AILA Africa ReN Newsletter

Applied Linguistics and Literacy in Africa and the Diaspora

An AILA Research Network
aila.info

Editor's comment

Dear ReN Africa members,

This newsletter marks the 10th anniversary of ReN Africa and its newsletter. Let us celebrate our 10th anniversary by spreading the word, such as by sharing the newsletter with colleagues and inviting them to sign up. Two newsletters per year will hardly fill anyone's inbox.

The first newsletter this year presents 10 (!) exciting conferences coming up across the globe. Editors of two edited volumes invite submission of abstracts – one on language use, variation, and attitudes in West Africa, the other on language and social justice.

New publications include a forthcoming piece on tone in a Togolese language where the author makes the case for a novel approach to representing tone in writing – a perennial issue in many African languages. A new edition of *Think Writer* is out – a practical tool for business writing.

Funding opportunities include three scholarships for students: New Zealand, University of Bradford, and UNICAF.

From the field we report on Bloom, the winner of All Children Reading's Enabling Writers competition. Bloom allows users with little computer experience make their own local language books through a simple interface, and it works offline.

Mary Faith Mount-Cors reports on Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA). Developed by RTI International, EGRA has been used over the past ten years in over 65 countries and in over 100 languages to assess basic foundation skills for literacy acquisition in early grades.
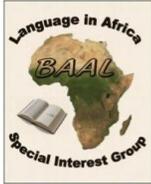
With best regards,

Yours,

Juliet Tembe,
Editor

Upcoming conferences and events

BAAL LiASIG Annual Conference, London, May 2016

The 2016 LiASIG Annual Meeting will be on May 6th at the University of East London under the title "Technology and Media: Emerging Trends in Africa and the Diaspora". The plenary speaker will be Professor Bonny Norton. We would be grateful if you could register by April 30, 2016 so that we can make a final order for catering for the day.

Date: May 6, 2016
Venue: University of East London, Docklands Campus, London
Web: liasig.wordpress.com
Contact: csmcglynn@btinternet.com

Language and Conflict: Politics of Language and Identity across Contexts, London, May 2016

This one-day workshop brings together scholars and graduate students working on the role of language in on-going and post-conflict contexts. Attendance is free, and no registration. Keynote speakers: Hilary Footitt, University of Reading, and Zoë Marriage, SOAS.

Date: May 20, 2016
Venue: School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, Room B102

Soillse/FEL: Small Language Planning: Communities in Crisis, Glasgow, June 2016

This conference aims to provide a forum for minority language researchers, policy makers, practitioners and activists to exchange research findings and experiences in order to stimulate fresh perspectives on minority language revitalisation and to identify new areas for collaboration.

Deadline: Register by May 1, 2016
Dates: June 6–8, 2016
Venue: University of Glasgow, Scotland
Web: www.soillse.ac.uk/en/soillsefel-conference-2016

LSSA/SAALA/SAALT Conference, South Africa, July 2016

The Conference theme is: *Language and Linguistics in the Global South: Posing the challenge.*

Deadline: Register by May 1, 2016
Dates: July 4–7, 2016
Venue: University of Western Cape, South Africa
Web: www.lssa-saala-saalt.co.za

Multidisciplinary Approaches in Language Policy and Planning Conference, Calgary, Sept. 2016

This international conference will be held at the University of Calgary in Alberta, Canada. We invite papers and colloquia that approach language policy from a variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives, and in a variety of contexts, from the local/institutional to national/global. Plenary Speakers include Ericka Albaugh (Bowdoin College), Leanne Hinton (The University of California at Berkeley), and David Cassels Johnson (The University of Iowa).

Dates: September 1–3, 2016
Venue: University of Calgary, Canada
Web: www.werklund.ucalgary.ca/lpp

IFENSA – English Scholars' Association of Nigeria (ESAN), Nigeria, September, 2016

Theme: English Studies in Non-native Environments: Reflections and Projections. Abstracts of no more than 250 words in Microsoft Word format should include the following: full names; institutional affiliation, email and telephone number. More information.

Deadline: Abstracts due by July 15, 2016
Dates: September 5–8, 2016
Venue: Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria
Contact: ifesan2016@yahoo.com

Child and Youth Institute, Senegal, October 2016

The Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) 's Child and Youth Institute is one of the components of the Child and Youth Studies Programme and is aimed at strengthening the analytic capacities of young African researchers on issues affecting children and youth in Africa and elsewhere in the world. Laureate applicants should be PhD candidates or scholars in their early career with a proven capacity to conduct research on the theme of the Institute. Intellectuals active in the policy process and/or social movements and civil society organizations are also encouraged to apply. The number of places offered by CODESRIA at each session is limited to ten.

