by these German friends and went on a two-week tour of storytelling in several towns and cities in Germany.

The cinema – Education with films in African languages

Throughout 2004 several African films were screened in their original version with subtitles. These were mainly films from Burkina Faso and Senegal, subtitled in French. The message we wanted to pass on hit home: it is possible to make an African film in

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1   Bell-shaped percussion instrument.

an African language in order to retain its authenticity and flavour, and by subtitling it in English or French it becomes accessible at international level.

Church choirs

In February 2004, AfricAvenir invited "Ndol'a Christo" and "Tabitha", two church choirs, to perform. The intention was to bring them out of the churches and present them to a varied audience, secular, Christian, Muslim and animist.

We also encouraged church ministers to give their sermons in the local language instead of inflicting their preaching in French or English on the faithful of a parish who all spoke the same language.

Rap concert in the national languages

A rap concert in the languages of Cameroon was organised for young people on 27 November 2004. There was no real prize as such, but it was an entertaining way of getting people to become aware of the importance and possibilities of the national languages in the new music scene. Most of the audience were secondary school pupils, students and the young unemployed.

Public reading material, research and awareness raising in the university sector

Public reading material

Throughout 2004, AfricAvenir acquired newspapers written in the languages of Cameroon from Professor Maurice Tadadjeu's association, NACALCO, in Yaoundé. They were placed in the reading room of the AfricAvenir Foundation and were the focus of much attention. Some readers were flattered to see newspapers written in their language available in the Foundation alongside French and English-language newspapers. Unfortunately, the newspapers do not appear regularly, are poorly printed and are available only in Yaoundé.

In addition, reading books, grammars and dictionaries in the Cameroonian languages were often made available to the public in the reading room.

Archive research

To support our work on the national languages spoken in Cameroon, AfricAvenir asked two researchers to collect folk tales in these languages held in German and Austrian archives which had been compiled during the German protectorate in Cameroon. These

folk tales in Duala, Bulu, Ewondo, Bassa, Fulfuldé. Etc., are now in the Cheikh Anta Diop Library in the foundation and are available for consultation by teachers and performing artists.

Also available now in the library is a collection of African folk tales recorded between 1908 and 1991, transferred onto CD by the sound archives of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. The CD was made at a workshop organised by the European Centre for Modern Languages during the intercultural exchange with Africa in June 2005.

University work

Throughout 2004, I carried out awareness-raising work in the Department of Foreign Languages and Civilisation at the University of Yaoundé I. The aim was to try and make students studying German, Spanish, Italian, etc., for their degree, master's or doctorate understand that in order to excel in these subjects it was essential for them to master their own mother tongue, and that if they mastered only French or English but remained ignorant of their own languages, it would be difficult for them to contribute to the development of their country and the self-fulfilment of their people, which would be a disaster. As a result of this effort, a master's student from the German section began work on a thesis on the collection of folk tales in Ewondo compiled during the German colonial period in Cameroon.

In this connection, two main findings emerged from the debates between teachers and students in this department:

- language teachers in Cameroon working in the primary, secondary and higher education sectors teach English, French, German, Spanish, Italian and, more recently, Russian and Arabic, but are not literate in their own languages; they are therefore contributing to the destructuring of the personality of their pupils;

- teachers of African and Cameroonian languages constitute a very small minority among language teachers;

- a committed policy on Cameroonian national languages which fails to raise the awareness of teachers of European languages and get them on board will remain marginal and largely ineffective.

Discussions are currently taking place in the Department of Foreign Languages and Civilisation to see how students there could be encouraged to follow optional courses in the Department of African Languages and incorporate Cameroonian languages in multidisciplinary research and Germanic comparative studies. As almost all language teachers work with foreign languages, incorporating African languages into training, research and teaching could be a way of promoting Cameroonian languages at national level.

Language competitions between secondary schools and active media support

Language competitions between secondary schools

We worked actively between September and December 2004 with various secondary schools in Bonaberi-Douala. With the authorisation of the head teachers, our staff went into the classrooms to explain directly to the pupils the aim of our action to promote the use of mother tongues. Having convinced both pupils and teachers, we made a further visit suggesting a Cameroonian language competition between schools, with quarter-finals, semi-finals and finals. Some 1 600 pupils from 16 schools took part. Each participant was required to read, write, tell a story, do maths and sing in his or her own mother tongue. Groups from each school also had to present a mini-dance with songs in one or more Cameroonian languages. The competition was held in a room full to overflowing, with a panel comprising teachers, parents and other volunteers. We had to hire tarpaulins and chairs placed outside, and set up loudspeakers so that everybody could follow the event. The pupils taking part in the competition never came alone but brought along with them a huge delegation from their school and their families to give them loud support. The quarter finals, semi-finals and finals had an audience of between 300 and 500. One child, who felt responsible for his school's being knocked out of the semi-finals started shouting at his mother: "It's your fault. You won't let us speak our language at home! You make us speak nothing but French! It's your fault we didn't get through!"

Parents who are keen to see their children do well in the exclusively bilingual (French/English) school system in Cameroon try to encourage the use of those languages at home, and do not speak to their children in their own mother tongue. The children grow up and are unable to speak their own language. The school competition organised by AfricAvenir offered prizes to the winners, but there was a bonus: pupils were ashamed that they were unable to speak their own mother tongue and this encouraged them to do something about this sad state of affairs.

Industrial firms in Douala made a considerable contribution to the competition. They provided various items: T-shirts, baseball caps, chocolates, snacks, drinks, exercise books, books, pens, etc. The competition was also greatly assisted by the physical presence of the Sawa kings, including the head chief, Bakoko Njocke Essawe, and a financial contribution to the final from 80-year-old Prince René Douala Manga Bell.

For the final, the hall was full to the brim. First place was awarded to the Collège du Levant, with Collège Nguesson coming second and CES Sodiko third. There was much press, radio and television coverage of the pupils and their schools. Following the competition, negotiations began with an Austrian organisation to twin these schools with three in Austria.

Active media support

From the outset, AfricAvenir sought and obtained active media support. During the three months of events, journalists attended the dialogue forums, the African palavers in the villages, the visits to schools, the folk-tale evenings and, of course, the language competition.

Radio Dynamic FM had organised, in partnership with the foundation, a parallel competition on Cameroonian languages for its listeners. AfricAvenir sent the questions to be broadcast on the radio, the listeners replied on air in the Cameroonian languages and the winners were invited to collect their prizes at the foundation. Several interviews and panel discussions with those taking part in the various events were broadcast on Dynamic FM, Radio Equinoxe, Radio Cameroun, Sweet FM, Nostalgie FM and Radio Bonnes Nouvelles. Several articles in the press have been posted on the foundation's website (www.africavenir.org). The television channels CRTV and Canal 2 broadcast reports and the major newspapers such as *Le Messager*, *Mutations*, *Cameroon Tribune*, *La Nouvelle Expression* and *Le Popoli* regularly published interviews and in-depth articles. In its edition of 21 December 2004, the government daily, *Cameroon Tribune*, praised the national languages competition for several reasons, adding that there should be more such initiatives, not only to enable everyone to find delight once again in their mother tongue, but also to enable them to learn more about other Cameroonian languages. The paper said that this would also help overcome the complexes harboured by those who swore only by languages from elsewhere, considering their own as mere dialects or patois. It hoped the competition would become a regular event.

Thanks to the active presence of the media and the commitment of the journalists over four months, the foundation's work on raising citizen awareness regarding the learning of national languages had a significant effect throughout the country.

In order to document the debate on the issue, the December 2004/January 2005 edition of AfricAvenir's newsletter *Dialogue Forum* (16 pages in tabloid format) was devoted to the question of national languages in education and communication. This edition, of which 2 000 copies were printed, was distributed to schools and universities, and also to public and private authorities.

Conclusion

This project in 2004 was 80% financed by the Austrian Ministry of Science and Culture (BM:BWK) and the remaining 20% by the AfricAvenir Foundation.[1] It must be said that it would have been impossible without the firm commitment of Ms Monika Goodenough-Hofmann of the Austrian ministry, who was fired with the need to give

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1   The AfricAvenir project is part of the Linguistic diversity and literacy in a global perspective (LDL) project, European Centre for Modern Languages, Graz, Austria (www.ecml.at/mtp2/ldl).

back to the children of Africa their languages and to pave the way for a dialogue with the unified greater Europe, which on a daily basis experienced multilingualism within its national borders. Without the commitment of the BM:BWK, supported by the Austrian Section of Unesco in this pilot phase of the project, we would never have been able to implement it in time and in as much detail. Because of a lack of funding following the 2004 pilot phase, the project was interrupted in January 2005.

The question of learning and using African languages at school and in communication in general is not a matter exclusively for specialists in African languages. The project showed that the population as a whole, pupils, teachers and parents readily understand the importance of this issue and are willing to do something about it. The official policy of exclusively French-English bilingualism decided by the government just does not tie in with the day-to-day reality of the people of Cameroon, even though the desire for harmonisation and unification is vitally important. Civil society has to become involved to endorse the conclusion reached by African language specialists: it is essential to introduce Cameroonian languages as languages of instruction in schools and it is important for our languages to be the foundation for economic, political, social and cultural development. These languages will then be better mastered and will play a key role as languages of outreach and dialogue.

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Putting little books into little hands in the Year of African Languages: a stories across Africa project initiative

Carole Bloch

> So I say, stories are there to be shared, to mould us, to teach us values, sometimes to tickle us and make us laugh uncontrollably, to take our minds to the worlds of Make Believe, of Never Never Land, of Bhakubha … the list is endless, and so is the capacity of our imaginations.
> (Mhlope, 1996: 1)

Introduction

The decades following colonial rule in Africa have brought serious challenges to governments and their various partners attempting to instil and sustain widespread reading and writing habits among diverse, largely oral communities living under harsh political and social conditions (Triebel, 2001: 21).

Language policies forcing the use of ex-colonial languages during and since colonialism have led to a serious neglect and underdevelopment of African languages for high status purposes, particularly as languages for reading and writing.[1] The oral tradition, with its great potential to impart knowledge and to function as a bridge to literacy has been sorely neglected in primary education systems, presumably to a significant extent as a consequence of the low status of African languages and the corresponding loss in perceived value to traditional social and cultural practices that were communicated through these languages.

Nowhere is this felt more keenly than in early childhood where the "modernising" wave of Universal Primary Education, intended to bring equal life chances for all African children, has largely failed to inspire a new generation of readers and writers. Rather it has adopted and reinforced the widely accepted view on the continent that reading and writing are technical skills, learned by exercising sets of discrete and decontextualised components, which have to be mastered before any child engages in authentic reading or writing. The negative effect of this approach is compounded by the

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[1] A major exception is the continuity of the tradition of reading in African languages for Christianity, established by missionaries in various parts of the continent. Writing has been harnessed and used for powerful religious purposes to such an extent that it is as if "literacy comes directly from God and not via the compromised agency of missionaries" (Hofmeyer, 2005: 3).

fact that although the first three years of schooling might be in mother tongue,[1] the pressure is towards teaching and learning the ex-colonial language, "the sooner the better". Often teachers themselves do not know the particular language well enough to teach in, nor are they adequately trained in foreign or second language methods. What is being taught can thus be literally incomprehensible to the young learners.

A sad and damaging "side effect" of this has been that the categorisation of storybooks as "supplementary materials" has become accepted as "normal" in Africa.[2] Reflecting the notion and reality that the significant initial texts are textbooks which focus on systematic teaching of letter-sound relationships and other identifiable skills couched in small restricted language texts, this has contributed further to the once cherished power and wisdom of stories shrinking into insignificance in the eyes of teachers and others responsible for early childhood education. Moreover, at home the habit of storytelling has dwindled and even died for many families as they struggle to survive.

Any real educator knows that it is stories that speak to our emotions and nurture our imaginations and our intellect – our languages and our literacies. There has been a small and struggling children's literature movement in several countries since independence, contributed to by some of Africa's greatest writers like Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Chinua Achebe, the concentration has been on stories for children at an age when they could already read.

But when young children are beginning to learn to read, instead of celebrating the oral heritage, and using it as a foundation for moving them into mother tongue literacy as they embark on the strange newness of school, misguided teacher training and curriculum implementation programmes for early literacy turn children's attention instead towards mind-numbing, rote learning of seemingly pointless skills. So although young children are expected to learn to read and write at more or less the same time as their peers in the North, most do so without any real conception of why people find it useful or enjoyable to read and write or why they should bother to learn.

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1   This varies depending on the current language policy of a particular country. In many cases, children (and teachers) have had to operate in English (or French or Portuguese) from the first day of school.

2   Supplementary materials are defined by Unesco (2001: 4) as "including work books, reading programmes or schemes, children's fiction (easy readers, stories, plays and anthologies), children's non-fiction, audio tapes, video tapes, multimedia learning packages …", namely anything that is not a textbook.

Opportunities for change

Several initiatives to produce storybooks for older children have taken place over the years (Montagnes, 2001: 28) but sustainability has always been a major problem. With the demise of apartheid in South Africa, the last decade has brought a recognition that there are serious inadequacies with the way that most young children are being taught literacy[1] and an exchange of international theoretical and practical insights on early language and literacy has led to opportunities for change in the South African school curriculum (South African Department of Education, 2004). This is spreading to and reinforcing complementary initiatives in other African countries. A very hopeful sign is that the perspective is emerging that teaching skills is not enough; a "culture of reading" where people have personally meaningful reasons to read and the development of literate environments that support reading and writing habits are critical.

Conceptions of literacy as social practice (Street, 1984) and emergent literacy (Hall, 1987) and whole language (Goodman, 1986) in early childhood are finding their way into curriculum documents (Western Cape Education Department, 2006). Debates are taking place about issues such as the importance of young children learning in their mother tongue or a familiar language, the benefits of reading for enjoyment, and the need for appropriate storybooks in relevant languages. At the same time, initiatives are under way to address these and other issues.

I now discuss the work-in progress of one such initiative – a pilot of the Stories across Africa (StAAf) project[2] that is concentrating on creating a pan-African children's literature as part of the drive to enable and support "reading culture" development across the continent.

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1   Results from recent large-scale literacy testing of grade 3 and grade 6 children in the Western Cape Province of South Africa provide a graphic example of the shocking situation, common in different parts of Africa, where despite initiatives to implement effective education through learner-centred teaching methods, huge numbers of children remain unable to become readers and writers (Western Cape Education Department, 2004).

2   StAAf is a core project of the African Academy of Languages (ACALAN), the official language body of the African Union (AU).

Stories across Africa pilot project: Little books for little hands

Thus far in Africa very few storybooks have been originated for children to experience in their early childhood, either in the ex-colonial languages, or in African languages.

StAAf is a pan-African project which began in 2004 intending to:

- develop and support the use of African languages in print;

- support mother-tongue-based bilingual education[1] in Africa;

- stimulate and support the African publishing industry and African literary and visual artists to create and foster the use of children's literature;

- begin to create a common store of written children's literature for African children;

- support possibilities for reading for enjoyment as part of literacy learning and development.

Stories, old and new from all corners of Africa, are being gathered for the development of anthologies for children from birth to teens so that wherever they live, the same universe of concepts and stories is available to them, in their own, or a familiar language. The process is being co-ordinated centrally by the Early Literacy Unit at the Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa (PRAESA) and by regional working groups in the five regions of Africa.[2]

To mark the AU Year of African Languages (2006/07), StAAf is developing a special set of little books for young children (0-6 years old) in a range of indigenous languages as well as the five AU official languages, French, Portuguese, Kiswahili, Arabic and English. These Little Hands picture books (10 cm x 10 cm) were modelled on the Pixi Books, popular with young children and those who read with them in Europe for over fifty years.

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1 This phrase refers to an educational system in which the mother tongue (or the language(s) of primary socialisation of the child) is used as the language of teaching as far as possible and if it is either replaced or complemented by a language of wider, or of international, communication, is never abandoned but rather sustained as a complementary language of teaching or as a subject taught by well-qualified L1 language teachers.

2 There is a StAAf steering committee made up of central co-ordinator, the regional working group co-ordinators and an adviser, who are based in Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Tanzania, South Africa and Rwanda.

The format was adopted because young children are attracted to and can easily hold and handle the sturdy, text light, brightly illustrated little books. It also allows for a very cost-effective method of producing large numbers of high quality books.[1]

Procedure for developing a pan-African set of Little Hands books

In conceptualising the pilot project, decisions had to be taken about how to set the limits of what may be possible within a given time frame. Guided by ACALAN's policy for languages, who our committed collaborating partners may be, and what we perceive our publishing and distribution capacity to be, a funding proposal was developed with a possible scenario in mind in terms of the languages, countries and numbers of books.

ACALAN's focus of attention for their work is initially on the AU official languages[2] and cross-border languages to cover the regions of Africa. However, in terms of capacity, we made the decision to work with our network of colleagues with whom we have productive working relationships in terms of book production and distribution. Distribution is a critical issue as it can contribute greatly to meeting our ultimate goal of actually getting children familiar with books and reading for enjoyment. The first step is having access to books in a language you can understand. But it is equally essential that the adults and others who interact with children are keen

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1   Some sixteen Little Hands books in English, Xhosa and Afrikaans were developed and distributed by PRAESA in the Western Cape as part of its Culture of reading programme between 2002 and 2005.

2   The reality for most African families is that opportunities for better employment are stronger when you know an ex-colonial language. At the same time, sound pedagogy rests on education in a language you think and feel in, and learning another language is easier when you know your home language well. StAAf is thus committed to book production in African languages and languages of wider communication, with an emphasis on African languages.

to share books with them, and are able to be inspiring reading role models to emulate. Michael Ratcliffe (cited in Moss, 1986: 198) captures the challenge vividly thus:

> The author is a shipbuilder; but unless the reader knows how to sail the kind of ship the author has constructed, there will be no voyage.

One of the great tragedies that is reported repeatedly about reading materials (donations or otherwise) is that even when books have been distributed, they often gather dust in school principals' cupboards or on classroom shelves. We thus intend to work wherever possible with partners who have a commitment to reading for enjoyment, and have ideas about how to encourage reading with young children.[1] To help work towards this end, a caregiver support leaflet with suggestions on how adults can use the books and encourage reading with children is being produced.

We have budgeted for the production of almost 4 million books which will be divided up among the following languages and countries: South Africa (Xhosa, English), Mozambique (Cinyanja, Portuguese), Tanzania (Kiswahili, English), Rwanda (Kinyarwanda, French, English), Ethiopia (Amharic, English), Ghana (Twi, English), Mali (Mandigo, French) and Egypt (Arabic, English). This particular scenario is dependent on the project receiving the required funding. If this is not forthcoming, or if we obtain fewer funds, we will reconsider which languages to use and where to distribute the books.

Supporting African publishers

The model we are using for the Little Hands was developed in the PRAESA Culture of reading programme 2002-05 (Bloch, 2005: 69-82), whereby PRAESA raised the funds to guarantee buying and distributing an agreed-upon print run in particular languages from a collaborating publisher. The model reduces the risk for publishers and motivates them to print further books, and also to publish in additional languages. It also allows for the books to be given away, or sold at an affordable price, thus creating a mini "book-flood" effect to help improve reading (Elley, 1991) and stimulate an expectation and demand for more storybooks from teachers, librarians, caregivers and children.

To encourage collaboration between local indigenous publishers whilst still ensuring sizeable print runs with low unit costs, we are working with one lead publisher, as well as an indigenous publisher from the other regions in Africa which take responsibility for part of the production process in assigned languages while printing will be done in one or two places. Future print runs of the books will include a royalty agreement between StAAf, which holds copyright of the books, and the publisher(s). Any royalties payable will be dedicated towards ongoing children's literature development,

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1   An agreement to participate in the project as distribution partners has been expressed by CODE Canada (www.codecan.org) as well as Book Aid International (www.bookaid.org). The organisations have support-literacy projects in Mozambique, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Ghana, Mali and Rwanda. Distribution in South Africa will be undertaken by PRAESA and Biblionef International, a book donation agency with whom PRAESA has worked closely for several years.

to fund the production of further translations of existing titles or to create, produce and distribute new storybooks.

Dealing with diversity

StAAf's work is informed by the view that it is critical to help children from diverse societies and communities grow up with the understanding that there is a common African heritage for them to share, respect and cherish at the same time as all of our uniquenesses are valued. A set of criteria was drawn up by the steering committee[1] guided by the regional working groups, to inform and guide story selection. The selected stories should:

- arise from and give an African point of view;

- have definite literary merit;

- reflect diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity, etc;

- challenge discrimination;

- include humour and avoid being didactic and preachy;

- include not only "problem literature" but fantasy and experimental, non-linear texts too.

In addition, we considered issues relating to:

- Style: how is the story written? Are the ideas easily understandable? Is it readable for the target age group?

- Theme: is the theme relevant for the age group? Will it have continent-wide appeal? Is the theme interesting? Does it portray positive roles for the readers? Is it gender sensitive?

- Attractiveness: is the story appealing to the target audience? If there is humour, is it appealing continent-wide? Does the language attract the reader?

- Clarity: is the rhythm, diction and syntax clear and appealing? Does the language contribute to transmitting the message and attracting/entertaining the audience? Is the language original and lively?

Following the call for stories, many manuscripts were submitted to the steering committee. The call invited texts in the original language accompanied by a translation in English or French. Dealing with the multilingualism inherent in this process is not easy: despite having a steering committee whose members speak a range of languages between them and others who can be called upon if needed, it is always necessary to work with a common language text, and this is often not a good, literary translation.

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1   Joshua Madumulla (Tanzania), Suzana Mukobwajana (Rwanda), Michael Ambetchew (Ethiopia), Jakalia Abdulai (Ghana), Nadia El Kholy (Egypt) and Carole Bloch (South Africa).

In addition to such language-related consideration about quality of versions, several of the submissions were more appropriate as stories for older children. This is not surprising, as writing "text light" picture books for very young children has barely begun in Africa.[1] Writing is a craft that matures with insight into and empathy for the particular age group apart from other things such as familiarity with the body of relevant children's literature. At the same time, each initiative that is taken provides an opportunity for progress.

Because of the limited time frame, the steering committee decided to select eight stories from the already published 16 Little Hands books produced by PRAESA and eight new stories from the manuscripts submitted from countries including Egypt, Ghana, Ethiopia, Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Tanzania, Kenya, Rwanda, Mauritius and Mozambique. The selection had to achieve a balance between the visuals and texts of the already existing stories and the new ones in terms of considerations such as rural and urban visual scenery and depiction of people, age, gender, reality and fantasy. Agreement was reached that we would endeavour to arrive at a set of books offering opportunities for children and their caregivers to explore their own and other worlds, while being careful that no texts or images cause offence.

Cultural sensitivities

Both the already published and the new stories were thus scrutinised for cultural incongruities or sensitivities and other possible problems. I offer the following comments to give a sense of the kinds of issues that have to be dealt with.

Already published books

Translation and terminology development issues arose in *Listen*, which deals with some animals and their sounds.