Deadline: Applications due by July 15, 2016
Dates: October 17–28, 2016
Venue: Dakar, Senegal
Web: www.codesria.org
Contact: child.institute@codesria.sn

5th International Conference on Language and Education, Thailand, October 2016

Theme: Sustainable Development through Multilingual Education. Confirmed plenary speakers: Dr. Susan Malone and Dr. Linda Tsung.

Dates: October 19–21, 2016
Venue: Bangkok, Thailand
Web: www.lc.mahidol.ac.th/mleconf/2016
Contact: 2016mleconference@gmail.com

Baraza II: Swahili Conference at SOAS

Abstracts are invited for short presentations at the second Swahili conference at SOAS addressing any aspect of the language, literature, translation, culture, philosophy or diaspora of the Swahili speaking peoples of the world. The aim of the conference is to foster academic interaction and exchange about new or emerging research, developing ideas and interests for mutual benefit among Swahili scholars and students. Please email your 250-300 word abstract and title of your presentation.

Deadline: Abstracts due by September 1, 2016
Date: October 29, 2016
Venue: SOAS – University of London
Web: soas.ac.uk/cas/events/31oct2015--baraza-swahili-conference-at-soas.html
Contact: Chege Githiora: cg17@soas.ac.uk or Ida Hadjivayanis: ih11@soas.ac.uk

First International Conference on Revitalization of Indigenous and Minoritized Languages, Barcelona, April 2017

Successful proposals will clearly indicate the relationship of the presentation to the core conference themes. Presentations should provide an opportunity for conference participants to engage with some of the challenging and fundamental questions at the intersection of theory, research and praxis. Plenary Speakers: Rodolfo Cerrón-Palomino, Maya Khemlani David, Teresa McCarty, and Joan Peytaví.

Deadline: Abstracts due by July 30, 2016
Date: April 19-21, 2017
Venue: University of Barcelona, Spain
Web: icriml.indiana.edu
Contact: congrevit@gmail.com

Call for papers

Essays on language use, variation and attitudes towards language in West Africa

The editors of the proposed book invite contributions to the theme of the book from data-driven case studies across West Africa on the languages spoken in the region, covering the indigenous languages as well as Arabic, English, French and Portuguese. The book is intended, mainly, to contribute to the study of the phenomena of language use, variation and attitudes towards language in the West Africa sub-region. In addition, it is to provide scholars and students access to comparative sociolinguistic studies and perspectives from the different cultures and societies in West Africa. Edited by Oladipo Salami (DPhil) and Wale Adeniran (PhD). Contributors should submit a title and their proposal of not more than 250 words and author's bio.

Deadline: April 30, 2016
Contact: diwalebookproject@yahoo.com

Language & Social Justice: Case Studies on Communication & the Creation of Just Societies

We invite abstracts for potential contributions to an edited book tentatively titled, *Language & Social Justice: Case Studies on Communication & the Creation of Just Societies*. The volume will be a collection of case studies on the subject of language and social justice. We are seeking 15–20 essays of 2000–3500 words each, written in an accessible style suitable for use in undergraduate and graduate courses on linguistic anthropology, language and social justice, and engaged language research. The collection will be co-edited by Netta Avineri, Robin Conley, Laura R. Graham, Eric Johnson, and Jonathan Rosa. Oxford University Press and Routledge have expressed interest in the volume. More information.

Contact: languagesocialjusticebook@gmail.com

Publications

Roberts, D. and S. L. Walter (forthcoming). Writing morphology, reading lexical tone: linguistic and experimental evidence in favor of morphographic spelling in Kabiye (Togo). *Writing Systems Research.*

The shorter a word, the more likely it is to be lexically ambiguous. In the standard orthography of Kabiye, a tone language of Togo, numerous monosyllabic heterophonic homographs (tonal minimal pairs) and homophonic homographs occur in the imperative and six associated conjugations. This paper presents the complete catalogue of these verbs, and then examines them in natural contexts. It goes on to propose a morphographic spelling in which elided root-final labial consonants are written as superscript silent letters to help the reader identify the lexeme. This spelling is tested against a tonographic alternative in an oral reading experiment. The results show that those who learned the morphographic spelling gained more in reading

accuracy from the addition of superscript silent letters than those who learned the tonographic spelling did from the addition of diacritics.