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1   It reflects my own experience in 2000-02 with the First words in print project in Cape Town, which was, to my knowledge, the first attempt to produce books for preschool age children in South Africa. Most of the stories submitted tended to be too old, or unimaginative and didactic, and lacking in the kind of rich rhythmical flow of language and creative interaction between text and illustrations that attract young children. Over time, new books are improving.
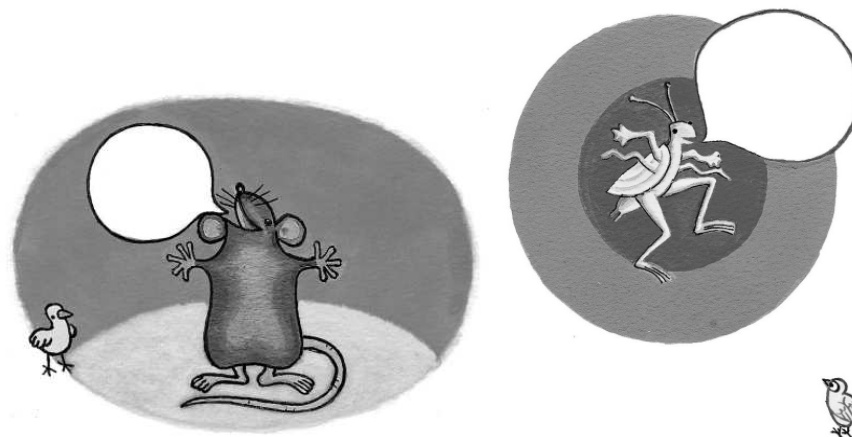
The problem was whether all of the animal sounds in the book have equivalents in all of the proposed languages. English has specified terms for describing sounds: for instance the "chirp" of a cricket, the "squeak" of a mouse and the "bleat" of a goat, whereas some languages use more general words for different animals sounds. In Kiswahili, creatures "cry", "sing" or "call". In Amharic, there is an equivalent for lions' "roar" but not for crickets' "chirp"[1] whereas in Twi (a language used in Ghana):

Mice squeak. Eek! Akura **su** Few!

Snakes hiss. Sss! ɔwɔ **su** Sss...!

Goats bleat. Bleh! Abirekyi su Mɛɛ!

Cows moo. Moo! Nantwi **su** Muu!

Moreover, because texts have not been made previously for the 0-6 age group, there are not necessarily agreed upon ways of writing the actual sounds – as in goat says "Bleh" or Cow says "Moo". It was agreed that actually, it does not matter if a cricket chirps in English and cries in Kiswahili, but also that in some cases terms can be borrowed from closely related languages where appropriate. Moreover, creative solutions are both desirable and possible and where relevant the translators should invent appropriate terms and sounds.

Several specific issues were related to possible "mismatches" between the experiences of children living in urban and rural settings.[2] For instance, in *How Many,* mother fries eggs in a pan; in *Let's Go!* a child waves goodbye to a balloon, she smells dirty socks

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1   Thanks to Joshua Madumulla in Tanzania for clarifying this for Kiswahili and Michael Ambetchew for Amharic.

2   Thanks to Michael Ambetchew and his colleagues in Ethiopia for most of these observations.

and walks hand in hand with a boy; and in *Where's Daddy?,* the house is "western style".
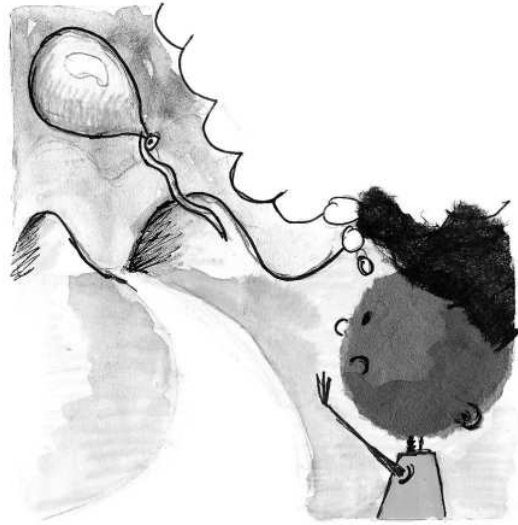
It was agreed that the strength of a common set of stories is to allow children and those who share the books with them access to a range of possibilities, which include familiar scenarios for them as well as glimpses into a variety of ways that other people do things.

Two visually depicts on each page a little boy who has a playful and close relationship with his dog, who accompanies his activities. In some illustrations, the dog sits on the arm of a chair next to the boy, and in one, it licks the head of the boy's baby brother or sister. Many African children and their caregivers might see this as a culturally alien way of being: a dog must stay outside and is not a pet with emotional ties to humans. The question here is whether or not these scenes could actually offend the adults.

New books

With one new story, *Titilope's Silly Game*, an issue relating to norms of behaviour – how we treat one another – was raised. Titilope, a little girl who loves to play with wasps does not listen to the advice of her elders, and gets stung. The original manuscript ended with all the children laughing at Titilope for being stupid. Would the message be that we condone humiliation as a way to improve behaviour? The editorial decision of the steering group was to have a gentler ending with Titilope herself recognising her own mistake.

The opportunity arose to be culturally inclusive with some of the new stories. In *Fruit Salad, Lovely, Lovely!* it was decided to give the nine characters names that are found across Africa from Egypt to South Africa. Thus Aïsha loves dates (Arabic), Phakamani likes paw paw (Zulu/Xhosa) and Muvara likes oranges (Rwandese), Juma likes mangoes (Swahili), and so on. The challenge given to the illustrator was to depict each child in a scene that might evoke a feeling of their region, but without creating stereotypes.

In *Nice and Clean*, which is a simple little story about the need to keep clean, the illustrator was asked to use animals common to many African settings instead of human beings thus allowing all children anywhere to identify with the actions.

Decisions also had to be taken about names in stories more generally. It was agreed, that as a rule, we would keep the name of the existing characters, for instance "Ali" and "Titilope" would remain such – as it is in life as it should be; people usually only change their names if they are oppressed in some way. At the same time, we have allowed some leeway because there are different opinions on this – so sometimes the name gets a spelling adaptation in different languages (for example, "Beruk" becomes "Beruki" and "Mimi" becomes "Mimii" in Kiswahili), or if a name is thought to be impossible to pronounce in a particular language, an alternative could be provided in the translation (for example, "Raeez" has become "Rafiki" in Cinyanja).

Concluding remarks

As we have not yet come to the end of the pilot (printing, distribution and reading of the almost four million little books is yet to take place), in place of a conclusion, I summarise a few of the lessons learned thus far. The project process has already been extremely constructive and informative. The ongoing communication and collaboration between individuals from all five regions shows that we have no fundamental disagreements about the common task we share, despite the vast linguistic and cultural diversity among us. It is anticipated that as we pool our collective resources, so we will increase capacity and have the energy to continue with what strategically, we are certain is the correct way to address the complex challenges we face – that is to urgently normalise the notion and practice of reading for enjoyment in African languages and ex-colonial languages in schools and wider community settings. One of the essential components of this is the provision of suitable reading materials. In the short term, we have to use relevant existing human and other resources to create these as quickly as possible. At the same time we are guided by a longer term vision that prompts us to ensure that mentoring and training is taking place for African literary artists (writers and illustrators) and other professionals at all levels of publishing. While the difficult question of who can afford to buy books remains, there is no doubt that when development and ownership of the domain is representative of the people of Africa, the chance of finding an answer becomes far more likely.

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Training for early literacy learning:
web-based resources for teacher training
in multilingual contexts

Viv Edwards

Introduction

The TELL (Training for early literacy learning) project was set up to help improve the quality of literacy teaching in early childhood development in South Africa by developing training materials for initial and in-service teacher education. Funding through the British Council Higher Education Link Award scheme made it possible for colleagues at the University of Reading, UK, and PRAESA (Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa), a multilingual education NGO based at the University of Cape Town, to work together on the development of training materials in 2002. This article explores challenges in knowledge exchange and discusses issues which needed to be considered in adapting materials originally produced for a UK Government initiative aimed at training mainstream class and subject teachers to support learners of English as an additional language. The training materials in their current form are described and the enormous benefits of electronic publishing – in terms of dissemination and ongoing development – examined.

Knowledge exchange: a UK-South African experience

The aim of TELL was to adapt materials originally designed for teachers working in UK multilingual schools to the training needs of teacher trainers and teachers involved in implementing South Africa's new post-apartheid curriculum, and language policies which included support for multilingual education.[1]

The UK materials had been produced in response to the invitation in 1995 from the UK Department for Education and Skills for higher education and local education authority partnerships to develop courses for mainstream class and subject teachers on "meeting the needs of bilingual pupils". The main challenge for those responding to this initiative was the dearth of suitable training materials. In an attempt to address this problem, three packs were produced at the University of Reading: *Speaking and Listening in Multilingual Classrooms; Reading in Multilingual Classrooms* and *Writing*

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1   For a more wide-ranging account of the knowledge exchange aspects of the project, see Rassool, Edwards and Bloch (in press).

in Multilingual Classrooms (Edwards, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c). These packs consist of a course leader's handbook, accompanying overhead transparencies and handouts, and a teacher's book that sets out and expands on the main issues covered in the course.

These materials were of interest to colleagues at PRAESA involved in initiatives to transform the skills-based and decontextualised approaches to literacy teaching with young children through research and multilingual education training programmes for both teachers and teacher trainers at the University of Cape Town. Participants from South Africa and, further afield, from other parts of Africa were discovering shared needs in relation to language policy and ineffective teaching methods for initial reading and writing.

There are very obvious differences between the situations in South Africa and the UK. Although there are notable exceptions – for instance, in certain schools in East London the overwhelming majority of pupils come from Bangladeshi families – most children from linguistic minority communities in the UK have easy access to English: they usually learn in classes taught by teachers for whom English is the mother tongue alongside English-speaking peers and are exposed to English as well as minority language media (Edwards, 2004). In South Africa, in contrast, especially in the rural and peri-urban areas, the main exposure to English is in classrooms where teachers are African language speakers whose competence in English is often limited. Moreover, the vast majority of children in Africa grow up in homes where oral language predominates and social and cultural practices around reading and writing are less well developed, especially in African languages (Bloch, 2005). Yet despite these differences, there was sufficient commonality to make co-operation in the area of teacher training an interesting prospect.

The University of Reading had previously produced training materials for teachers as part of a government initiative on "meeting the needs of bilingual pupils". Training was aimed at upgrading the skills of class and subject teachers who were overly dependent on the specialist language support teachers working alongside them. Support teachers were, however, often shared between several classes. It was therefore deemed more cost effective to place greater responsibility on class and subject teachers for understanding and responding to the needs of children who speak English as an additional language. Working together as part of the British Council Higher Education Link Scheme, colleagues at the University of Reading and PRAESA set about the task of adapting the British training materials for more general use in the multilingual classroom settings of South Africa.

One aspect of the UK packs which made them an obvious candidate for knowledge exchange is the fact that they address two important current requirements for training in South Africa: they offer a process-based approach to teaching and learning, grounded in the principles of professional reflexivity; and they include opportunities to respond to the needs of a learner-centred curriculum. UK expertise was also valuable in production. The experience of having produced the original training packs was useful in determining both the different elements that would be necessary in the development

of the South African materials and aspects of project management. It was also possible to adapt the Word document templates employed by trainers on a separate project for use with the South African materials. As part of the same process, it was possible to upgrade the South African partner's skills in IT, presentation and design.

There is a danger, however, of portraying knowledge transfer as a one-way process. It is therefore important to stress that the South African partners are not the sole beneficiaries of this co-operation. As we contemplated the needs of South African trainers, it was necessary to confront questions of organisation which had not been satisfactorily addressed in producing the UK materials. Originally, the materials had been divided into speaking and listening, reading and writing, neatly mirroring the different language skills. This course of action was, however, overly simplistic and had resulted, in practice, in unnecessary compartmentalisation and lost opportunities for making links between similar learning processes. Moreover, because curricula for early literacy in Africa had been inherited from the countries in the North and applied rigidly under very different circumstances (Bloch, 2006), one of the main challenges facing South African early literacy specialists was how to help teacher trainers and teachers understand that written language is also language, that all the aspects of literacy are interconnected, and that "whole language" approaches allow learning to be more meaningful. By reviewing developments in theory and practice in the seven years since the materials were first written, we were able to develop a clearer vision of the programme as a whole, and to consider other ways of organising the materials. We arrived at an alternative and far more flexible framework. The materials are no longer offered as a set curriculum to be presented in a fixed order; they can be used on their own or can supplement existing training materials in such a way that trainers can "pick and mix" to suit their own requirements.

Adapting the materials

The first step was to review the content and shape of the existing training materials, identifying topics and approaches which apply equally in both situations, as well as gaps in the materials and areas covered in the UK packs which do not transfer easily to the South African context.

When any materials are transferred from one setting to another, there are issues of localisation. In many cases, the necessary adaptations are of a superficial nature: photographs required to illustrate an exercise on stereotyping (see Figure 1), for instance, need to reflect the population of South Africa rather than the UK.

5   The right face for the job?

Match the following jobs to the people in the photographs:

- Porter
- Dentist
- Cook

- Nursery teacher
- Nurse
- Civil servant

- Graphic designer
- University lecturer
- Computer technician

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

The right face for the job?

Match the following jobs to the people in the photographs:

- Hospital porter   • Pre-school teacher   • Author
- Taxi driver   • Dentist   • Cook
- Cleaner   • University lecturer   • Nurse

Figure 1: British and South African versions of an activity on stereotyping

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Other examples of localisation concerned language. In the British materials, an exercise in simulating the experience of learning to read in another language uses Dutch as an example; in South African setting where Afrikaans, a language more closely related to Dutch, is widely known it was more appropriate to use an unfamiliar language.

In other cases, it was necessary to omit themes and activities altogether. The UK writing pack features an activity designed to draw attention to the difficulties of learning a new script. Participants are invited to copy sentences in Punjabi and Bengali scripts, which hang down from the line, in Urdu, which runs from left to right, and in Chinese, where each character is constructed within a notional square from different strokes in a clearly prescribed sequence. Given that all the official languages of South Africa are written in a roman script, there was no need for an exercise of this kind.

Additional themes arising from the perceived specific needs of African contexts focus on considerations around the culture of reading and how to establish reading and writing habits in African languages as well as English. Activities include getting teachers and trainers to reflect on the impact of different environments for literacy and their own early experiences and current uses of reading and writing.

It was also important to acknowledge – and exploit – differences between South African and British teachers. Most of the teachers who form the audience for the UK packs are monolingual English speakers, with no personal experience that they can relate to the bilingual pupils in their classes. Most teachers in South Africa, in contrast, are bilingual or even multilingual. Although they have, in many cases, accepted uncritically the hegemony of English and the low status of local languages, they are better able to relate to the situation of children educated through the medium of a language which is not their mother tongue. An activity included in the South African pack, which builds on this understanding, invites participants to shade or colour different parts of a line drawing intended to represent their body to reflect the languages that they speak.[1] African teachers were initially cautious about an open-ended exercise of this kind, but soon responded enthusiastically to a task which required them to reflect upon their own language identity and experiences. This activity also reflects one of our intentions that, where possible, activities once experienced by the teachers in training, could then be used with children in the classroom (Busch, Jardine and Tjoutuku, 2006).

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1   This activity grew from PRAESA's Training of Trainers for Multilingual Education course when working with Brigitta Busch who had used this exercise with teachers dealing with issues of identity in Bosnia and Slovenia.

Figure 2: Language biography

The current TELL materials

The materials are now organised in eight units or modules: Learning through talk, Learning to read, Learning to write, Learning an additional language, Language, culture and identity, Multilingualism, Multiliteracies and Materials development (www.tell.praesa.org). Each unit consists of several different components. Trainer's notes set out the purpose of a particular activity, any materials required and instructions for how to present the activity to a group of teachers. There are also accompanying overhead transparencies (OHTs) and handouts.

The activities offered to the teachers are various. Some take the form of quizzes. In the "Reading and bilingualism" activity (see Figure 3), for instance, a quiz is used to explore participants' preconceptions of reading in an additional language before moving on to the theoretical concepts that underpin our current understandings of what happens when children learn to read in an additional language.

Reading & bilingualism: quiz

True or false?

- Children get overloaded and confused when they are taught to read more tham one language at the same time.

- Children need to speak a language fluently before they start learning to read in an additional language.

- The same methods of teaching apply no matter which language is being used.

- In bilingual settings, it is important to recognize children's ability to translate texts in one language to another.

Figure 3: "Reading and bilingualism" quiz OHT

Other activities draw on participants' personal experience to demonstrate principles with important classroom applications. The "What do we share?" activity (Figure 4), for instance, is a useful ice-breaker, which helps people to think about identity. Participants work in pairs. They are asked to write down words or phrases that describe themselves briefly under a range of different headings, then look at each other's descriptions to see what they have in common and what is different. In taking feedback, the trainer is encouraged to focus on the fact that:

- there are always things we hold in common with others;

- people place different value on different aspects of themselves depending on the context they are in and on their experiences;

- we usually have a range of identities, some of which we share with different groups of people.

An appreciation of issues of this kind has obvious implications for teachers working in multilingual classrooms where it is important to challenge prejudices and recognise diversity as a resource.

What do we share?

	NAME	Zola
MEL	NAME	Zola
FEMALE	GENDER	male
ENGLISH, SHONA	LANGUAGES	English, Afrikaans
ZIMBABWEAN	NATIONALITY	South African
OUTGOING, FRIENDLY	PERSONALITY	reserved, calm
EDUCATION	WORK	education
MOVIES, MUSIC, DANCING	ACTIVITIES	Church, football dancing
HOT FOOD	LIKES	dancing, dogs
DOGS, RAIN	DISLIKES	rain, hot food

	NAME	
	GENDER	
	LANGUAGES	
	NATIONALITY	
	PERSONALITY	
	WORK	
	ACTIVITIES	
	LIKES	
	DISLIKES	

Figure 4: "What do we share?" handout

Still other activities allow teachers to develop practical skills in areas such as materials development. The "Make a story" activity, for instance, uses a series of "story starters" as the basis for group stories. Participants are asked to work in small groups. Each group chooses one of the starter sentences while other members of the group take turns to add a sentence to a story. One member of the group acts as scribe. When taking feedback, the trainer is asked to facilitate discussion of how this activity can be used to generate reading materials in any language and be used with children of all ages.

Story starters

- I began to feel suspicious when…

- I heard a noise and went to investigate.

- Since I was a child, I have loved to…

- People were very kind to me after…

- I want to tell you the story of…

- Far away and long ago…

- I opened my grandfather's trunk and I could hardly believe my eyes.

Figure 5: Story starters

Production issues

The challenges for trainers in both settings were in fact quite similar: the small numbers of packs required and the many different elements – teacher's notes, OHTs, handouts – mean that the unit cost is necessarily high. While limited education budgets in the UK pale into insignificance next to the scarce resources in South Africa, expense is nonetheless an important consideration in this context, too.

The solution adopted for the original UK training materials was printing on demand; with the exception of the teachers' books, high-resolution elements of the pack were printed or photocopied only when an order was received. This approach was nonetheless time-consuming and costly. Considerable technological advances have been made since the UK materials were first produced in 1995, which benefit both South African and UK trainers. The most important of these is the development of the Internet. The materials can now be downloaded as individual Word files from the TELL website (www.tell.praesa.org) and adapted as necessary.

This approach makes it possible to arrange individual elements more flexibly. The same OHTs relating to the theory underpinning reading and writing in other languages, for instance, are included in modules on Learning to read, Learning to write and

Multiliteracies. This in turn, encourages the use of a "pick and mix" approach in which elements are selected to match the specific needs of individual trainers rather than imposing a set curriculum. There is also provision for trainers to develop additional materials using downloadable templates and for these materials to be added to the website.

As PRAESA colleagues began to use the materials, various practical problems were identified. The first concerns the need for trainers to have a clear overview of the materials. When they were first published on the web, users needed to download large numbers of individual files to view their content, an extremely time-consuming process. While the files are still available individually, a trainer's handbook containing all the topics for an individual module is now downloadable as a pdf. The second concerns the overhead transparencies. When trainers wanted to project a sequence of OHTs they had to open each of the files in question; and if they wished to make the OHTs available to course participants, each needed to be printed individually and took up a whole page. In order to reduce photocopying to manageable proportions, all the OHTs for a given activity have now been converted to single PowerPoint files, giving the option of printing up to nine slides a page.

Conclusion

While we were devising the training materials we were acutely aware of historical power imbalances between the United Kingdom and South Africa. Because of the nature of the partnership, however, there was no danger of the project replicating the one-way model of knowledge transfer – from the metropolitan, ex-colonial "mother country" to the emerging post-colonial nation state. Colleagues at the Early Literacy Unit at PRAESA have been working for many years to help to transform both the understandings of trainers and teachers about early literacy, and the classroom methods that they use (Bloch, 1997, 2005). Knowledge exchange from one society to another inevitably involves degrees of "localisation", that is to say, adapting materials to suit local needs. It might have been possible to see this as a linear process involving changing surface aspects of the materials such as images and scripts. However, in practice, we found we were involved in a two-way flow of knowledge and expertise as we engaged in an ongoing critical dialogue, working reflexively with the materials, questioning our own assumptions and values.

A number of challenges remain. There is a need to publicise the existence of the materials; this article is one way of beginning to address this issue. Lack of resources, however, is an important obstacle to wider dissemination. It is also important to recognise the dynamic potential of the materials. Electronic publishing is immensely flexible. Not only are we able to modify existing materials in response to feedback from the trainers who are using them, but we are able to add new modules, new topics and new elements, as this resource becomes more widely known and used. Although

the materials were initially designed mainly for training teachers in South Africa, they have the potential to be used in many other multilingual settings, particularly in Africa. Already some of the modules have been translated into Xhosa and Afrikaans. It is anticipated that as the materials become used, versions will be created in other languages as well.

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Materials development
for linguistic diversity and intercultural learning

Brigitta Busch

Suitable teaching and learning materials are of central importance in discussions of literacy and linguistic diversity: they help teachers to structure their daily practice in the classroom and to shape the learners' encounters with print. Yet in spite of the dramatic increase in the number and variety of teaching and learning materials, there remain serious gaps. These gaps are especially evident where the medium of education is a dominant and prestigious language other than the language(s) which play(s) an important role in the daily life of learners. This is the case, for instance, for speakers of regional or minority languages in Europe or the urban centres where a wide range of languages is spoken by migrants. It is also the case in African countries where the former colonial languages often dominate at the expense of indigenous languages. All too often in these situations, monolingual pedagogy and learning materials are the norm, even though the classroom reality is multilingual. The language experience of individual students differs significantly from what is sometimes assumed to be the norm, namely, the acquisition of a (single) mother tongue followed by the learning of different second and subsequent languages. Learner experiences are varied and often characterised by ruptures in the linguistic environment due to migration and labour mobility (Busch, 2006). Linguistically heterogeneous learner groups – speaking different home languages, dialects or varieties, and coming from multilingual family backgrounds – are the rule rather than the exception.

One of the consequences of globalisation is that the monopoly of standard languages in domains that have traditionally been their preserve can no longer be taken for granted. While the use of English as a lingua franca in the media, for instance, is becoming more widespread, there is also evidence of the emergence of new "impure", hybrid and mixed codes (as is the case, for example, in youth jargon); elements form other codes and languages serve as eye catchers in advertising; and increased communication flows in all directions has served to make linguistic diversity more visible. There are not only different "Englishes" but also different "Frenches", "Portugueses" and so on: the authority of standard languages is undermined in interpersonal communication via sms or email which follows orthographic and syntactic rules different from those of traditional written language (Busch, 2004). Developments of this kind indicate changing attitudes towards standard language more generally, with greater awareness of language variety and change and an increasing tolerance of linguistic creativity.