Rodseth, V., L. Johanson, and W. Rodseth (2015). Think Writer. 7th rev. ed.

Think Writer teaches the basics of business writing – the kind needed for business letters, memoranda and reports; also for examinations and essays. Based on numerous composition-teaching works and on several years of trialling in business settings and in academia. The course deals with writing problems systematically.

Web: www.amazon.ca/Think-Writer-Vic-Rodeseth-ebook/dp/B01B9BVDP4

Funding and competitions

New Zealand scholarships for postgraduate programs

New Zealand Government is offering scholarships for students starting full-time postgraduate degree programmes in 2016.

Web: developmentconnection.net/new-zealand-government-scholarships-for-developing-countries-2016-2017

University of Bradford Global Development Scholarship

You no longer need to have secured an offer to study at Bradford before you apply for this scholarship. However you must already have completed your undergraduate degree and know your results to be able to apply.

Deadline: May 13, 2016
Web: www.bradford.ac.uk/fees-and-financial-support/university-scholarships-and-support/2016-17/global-development-scholarship

UNICAF scholarships

UNICAF is one of the most generous scholarship Programmes available. The programme supports students that are domiciled in Africa and provides opportunities for studies towards various distance learning degree programmes awarded by European, British and American universities.

Web: www.unicaf.org/scholarships

In the field

Bloom: Let's Grow a Library

SIL's Bloom software has been chosen as the winner of the Enabling Writers competition, part of the All Children Reading initiative (a joint effort of USAID, AUSAID and World Vision). The goal of the competition was to spur development of computer or mobile software that would allow writers to easily create reading materials for primary-level students.

When working in local-language education projects, project managers and reading specialists end up settling for what is practical, instead of what is actually needed. The hope is often that a primer and a handful of books will be enough to open up the joy and power of reading in minority language communities. Communities themselves find it hard to conceive of the processes involved if they are to develop sufficient reading materials to promote fluent reading in local languages … and realistically, we know that it takes *stacks* of titles to make reading worthwhile and give the practice needed to develop true literacy.

Bloom enables many people to get involved in building a large collection of local language books using a radically simple platform. With new computer users in mind, it has special features to guide them in simple book making, so people need far less training than alternatives such as Word, Publisher, or InDesign. In addition, Bloom's Book Library offers books from around the world for you to translate into a local language. With a single click, shell books are downloaded to your computer, ready to use even when you are offline.

SIL International and SIL LEAD collaborate to offer training in the use of Bloom software and approaches to materials development for local language literacy and education programs.

Web: bloomlibrary.org
Contact: bloom@sil-lead.org

Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA)
By Mary Faith Mount-Cors, PhD

At the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) meeting in Vancouver in March 2016, I had the pleasure of meeting Bonny Norton. She asked if I would like to provide a newsletter entry on the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), its purpose, how to access and use it, and also my own experience of it.

EGRA purpose

The USAID-funded EdData II team at RTI International developed the EGRA methodology. The EGRA test has been used over the past ten years in over 65 countries and in over 100 languages by RTI International and many other USAID implementing partners as well as by other donors. EGRA is an individually administered oral assessment requiring about 15 minutes per child. It is designed to assess the most basic foundation skills for literacy acquisition in early grades, including pre-reading skills such as listening comprehension. The test includes timed, 1-minute assessments of letter naming, nonsense and familiar words, and paragraph reading. Additional (untimed) segments include comprehension, relationship to print, and dictation.

Essentially, it is an oral test similar to DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills), which may be familiar to many of you. DIBELS was developed for English reading in the 1970s and 80s at the University of Minnesota and the University of Oregon. DIBELS includes phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, accuracy, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary. DIBELS is used by many teachers in kindergarten through sixth grade in the U.S. to screen for students at risk of reading difficulty, to monitor student progress, and to guide instruction, such as in forming homogeneous reading groups within their classrooms.

EGRA is considered by RTI and USAID to be a system-level, progress-monitoring tool or a program evaluation tool, and not an intervention or curriculum. USAID considers it an inexpensive and simple diagnostic of individual student progress in reading. The intent is for EGRA results to be used by ministries of education to identify schools with particular needs and develop instructional approaches for improving foundational reading skills. So, the uses and purposes may be different for DIBELS and EGRA while the two tools may be quite similar.