Nevertheless, language-in-education policies are still firmly rooted within the nation state paradigm. In most countries, textbooks are subjected to a formal appraisal process which ensures that they conform to curriculum requirements and preferred approaches

to teaching. They not only reflect and shape national identities at the discursive level, but also help promote a single unified standard as the national language or one of the national languages. Textbooks thus often miss opportunities to build on the learners' own language resources and, in their failure to make allowances for linguistic diversity, play a role in social exclusion. Traditionally, education is a nation state domain. Since the introduction of compulsory education, schooling has been seen as a means both of preparing students to become loyal subjects or citizens and of promoting national unity, common values and orientations. It has thus been an essential tool in the promotion of unified and homogeneous standard languages, state languages.

Textbook analysis gives important clues about the thrust of language policy and the hidden agendas that guide school practices. Indicators of the relative status of different languages include the number of resources; whether materials are available for high status subjects such as science and ICT as well as for "soft" subjects such as history and music; and whether materials are available at both primary and secondary levels. When bilingual materials are used, the relationship between the languages is of interest: analysis can often reveal subtle differences in terms of layout, typography and relative amounts of texts in the two languages and the ways in which the languages are used.

The development from the 19th century to the present of first grade primers in the German-Slovenian-speaking bilingual region in the south of Austria offers a clear example of the interdependence between language policy and materials production. Although rooted in a European context, this micro-level analysis illustrates principles of materials development also pertinent in other contexts where schools serve populations that speak low status languages.

Language, design and changing power relationships in textbooks

The first German-Slovenian schoolbooks was published towards the end of the 19th century (Preschern, 1888/1921). It was used for several decades throughout the Slovenian-speaking area of Carinthia with children starting school. Slovenian was then the language spoken by the majority of the people in the region; only the nobility and people working in administration, trade and the army spoke German to any extent. Slovenian was used only as a transitional language intended simply to aid the acquisition of German.
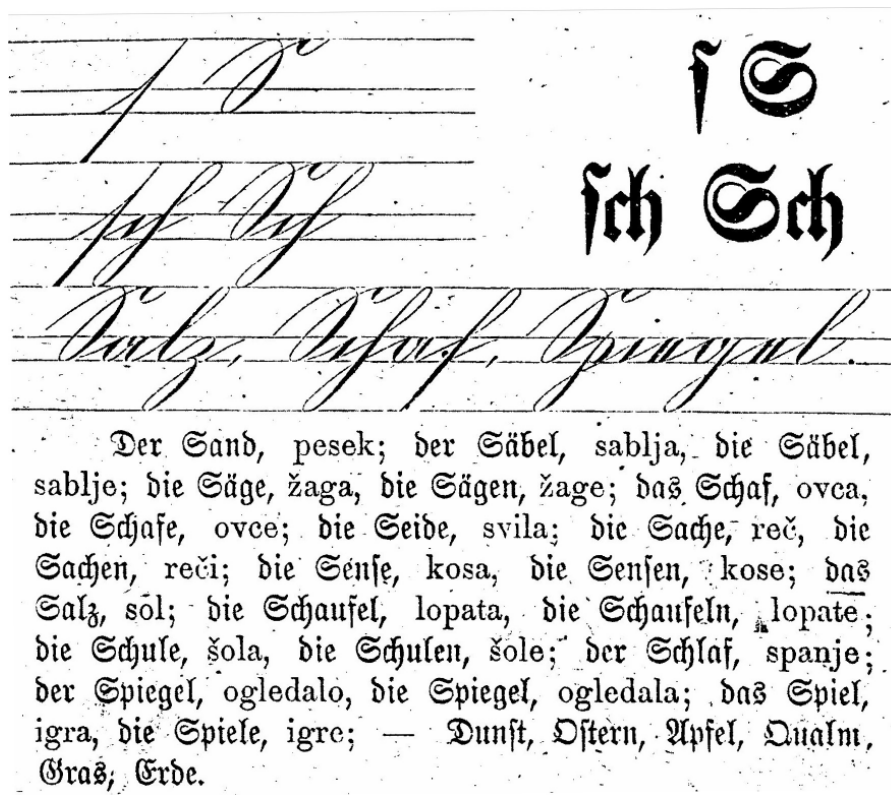
*Figure 1: Lesson from the 19th-century manual introducing
the letter "s" of the German alphabet*

When compulsory education was introduced, writing was the mode of transmission for canonical knowledge: it is noticeable that there are no illustrations. The first part of the book aims to teach the letters of the alphabet. Examples of German words beginning with the letter "s" are given first in German writing. These are followed by their Slovenian translation printed in Latin writing. The focus here, however, is very clearly on German. All the German words on this page – "Sand" (sand), "Säbel" (sword), etc., begin with "s" as it is a lesson on the acquisition of this letter. There are no special examples for Slovenian words, but only translations of the German words, underlining the pedagogical assumption that German is the target language and Slovenian is only the auxiliary.

The second part of the book, which is made up of short texts for reading practice, follows the same principle, with one sentence in German followed by the translation in Slovenian. The third part contains longer texts, such as prayers, rules of conduct and proverbs in both languages. German is given greater prominence in the number of texts

present. Although when content is considered important (as in the prayers and rules of conduct), Slovenian is recognised as the children's first language and no German translation is included. This and other books following a similar pattern with the underlying pedagogical assumption that German is to become the medium of instruction as soon as possible were in use up until the Slovenian language was outlawed and speakers persecuted under the Nazi regime from 1938 to 1945.
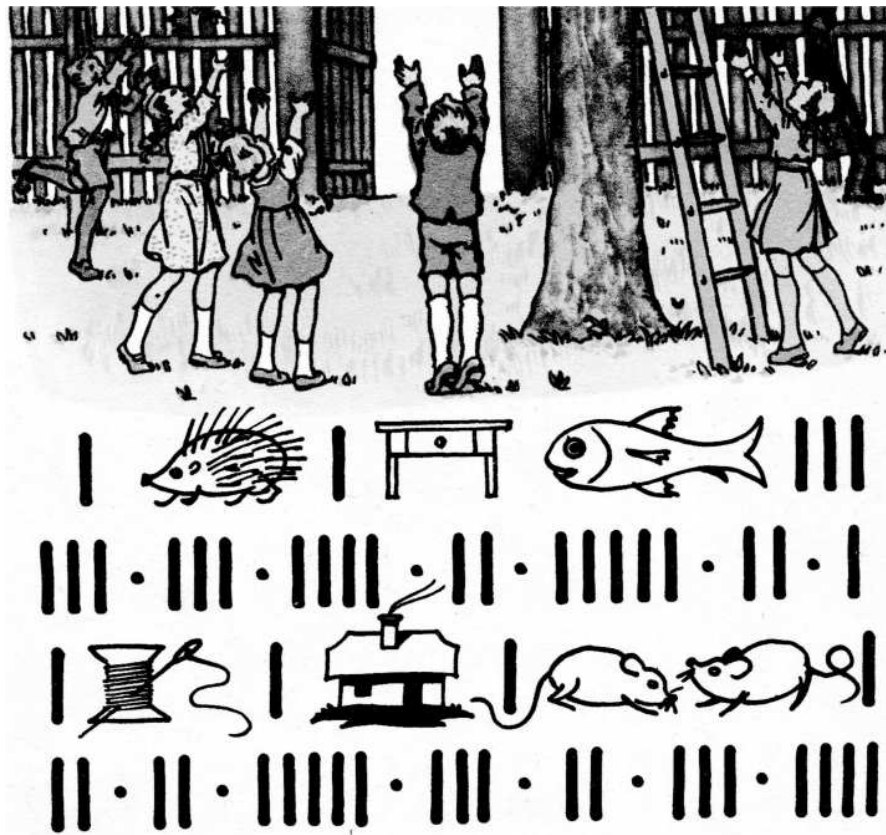

Figure 2: Bilingual German-Slovenian manual (1953) for schools with children of German L1 and Slovenian L1

In 1945 compulsory bilingual education was introduced in primary schools throughout the bilingual Slovenian-German-speaking region of southern Carinthia. The page shown in Figure 2 comes from *ABC. Slowenisch-deutsche Fibel* (ABC, Slovenian-German primer, 1953), a publication produced by a group of bilingual teachers. Reflecting a language-in-education policy which assumes that both languages are equal, the aim is to help Slovenian-speaking children to learn German at the same time

as helping German-speaking children to learn Slovenian in mixed language classrooms. Unlike the earlier book, this publication gives equal attention to both languages. Figure 2, for instance, is based around words beginning with the letter "I" in both languages, for example, "Igel" (German for hedgehog) and "igla" (Slovenian for needle). This book makes use not only of written language but also of the visual – in the form of images and illustrations – an important support for beginning readers. Towards the end of the first school year, however, the visual gives way to a word-centred text. There is, however, a notable move from literal translations which characterise the earlier book. Later in the book, for instance, short reading passages on a particular topic appear in both languages but these are rather complementary than translations or summaries. For instance, while the German passage on farm animals is in prose, the Slovenian takes the form of a poem.
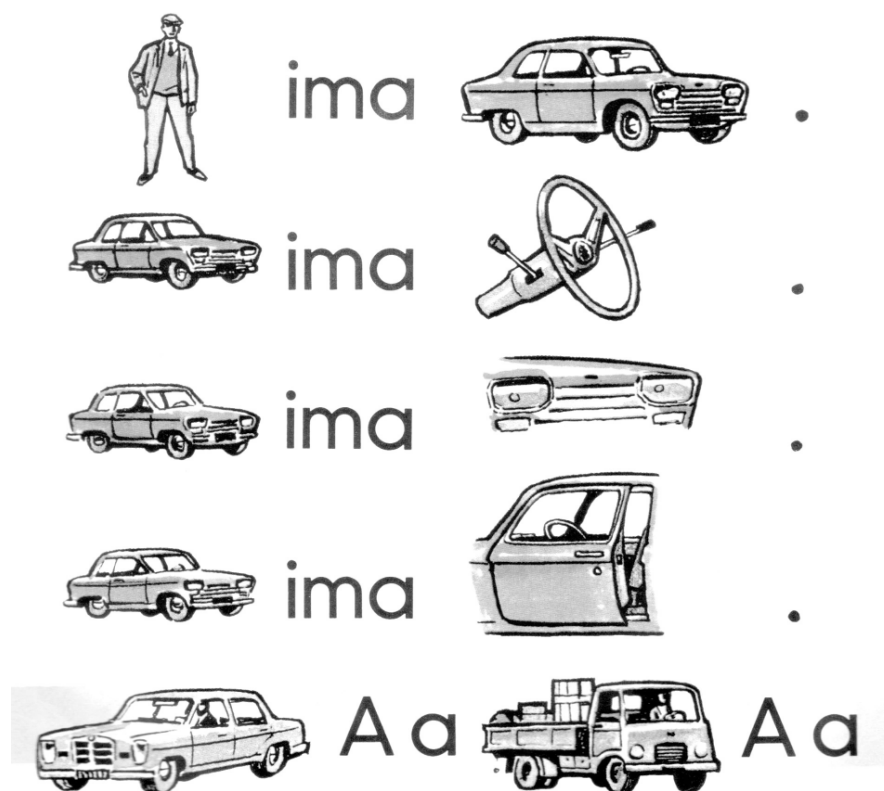
Figure 3: A page from the Slovenian manual for primary schools (1960): illustrations become more important

After compulsory bilingual education came to an end in 1958/59, parents had to make a conscious decision to pursue this option. Consequently the number of children attending Slovenian lessons fell dramatically and bilingual textbooks disappeared. They were replaced by sets of monolingual books in German or Slovenian. Figure 3 shows a page of a book in Slovenian, *Naša začetnica* (Our primer), first published in the 1960s but still in use in some schools today. In textbooks of this period, illustrations assume greater importance and are an integral feature of the text.