How to access and use EGRA

EGRA instruments are available on the EdData II site. The EGRA instruments typically are adapted for use in each particular country and each language. EdData II provides access to customized versions of the assessment protocols and questionnaires. EdData II also offers toolkits in multiple languages for implementing an EGRA and samples of teacher manuals for improved reading instruction. Check out their Web site: www.eddataglobal.org/reading

An updated toolkit is currently available from USAID. A webinar and face-to-face workshop will officially launch *EGRA Toolkit, 2nd Edition* on April 27, 2016 sponsored by the USAID-funded Global Reading Network. Check out their website: globalreadingnetwork.net

My own experience of EGRA

In my book, *Global Literacy in Local Learning Contexts: Connecting Home and School*, to be published by Routledge in June 2016, I used data from schools in Kenya where a large EGRA pilot was done by RTI International and USAID in 2006. Check the Routledge site for my book.

I conducted quantitative analyses on a 2006 coastal Kenya dataset that set up my field research in 2009 with mothers of second grade children who had been in the reading program and been assessed for reading progress using EGRA. In my book, sociocultural literacy frameworks face off with technicist frameworks as I ask questions about health and home as connected or disconnected with literacy learning in the case of these EGRA schools. I used sample matching on the EGRA dataset across more than 20 schools in coastal Kenya and then chose three schools for primary research with low, mid, and higher reading progress over the 9 months of the early grade reading program. I then framed my recommendations for dual-generation approaches to literacy learning for children.

EGRA ten years ago perhaps did not generally attend to sociocultural facets of literacy, such as languages, economic situation, home care configuration, and physical and health environment, which I was looking at in my research. Much growth in how USAID's reading movement looks at literacy has occurred over these past ten years. In part due to what EGRA demonstrated about low reading levels in countries where it was used and also by what factors originally ignored in those contexts, much more about how a child forms early literacy skills has

now been brought to the fore. This fuller understanding can be seen currently in USAID reading programs and solicitations.

Currently, USAID solicitations under Assistance to Basic Education: All Children Reading have three broad outcome areas: classroom instruction, national policy, and parent and community engagement. Within these areas, it is now understood that while an assessment tool and a classroom instruction package are critical for knowing where a school population and perhaps a nation as a whole are with reading ability and in focusing on reading with teachers and students, it is not enough. Parents need to be connected to their children's reading programs and reading abilities. Communities need to support reading as endemic and essential within their cultural practices. This means also understanding how social practices build literacy through talking and describing, in addition to connecting to text, from an early age.

Through my small business, EdIntersect, LLC, we have recently worked on EGRA research including training enumerators, adapting instruments, collecting data, and analyzing results in Zimbabwe and are working on a proposal for EGRA research in Senegal.

Madagascar All Stars music group

Ulrike Hanna Meinhof from Southampton University has been granted a Follow-on-Funding award from the AHRC. The project is called 'Madagascar in the World. The Impact of Music on Global Concerns'. The purpose is to turn the themes and results of her previous AHRC-funded research with the project TNMundi. Diaspora as social and cultural practice 2006-2010 into a feature-length music documentary and to disseminate it widely through film festivals and workshops. The film will be co-produced and directed by Parisian film company Laterit productions and tell the story of the Madagascar All Stars, a group of 6 musicians of Malagasy origin, half of whom live in Europe and the others in Madagascar. Its first screening will be at the Shetland Island film festival Screenplay in September 2016, and the first screening in England will be at the City Light Festival in Southampton in November 2016. Both screenings will be followed by discussion sessions with the director Cesar Paes, one of the musicians Dama Mahaleo and Dr. Meinhof as the researcher. All are most welcome.

Contact: uhm@soton.ac.uk

Miscellaneous

Free membership in the International Literacy Association

The International Literacy Association (ILA) has a new membership policy for people in the developing world. ILA is doing everything possible to building up African membership and influence, so ILA is giving African ("Developing Economy") members FREE membership. This means that you can be a full member of the organization and have free access to all the online research and reading materials on its website, and you can read *Literacy Today* online for free. As a member you still receive conference discounts and discounts on ILA books. More information.

Tell us about your research!

Send us a short profile (one paragraph) of the research you are undertaking on language or literacy education in Africa by September 30, 2016, for inclusion in our next issue.