To je moj sin Peter.

sin

To je moja ....

To je ....

To ....

mama

hči

hči

oče
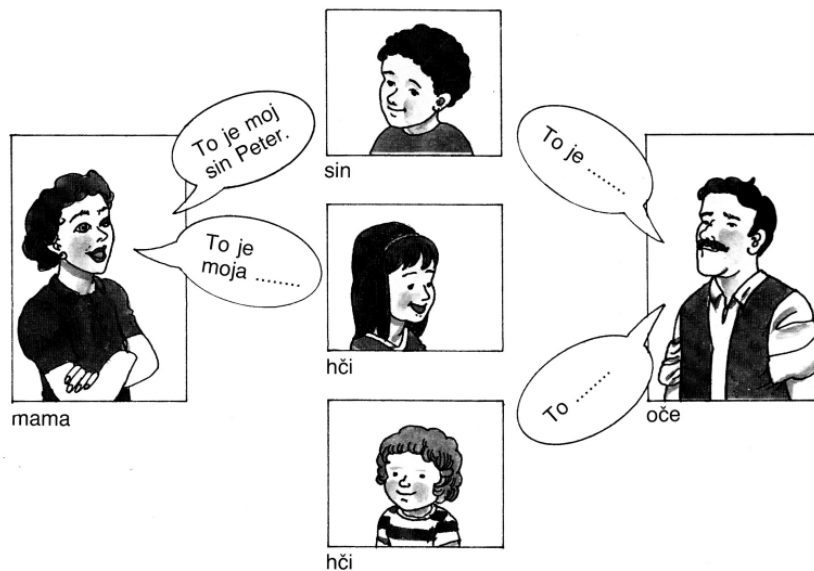
Kdo je v hiši? Kdo je **doma**?
Mama je v hiši. Mama je **doma**.
Oče je ... .

v hiši – doma

hiša – dom

Dopolni!

Silva in Martin sta .... Silva je Sonj**ina**, Tin**ina** in Petr**ova** ....
Martin je Petr**ov**, Sonj**in** in Tin**in** ....
Peter je oče**tov** in mam**in** ....
Tina je oče**tova** in mam**ina** ....
Sonja in Peter sta .... in ....
Sonja je Petr**ova** in Tin**ina** ....
Peter je Sonj**in** in Tin**in** ....

Figure 4: Slovenian manual for primary schools (1986):
three different levels are catered for in every exercise marked with one, two or three
dots

In the Slovenian textbook for beginning readers published in the late 1980s, *Sonja in Peter se učita Slovensko* (Sonja and Peter learn Slovenian), visual elements work closely with the written text (Figure 4). In order to complete the exercise, children need to use both visual and written information: the illustration indicates the persons present in the interaction, the text in the speech bubble gives the pattern of expressing the family relationships. A stronger emphasis is also put on oral skills than in earlier publications. In a more open-ended approach, children are required to draw on their own linguistic resources; the teacher can then respond by drawing their attention to any differences between their own usage and the standard written form.

This publication reflects the greatly changed linguistic situation of the late 1980s, by which time increasing numbers of children in bilingual programmes had little or no knowledge of Slovenian. Today, more than a third of children in primary education are being taught in bilingual programmes; of these, 67% have no knowledge of Slovenian when they arrive, and 17% have very limited competence (Ogris, 2005). While the increased interest in Slovenian is encouraging, it is also a challenge for teachers who have to cope with children from very diverse linguistic backgrounds. *Sonja in Peter,* the book mentioned above, responds to this challenge, for instance, by offering three different levels of difficulty in the exercises that follow each section.
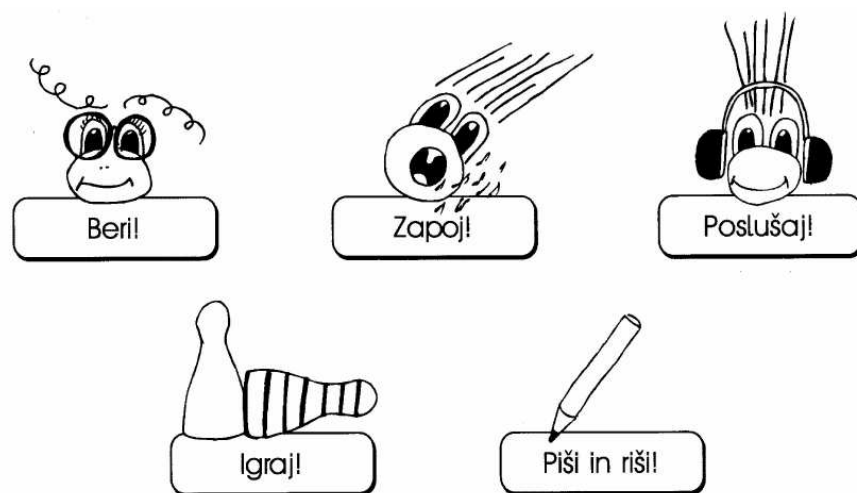

Figure 5: Icons used to mark different activities: reading, singing, listening, playing, writing and drawing in the Slovenian manual produced in 2004

A wide range of interactive and engaging materials has been developed to meet the new needs. The most recent primer for bilingual schools in Carinthia, *Poslušam, berem, govorim* (I listen, read and write) was published in 2004. The book gives even greater emphasis to the full range of language skills, organising activities into reading, singing,

listening, playing and writing/drawing (Figure 5). The accompanying CD offers opportunities for parents with limited competence in Slovenian to help their children with homework and practice.

To summarise these developments: the first textbooks in the predominantly Slovenian-speaking area of South Carinthia were bilingual; the main approach was literal translation in an attempt to facilitate children's transition to German-medium instruction. Although Slovenian and German are represented in the text in equal proportions, there is a clear hierarchical relationship between the dominant language and the home language. During the period of compulsory bilingual education, textbooks avoid literal translations and view texts in the two languages as complementary; these are often centred around visual elements. In an approach which strives for balanced bilingualism, both languages are considered equally important. When bilingual education became optional, separate Slovenian and German textbooks were produced. With the passage of time, however, textbooks are attempting to take into consideration the varying level of competence in Slovenian of children now entering bilingual programmes; they also make increasing use of representational modes other than the written. The de-centring of writing (Kress, 2004), formerly the mode in which canonical knowledge was transmitted, makes it possible to rethink bilingual materials. The fact that the image is present can serve a cohesive device for integrating the texts in the different languages into one coherent entity. The image can be "language neutral" in the sense that it can often be understood without knowing necessarily the all the languages present.

Examples of multi-variety and multilingual materials

The example of Southern Carinthia shows changing attitudes towards materials in a bilingual setting, where there is a difference in status between the languages in question. This situation is typical of many European border regions and urban centres where many different minority languages are spoken. The relationship of African languages with former colonial languages is similarly asymmetric. In the following section, I will discuss current examples from my experience of materials from a range of settings in Europe and Africa which engage constructively with linguistic diversity.

Izabrani tekstovi (A choice of texts)

When former Yugoslavia split into different nation states, its official language, Serbo-Croatian, was abandoned by the successor states in favour of the newly declared national languages – Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian. *Izabrani tekstovi* (A choice of texts) was designed in the 1990s for mother-tongue teaching in Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian (B/C/S) or Serbo-Croatian in Austria where schools found themselves serving very different populations: children whose families had come in the

earlier, so-called guest worker migration during the 1960s and 1970s, as well as children whose families were fleeing the war that was raging in the Balkans.

The textbooks from the successor countries had been characterised by stereotypes and prejudice and were unsuitable for use in "mixed" classrooms where children from Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia were learning together. The challenge was therefore to produce learning materials, acceptable for all, that were neither "Yugonostalgic" nor accentuated differences. The *Izabrani tekstovi* project was conceived by a group of teachers, linguists and officials from the Austrian Ministry of Education. We selected a range of texts for reading and accompanying activities which we organised as a loose collection, rather than a body of materials designed to be worked through in a set order: teachers and learners choose the topics and activities which are of interest. Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian and Montenegrin texts – some in Cyrillic and others in roman script – are represented in roughly equal proportions: there are also older Serbo-Croatian texts. The focus on a single standard is thus avoided.

Multi-variety bilingual dictionary

The Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian-German multi-variety dictionary (Figure 6) takes the concept a step further. Sometimes one item corresponds to three different terms on other occasions two and in still other cases just one. Similarly, there are sometimes two German entries, corresponding roughly to Austrian German and German German. The entries are not, however, labelled: language borders do not follow national borders. Take, for instance, the German "Schultasche" and "Schulranzen" (school bag). In eastern Austria, speakers use "Schultasche"; in the west of the country both "Schultasche" and "Schulranzen" are used; in most parts of Germany, "Schulranzen" is more current, whereas in the south there is a tendency to use "Schultasche". Children can thus choose the term that is familiar to them and at the same time get to know the other(s). The multi-variety presentation also encourages language awareness: the entries for cauliflower: "karfiol" (B/C/S) and "Karfiol" (German), for instance, offer opportunities to discuss language contact. Teachers using the dictionary in their classrooms have confirmed that, far from causing confusion, the multiple entries have helped to develop metalinguistic skills and to promote intercultural learning.

hljeb
kruh
hleb

naslonjač
fotelja

Dein
buntes Wörterbuch
Deutsch
Bosnisch / Kroatisch / Serbisch

das Brot

der Sessel
das Fauteuil

školska torba

cvjetača
karfiol

der Schulranzen
die Schultasche

FLEURUS
VERLAG

der Blumenkohl
der Karfiol

Figure 6: Front page of the bilingual multi-variety dictionary
German-Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian

The same bilingual dictionary was published for a range of other languages which are equally important languages of migration, such as Turkish, Polish and Russian. In urban areas it is very often the case that in a school, or even in a particular classroom, there are children with many different home languages. The class teachers very rarely understand or speak any of these. The dictionary allows them to find ways to valorise the home languages of the children. As it is organised around topics which are dealt

with in the curriculum such as school, housing, food, animals, it can be used to introduce these topics. Teachers can borrow packages of dictionaries with the necessary languages for the class they are working with at the central library. A manual with suggestions for the use of this multilingual material was developed by a group of teachers.

Authentic texts

Pogledi (Views, 2001) was designed for the upper grades of primary schools throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina where, as mentioned earlier, language policies in the post-conflict situation have tended to emphasise national/ethnic differences by promoting the use of newly codified, "pure" standard forms of Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian. The publication, based on a radically new approach, consists in the main of authentic texts, that is texts where there is no didactic or linguistic intervention. The selected texts, including literary extracts from different periods of time, newspaper articles, advertisements, leaflets and official documents appear in their original form. Generational differences in language use are as apparent as differences due to the rural-urban divide, to political orientation or geographic location. The extracts thus represent a wide range of language in use, mirroring the heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1981) of Bosnian society. The book allows pupils and teachers to recognise themselves and their linguistic practices in at least some of the texts and relieves them from the pressure of a single prescribed standard.

What distinguishes *Pogledi* from other teaching materials developed by, or with the support of, international organisations is that just one version of the book is used throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. This was not achieved by inventing an "interlanguage" or by reverting to the language of textbooks in the region before the outbreak of the war, but by representing a wide range of language actually in use in Bosnia and Herzegovina today. Workshops and evaluation in 2002 showed that *Pogledi* is in use in more than 80% of the upper primary schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina.[1]

Madiba Magic

The Nguni family of languages consists of four closely related and mutually intelligible varieties – isiZulu, isiXhosa, isiNdebele and siSwati. In 2005 the multi-variety approach was used in the production of an Nguni version of *Madiba Magic*, a collection of African stories selected by Nelson Mandela. *Ikhubalo likaMadiba* has a pan-African orientation with stories from South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Zambia, Tanzania, Malawi, Kenya, Nigeria and Morocco, as well as Malay/Indian stories brought to the Cape of Good Hope centuries ago by artisans and political exiles from the East. Eleven of the stories have been

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1   For a more detailed discussion of this manual see Busch and Schick (in press).

translated into isiZulu, 11 into isiXhosa, five into isiNdebele and five into siSwati. The intention is to break down barriers between these four varieties (Figure 7). Alexander (2004: 8) expresses the hope in the foreword that the book:

> … will help to create a bridge between the children of Africa. By translating these stories into some of the many languages of Africa, we believe that such bridges will be built and that the unity of Africa will be forged from the ground up … Our choice of an Nguni edition is deliberate, since we believe that people who speak and understand related language varieties should be encouraged to read texts in those varieties.

Figure 7: The page displaying the contents of the book Ikhubalo likaMadiba/Madiba Magic: all four languages of the book are visible in this page

Catering for different home languages and reading interests

Ah – Bekutheni? An ABC of multilingual rhymes. 'n Alfabet van rympies in Xhosa, Afrikaans en Engels (2001) has been published for children in preschool and in the first years of primary school in the Western Cape (South Africa). It is a collection of colourful images and of short texts intending to promote intercultural awareness and communication as well as reading for enjoyment. Rhymes, little poems, riddles and songs are at the core of this compilation as – because of their rhythmical and repetitious character – they can be a good introduction to reading and getting familiar with a new language. The collection is presented as a pack of loose large format cardboard cards as many children can handle them at one time compared to a book, so that when working in a school class, with only one or two packages, every child can actually hold the material in her/his hands. For every letter that figures in one of the three alphabets, the Afrikaans, the English and the Xhosa, there is one card, the photo of a child whose name begins with the letter and a series of short texts. Usually for every letter there are texts in at least two of the three languages on each card, often there are small texts in all three languages. Illustrations play a central role in this collection. Both texts and images do not prescribe a predetermined reading path, but allow the readers to discover many different elements and details. The package also contains guidelines for use to help teachers to facilitate interactive learning. Feedback from teachers indicates that materials such as these can promote group work with children helping each other to read the unfamiliar language(s) and showing respect and curiosity in one another's languages.

Language awareness as an underlying concept

The life skills manual for foundation phase one, *On Our Own Two Feet* (1999), is conceived for South African schools in which the medium of instruction is English, but where the language background of the learners is heterogeneous. Care is taken throughout the book that the diversity of South African society is not only present in the illustrations and in the names of the children that figure as the main characters, but also by inserting on nearly every page some words or short texts in one of the other South African languages. In the learner's book the persona of a little cock serves as a guide for language awareness. He comments on the languages present on the page and sometimes also gives translations into English. The learner's book builds opportunities for working in multilingual classrooms – many of the rhymes are in various South African languages. The teacher's guide offers suggestions for developing and working with multilingualism as integral to learning.

Conclusions and perspectives

The basic principle guiding the development of multi-variety materials is that of a learner-centred approach which aims to develop the ability to compare, evaluate, criticise and formulate one's own position. Neither in terms of content nor on the level of language use is a normative approach taken. The idea is to make the "multi-voicedness" of society visible in all three dimensions described by Bakhtin (Todorov, 1984: 56): heterology (*raznorečie*) or the diversity of discourses; heteroglossia (*raznojazyčnie*) or the diversity of language(s); and heterophony (*raznoglossie*) or the diversity of individual voices.

The examples of bi- and multilingual materials discussed in this contribution illustrate the importance of a meaningful distribution of the languages in question which recognises the heterogeneous linguistic backgrounds of the learners and also takes sociolinguistic parameters into consideration. Providing simply an identical text in two different languages does not stimulate the curiosity of the learners, but rather encourages the reader to rely on his/her "stronger" language or to prioritise the more prestigious language. Illustrations and iconic symbols can be used consciously as a constitutive element of the text that neither "belongs" to one language or the other, that gives the text coherence and supports the reader in making his/her way through the book.

This approach is intended to counterbalance the mechanisms of exclusion and division: on the one hand, individual learners find themselves and their linguistic practices represented at least in some of the texts; on the other hand, they discover for themselves that linguistic diversity is not necessarily a question of ethnicity or nationality but depends rather on a range of other factors; nor need it hinder communication and understanding. Concepts of language awareness, of the development of metalinguistic skills – such as translation, transfer, the development of strategies of comprehension – are increasingly being recognised as interesting learning strategies. The development of learning materials which allow for difference and variation in an emancipatory sense could be especially fruitful in linguistically complex settings. Multi-variety materials should not therefore be understood as simply celebrating difference but as a materials with emancipatory intent.

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Postscript

Brigitta Busch

Summarising the outcome of the project Literacy and linguistic diversity in a global perspective (LDL) is not an easy task. It is difficult to define its boundaries in a spatial, in a temporal and in a thematic sense. The project was part of the second medium-term programme of the ECML, which carried the title "Language for social cohesion. Language education in a multilingual and multicultural Europe." Our project was one of the few ECML projects which went beyond the borders of the European continent as it brought together experts from African and European countries around the common topics of raising awareness for the presence of the home languages of children in different education systems and of materials development for linguistically diverse contexts. We are grateful to the ECML for allowing this transcontinental exchange to happen and to the Austrian Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and the Austrian Unesco commission for funding the participation of the African experts.

On the African side, it was the Project for Alternative Education in South Africa (PRAESA) that played a pivotal role not only in the project but also in establishing first links between the African Language Academy (ACALAN) and the European bodies interested in the promotion of linguistic diversity. Some of the LDL project meetings served at the same time as occasions for the ACALAN steering committee to come together and to engage in networking with European partners. It was during the central workshop of the LDL project in 2005 that the President of ACALAN, Adama Samassékou, and the representatives of the ECML met for the first time. On the European side within the core team we could mainly draw on concrete experiences in multilingual schools in urban settings and on experiences with regional minority languages in Wales and in Carinthia. Actually, at almost all of the project meetings there were more persons present than the strict core team and the meetings always developed into a forum for the exchange of information and ideas.

Although the focus of the project was on materials development, already a vast field as such, it was important to keep an openness for unexpected developments and results. In spite of the obvious differences, we discovered a range of commonalities between the situation of the languages of migrants and of certain regional and minority languages within the school systems in Europe and the position of many African languages in African education systems. Often these languages, no matter whether they are spoken by a majority of the population in a given area or only by a smaller group, do not score high on the linguistic market and even basic learning and teaching materials are not available. It is also rather the rule than the exception that learning takes place in heterogeneous learner groups, in which different languages and codes are present as home languages of the learners. Our main interest concentrated on questions of

transfer, on how experiences and examples of good practice and existing materials can be adapted for other settings. We decided to focus on the issues of localisation (translation, adapting cultural content and illustrations) and on methods for producing transnational materials. In this context it is important to develop strategies for dealing with polycentric languages and with contexts in which a range of different varieties and codes must be catered for. These topics are addressed in the chapters of this volume. Especially in the ACALAN core project Stories across Africa (StAAf), which Carole Bloch describes in this volume, questions worked upon in the course of the LDL project become highly relevant.

During the course of the project the question of how to raise awareness for the promotion of mother-tongue education and for bi- or multilingual education among parents and teachers was addressed on several occasions. The experiences gained in the framework of the European Year of Languages 2001 were debated at one of the first project meetings and were incorporated into the action plan for the Year of African Languages launched by the African Union in 2006/07. The members of the project team also engaged together with other experts in the field of linguistic diversity in promoting a Unesco initiative for an International Year of Languages and in elaborating a plan of action for such an awareness-raising campaign.

The outcome of our project is less measurable in concrete products on paper than in terms of networking and co-operation. Some of the formulations used in the report "The place of mother tongue in school education"[1] which is the reference document for Recommendation 1740 passed by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in April 2006, are derived directly from papers delivered by African specialists at the central workshop of the LDL project. This is manifest testimony to the effects of the international network of specialists working for mother-tongue-based bilingual education in different contexts, which the LDL initiative has woven together much more tightly.

The members of the LDL project team, together with other colleagues, have already drawn up different project proposals which will enable them to continue working together in a comparative education framework. One of the projects continues the work on materials development and another one focuses on methods in bilingual education. The LDL project has taught us the great value of comparative education and international collaborative research networks for enriching and deepening the insights of the respective participating scholarly initiatives.

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[1]   Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, Doc. 10837, 7 February 2006 (see http://assembly.coe.int).

Multilingual societies, plurilingual education

Some supplementary thoughts

Daniel Coste
ENS Arts and Human Sciences
ICAR team

It is particularly significant that this volume with its numerous contributions is the outcome of an activity undertaken by the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz. One might be tempted to think that the project does not really fit into the Centre's terms of reference and falls outside its geo-educational and institutional field of competence; what has Africa got to do with promoting the learning of modern languages in the Council of Europe member states? The answer is "everything"; it has everything to do with it and vice versa.

At a time when Europe acknowledges that it is a multilingual continent and proud to be so (even though it accepts the need to have recourse to international languages for many of its internal and external exchanges), and especially when most European countries set great store – at least in principle and in their official statements – by their multilingualism deriving from the variety of regional languages, minority languages and languages of immigration, it is clear that the plurilingual education and plural literacy experience of African countries is of relevance to the changes taking place in Europe and that the people of Africa, which for so long had been under colonial rule, have a valuable contribution to make.

As others have pointed out here, proximity depends on historical relationships of domination between languages (and between speakers of those languages). Echoing the approach of the 19th and 20th-century colonisers who declared these vernaculars (when indeed they acknowledged them as languages, which was not always the case) to be unsuitable for educational or "civilisational" communication, as they were generally unwritten, and excessively fragmented because of their large number and dialectal variations, in the same way today in Europe regional and minority languages are still viewed negatively because of their diatopic and diastratic variations and because some of them at least are not standardised. Even though they are more readily classified today as languages rather than dialects or patois, they are still, in the opinion of many, second-class languages, lacking the customary instruments of codification (dictionaries, grammars, teaching material) and their "native" speakers in most cases are unable to use them in social contexts such as administrative affairs, public services, etc., or find them in the media.

Europe, however, presents some particularly interesting situations and developments:

- regional languages which are in a strong position, even though so far they remain "merely" regional (Catalan on Catalonia,[1] Basque in the Spanish Basque Country). They are highly codified languages with a written and literary tradition and are widely used in a variety of spheres by society as a whole in these areas; moreover the local authorities have adopted a proactive language education policy and set aside the appropriate resources to implement this policy;

- languages which may be regional or minority in one country but majority and official national languages in another, often neighbouring country (for example, Polish in Lithuania, Hungarian in the Slovak Republic); here we find more complex situations where the national authorities have to introduce specific legislation and regulations setting out the rights and obligations of the parties concerned;

- more generally, international instruments with convention status have been produced, such as the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. For the countries that have signed up to these commitments, there are a number of (freely chosen) obligations concerning the guaranteed used of the languages in question in fields such as justice, education, culture, information and the media, etc. Regular reports have to be written on how the commitments entered into are being honoured in practice;

- even countries which have not ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages can take significant symbolic measures. For example, France, which has a long history of regulatory linguistic centralism, still very much in evidence, and which has devoted much time and effort into promoting unification via the French language exclusively, has recently recognised 75 "languages of France", and the Office for the French Language has now become the Office for the French Language and the Languages of France;

- still in France, it is now possible in the state education system for a regional language to be used in a partial immersion approach (up to 50% of school time), with the rest set aside for the national language;[2]

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1 Catalonia, however, is almost at the stage of having "nation" status.

2 Total immersion in a regional language is possible in the private sector thanks to associations and activist regional or regionalist movements. All the same, whether public or private, the number of schools where a regional language is the partial or exclusive medium of instruction is very small and in most cases applies only to the initial educational levels, as parents subsequently put their children in "ordinary" schools. Many respected commentators have pointed out that this symbolic or practical recognition of regional languages has come about at a time when the majority of these languages are no longer being passed on through the family and whose long-term social survival therefore is, in practice, under threat.

- in many countries, there are specific qualifications and training for (future) teachers of/in regional and minority languages, even though there is more emphasis on recognition of mastery of the language than preparation for using this language in the transmission of knowledge in other disciplines.

The situation regarding African languages is somewhat different and terms such as regional or minority language are not applied as consistently in that context as they tend to be in the Council of Europe member states.[1] And where a language which is not widely spoken in one country and by no means has national language status is a demographically dominant and official language in another country (which is frequently the case because of the often arbitrary drawing of borders in colonial times), invariably there are no specific regulations similar to those discussed above. This is quite simply because, whether or not they are languages of instruction, whether or not they are central in a geographical area in relation to other languages, there is little danger that most of these African languages will die out through not being passed on in the family context (although some of the contributions here have stressed the risk of this happening because of certain socio-family choices). Nonetheless, half a century after independence they are not yet in a position to be the main medium of instruction in schools. This has been pointed out and criticised on numerous occasions. One might think that everything has already been said, if not done. This is not the place to go over these arguments, and clearly this work has a different purpose. The fact is, however, that the languages of the former colonial powers, playing an influential role in education and related sectors, maintain a dominant role which is more than symbolic, even though their use by politicians, economists, universities and other civil society sectors make them instruments for development and asserting national identity.

Far from taking a pessimistic view as to the future or getting bogged down in analysing causes and apportioning responsibility (necessary though such an analysis may be), the contributions in this collection describe experiments that "work", action which though it may be small scale has a clear aim: to ensure that there are opportunities for the languages which are not appropriately represented in schools today, nor in writing in the social context, to be given their rightful place and be seen as asserting the identity of those who speak them and those who speak other African languages (as seen in the African palavers and other multilingual story-telling evenings attended by people who themselves are plurilingual but do not master all the languages used in the course of such events). We are talking literacy here and it is important for people to be proud of their languages when in contact with other languages and outside school.

It is the plurilingual speakers who should be at the heart of the reflection and possible action, for the sake of both African languages and Europe. If a distinction is made, as there tends to be, between societal multilingualism (several languages coexisting in a given social area) and individual plurilingualism (the same individual able to speak – to

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1   This consistency is, however, only relative, and a large proportion of the preamble to the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages is taken up defining these terms.

varying degrees of proficiency – several languages), we will see that there are two main aspects:

First, it would be to the advantage of societal multilingualism for it to be recognised and promoted as an asset by the society in question and as one of the components of mankind's heritage, on condition that each language continues to be passed on "naturally" from one generation to another. Such recognition must relate to the status of the language, the areas of use and possible preservation or extension, even work on the corpus of the language (standardisation, lexical creation, transcription and a fixed graphical system, where necessary). At the same time, there is nothing scandalous in saying that not all the world's languages should be given the same level of promotion or linguistic attention. Defending the plurality of languages and acknowledging that they all have the same dignity as languages is not the same as claiming that they are or should be all equal in their mutual relationship which, as has been pointed out, often takes the form of a war of languages, if not glottophagy.[1]

Second, in many contexts, it is now only through individual plurilingualism that people can become mobile, that there can be inter-communication in multicultural societies, that individuals can feel included in a society which is only modestly cohesive and that they can play a full part in the various expressions of citizenship. This is all the more so for speakers of so-called peripheral languages than for speakers of "central" languages, according to the gravitational type model suggested by Swan and developed by Calvet.[2]

From a psycholinguistic, acquisitional and sociolinguistic point of view, contemporary research tends to suggest that learning a second language and especially partial or total education through the medium of a second language (for example, French or English in a given African country) can be successful only if the initial language or languages are

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1   Cf. the titles of two works by Louis-Jean Calvet, who applied the term "glottophagy" to relations between the languages of colonisation and the languages of the colonised countries. Nonetheless, this "swallowing up" of certain languages by others is not a feature of colonial situations alone. Moreover, an ecological rather than polemological view of relations between languages also reveals the sociolinguistic (and not strictly linguistic) disparities and inequalities between languages, and the fact that at a given point in history some languages play a central role with many others becoming marginalised for reasons other than linguistic.

2   According to this model, it is bilingual/plurilingual speakers who are the links between the different degrees of "centrality". People born into a family background where the language or languages of communication are peripheral are more likely, for social and educational promotion purposes, to become plurilingual by learning the more central languages. Those who are native speakers of a central language are less likely to feel the need to become plurilingual. Speakers of the current "hyper-central language" (English) are the ones who can afford to remain monolingual (although some may claim that this contributes to their isolation and renders them less able to engage in intercultural communication). This model is doubtless a debatable one and may even appear biased, but it does present a dynamic link (via the speakers themselves) between societal multilingualism, individual plurilingualism and power relationships between languages. The distinction between centre and periphery also ties in with other uses (with regard to colonial-type domination) of the spatial metaphor of distance.

recognised and taken into consideration, and linguistically and functionally developed in the child's repertoire, linguistic awareness and cognitive maturation.[1]

These brief comments relating to multilingualism and plurilingualism concur with the majority of points of view expressed in the contributions to this volume. It sketches out a framework for possible action of varying degrees of complexity and at various levels in the political, social and especially educational spheres. Clearly, readiness to embark on the large-scale reforms and changes which we would like to see and which should be encouraged in the shorter or longer term, in line with the contexts and institutional, political, economic and linguistic conditions which prevail, is not yet generalised. In such complex and sensitive areas, a maximalist or radicalist approach is unlikely to have more chance of succeeding than mere good intentions. This volume points clearly to possible approaches and realistic measures and initiatives in order to emerge from the deadlock caused by failure to act, defence of acquired positions and, on occasion, unsuccessful attempts at change which were ill-prepared and poorly supervised.

Being better informed about what is happening on the European scene than in a multifaceted and an acknowledged linguistically plural Africa, I have learned much from reading this compilation which is the outcome of one of the programmes of the ECML in Graz and which has benefited from the support of the Austrian authorities. As I am familiar with the work and instruments of the Council of Europe's Language Policy Division, I am also struck by the number of areas of convergence, both manifest and less apparent, between the latter and the ideas behind the contributions here. This cannot be the mere product of chance, even though one must be careful in seeking areas of confluence. I am sure, in any event, that reference tools such as the "Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe", sub-titled "From Linguistic Diversity to Plurilingual Education", or activities to help in assessment and decision making such as the one which led to the drawing up of the *Language Education Policy Profiles,* produced at regional or national level, will – along with other initiatives – serve as a springboard to go a stage further than mere pooling of experiences, given the types of interdependence to be addressed in the future.

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1   This ties in with the threshold hypothesis put forward by Cummins the threshold in question does not necessarily have to be reached before education in another language begins provided that the child continues to develop his or her abilities in the first language (so that the child becomes literate in both languages and has access to a wide variety of oral and written sources in the first language). The child's own image of his or her mother tongue(s) and of himself/herself and of the community of speakers of the language(s) in question is also of prime importance.

Notes about the authors

Neville Alexander is director of the Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa (PRAESA) at the University of Cape Town and is widely known as an educator and language planner. His latest work relevant to this publication is *An Ordinary Country. Issues in the Transition from Apartheid to Democracy in South Africa* (Berghahn Books, London and New York, 2004).

Ayo Bamgbose is Professor Emeritus of Linguistics at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria. He took his Ph.D. in Linguistics at the University of Edinburgh in 1963 and has taught at the University of Ibadan for more than thirty years. He has also been visiting professor at universities in the United States of America and Europe. His contributions to African linguistics include the phonology and grammar of the Yoruba language, the role and varieties of English in Africa, and the language question in Africa. His publications include *Language and the Nation* (Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1991), *Language and Exclusion* (Lit Verlag Münster, Hamburg, 2000), and *Sociolinguistics in West Africa* (ed.) (*International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, Issue 141, 2000).

Carole Bloch co-ordinates the Early Literacy Unit at PRAESA which concentrates on teacher training and materials development for multilingual contexts. She is also the central co-ordinator of the Stories across Africa project (StAAf) which is carried out in the framework of the African Academy of Languages. She has published work on early literacy approaches: for example, "Building Bridges between Oral and Written Language: Facilitating Reading Opportunities for Children in Africa" (in Alexander, N. (ed.), *Mother Tongue Based Bilingual Education in Southern Africa. The Dynamics of Implementation*, Multilingualism Network, Frankfurt, Cape Town, pp. 69-82). She writes and facilitates books for young children such as those in the Little Hands series (PRAESA, 2002 and 2004).

Brigitta Busch works at the Department of Linguistics at the University of Vienna. Her interests focus on questions of linguistic diversity in education and the media as well as on language and migration. She has published widely on these topics. Her publications include *Language Biographies for Multilingual Learning* (PRAESA Occasional Papers, No. 24, 2006, together with Jardine, A. and Tjoutuku, A.), *Sprachen im Disput. Medien und Öffentlichkeit in multilingualen Gesellschaften* (Drava, Klagenfurt, 2004).

Daniel Coste is an Professor Emeritus in Language Sciences and Language Didactics at the Ecole normale supérieure Lettres et Sciences humaines, and expert for the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe. He contributed to the drafting of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* and is the author of several articles and chapters related to plurilingualism within educational systems.

Viv Edwards is Professor of Language in Education at the University of Reading, UK, where she is also Director of the National Centre for Language and Literacy. Her publications include *Multilingualism in the English-Speaking world* (Blackwell, 2004) and *The Power of Babel: Teaching and Learning in Multilingual Classrooms* (Trentham, 1998).

Arame Fal worked as a researcher at the IFAN Cheikh Anta Diop Linguistics Laboratory until her retirement. She is one of the founding members of the Senegalese Development Support Organisation (OSAD), which deals with formal and non formal education. This NGO, which received the Kadima International Prize for the Promotion of Partner Languages of the South (Prix International Kadima pour la Valorisation des Langues Partenaires du Sud) in the area of translation in 2001 from the French Speaking Nations Agency has developed teaching materials for education in the national languages financed with the income generated from the services it provides. Publications (extract): *Dictionnaire wolof-français* (co-author), Paris, Karthala, 1990; *Précis de grammaire fonctionnelle de la langue wolof*, Dakar, 1999.

Prince Kum'a Ndumbe III is Professor at the University of Yaoundé I/Cameroon and works also at the Free University of Berlin. He is the founder of the association AfricAvenir. Prince Kum'a Ndumbe III is also a poet and writer and has published over 30 non-scientific works, mostly theatre plays and short stories in Duala, German and French. His publications include: "La mise en application du Nouveau Partenariat pour le Développement de l'Afrique (NEPAD). Quels défis pour les politiques nationales et pour la coopération internationale?" (Goethe Institute, Yaoundé, 2002) and "Interdisziplinparität und Interkulturalität als Voraussetzungen einer entwicklungs-relevanten Germanistik in Afrika", in Mishima, K. (ed.), *Dokumentation des Symposiums "Interkulturelle Deutschstudien – Methoden, Möglichkeiten und Modelle"* (Munich, 1992).

Adama Samassékou plays an active role in community life. He was the founding President, for Mali and Africa as a whole, of the Peoples' Movement for Human Rights Education. In the political sphere, he was the founding Chairman of ADEMA-France. Having been Malian Minister for Education for seven years (1993-2000) and former spokesperson for the Government of Mali (1997-2000), Adama Samassékou is currently President of the African Academy of Languages (ACALAN).