



Applied Linguistics and Literacy
in Africa and the Diaspora

An AILA Research Network
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Editor's comment

Dear ReN Africa members,

I welcome you to our November issue of the ReN Africa Newsletter. In this issue, you will find news about two important upcoming conferences on Africa, as well as a new book on language and economics, addressing the link between the two in the African context. Also worth noting is the free issue this month of the *Journal of Sociolinguistics* on the linguist William Labov and a free online course on writing.

For prospective Master's and PhD students from developing Commonwealth countries there are funding opportunities for studying in the UK. Also, African-born scholars with appointments at universities in the United States or Canada can apply for a placement at an African university as part of the Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship Program.

We are also delighted to report that the Spoken Corpus of Cameroon Pidgin English is now publically available for download.

Finally, we have compiled a list of journals for applied linguistics with an interest Africa. We encourage our readers to add to this list, which is also available as an editable Google spreadsheet.

With best regards,



Yours,

Juliet Tembe,
Editor





Upcoming conferences and events

LIA BAAL SIG annual conference, Reading, UK, May 2017

The next Annual Conference of the LIA BAAL SIG will be held on Friday, May 5, 2017 at the University of Reading and the theme will be “Language without Borders: Multilingual Communication in Africa and the Diaspora”. Papers are invited on any topic which fits into that theme, including translation, translanguaging, oral communication and so forth. Please contact the LiASIG Secretary Goodith White (anne.goodithwhite@ucd.ie) for more information.

SOAS Africa Conference, London, July 2017

The SOAS Centre of African studies (CAS) calls for contributions for the first SOAS Africa Conference to be held on 20th and 21st of July 2017. The conference theme, “Imagining Africa’s Future”, marks SOAS’ centenary, and in order to celebrate a century of African studies we look forward to examine future key trends, changes and debates that are likely to shape the African continent over the coming century, drawing from a broad range of disciplines and perspectives in a truly inter-disciplinary conference. 500-words abstract should be sent to cas@soas.ac.uk.

Deadline: December 10, 2016

Call for contributions: [here](#)

Venue: SOAS University of London

Dates: July 20–21, 2017

Pan African Reading for All Conference, Abuja, 2017

The Reading Association of Nigeria will host the 10th annual Pan African Literacy for All Conference. The conference theme is “Connecting and Engaging with Literacies: Systems and Structures for Sustainable Development”.

Venue: Abuja, Nigeria

Date: August 28–31, 2017

Contact: Judith Baker (judithbakr@gmail.com)

Website: [here](#)

Publications

Kamwangamalu, Nkonko M. (2016). Language Policy and Economics: The Language Question in Africa. Palgrave Macmillan.

This book addresses the perennial question of how to promote Africa’s indigenous languages as medium of instruction in educational systems.

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Breaking with the traditional approach to the continent's language question by focusing on the often overlooked issue of the link between African languages and economic development, *Language Policy and Economics* argues that African languages are an integral part of a nation's socio-political and economic development. Therefore, the book argues that any language policy designed to promote these languages in such higher domains as the educational system in particular must have economic advantages if the intent is to succeed, and proposes Prestige Planning as the way to address this issue. [More information.](#)

Free issue of the Journal of Sociolinguistics on William Labov

The current issue (vol. 20, no. 4, 2016) of the Journal of Sociolinguistics is available for free during November. This special issue is entitled *Labov and sociolinguistics: Fifty years of language in social context* and is edited by Allan Bell, David Britain and Devyani Sharma.

This theme issue marks fifty years since the publication of William Labov's *Social Stratification of English in New York City*, the foundation study of variationist sociolinguistics. The issue touches on several strands of Labov's contribution to sociolinguistics: language change, linguistic evaluation, methodological innovation, African American English, language and the individual, and language style. We conclude with a reflection on Labov's commitment to the study of language in society.

Funding and competitions

Commonwealth Scholarships for Master's and PhD study

Commonwealth Scholarships for Master's and PhD study in the UK are offered for citizens of developing Commonwealth Countries. These scholarships are funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), with the aim of contributing to the UK's international development aims and wider overseas interests, supporting excellence in UK higher education, and sustaining the principles of the Commonwealth. [More information.](#)

Deadline: November 15, 2016



Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship Program (CADFP)

Accredited universities in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda can submit a project request to host a scholar. Scholars born in Africa, who live in the United States or





Canada and work in an accredited college or university in either of those two countries, can apply to be placed on a roster of available candidates for a fellowship. Scholars must hold a terminal degree in their field and may hold any academic rank. Scholars who have already received a fellowship in the fall 2015 or spring 2016 competitions, are not eligible to participate.

Selection decisions will be made in March 2017; project visits can begin as early as May 1, 2017 and must be completed by August 31, 2017. Projects can be conducted in the African host country for 14-90 days. For the fellowship, the African Diaspora Fellow will receive a \$200/day stipend, visa costs, limited health insurance coverage, and round-trip international air travel.

Deadline: December 8, 2016

Contact: Jeremy Coats (africandiaspora@iie.org)

Website: [here](#)

Reports from conferences

BAAL Language in Africa SIG: Annual Meeting May 6, 2016, University of East London

Under the theme "Technology & Media: Emerging trends in Africa and the diaspora", several themes emerged over the day. One was concerned with the use of social media for representing African languages and culture. Elvis Yevudey & Nathaniel Dorgbetor studied how Facebook was providing opportunities for communication in Ewe, a Ghanaian language, among a large population of Ewe speakers.

Two talks and a poster focused on *social media as a form of political activism*. In his poster, *Size Echitchi* presented identity work in the speeches of southern Cameroonian secessionists which are available on websites. The two talks described contrasting online groups of Eritrean refugees in the diaspora. *Sarah Ogbay & Goodith White* analysed the linguistic practices of an Eritrean Women's Network on Facebook, and how these were used to achieve consensus, empower women and network on a global scale. *Chefena Hailemariam* presented political discussion from a group on Viber, mainly young Eritrean men for whom the network platform provided a democratic space in which they could express themselves freely and contest other views.

Another theme concerned how *technology could be used to preserve and disseminate underrepresented or threatened African languages*. *Kirsty Rowan* described how speakers of Nubian languages, which are threatened by the loss of the historic homeland and displacement due to the building of dams on the River Nile, are being assisted in revitalizing their language and culture through a project from the SOAS World Languages Institute for making video and audio recordings. *Richard Shapiro* of Oxford University Press described an ambitious project of making dictionary and language information for 100 languages globally accessible online over the next ten years. The theme of local involvement occurred again in the presentation by *Manuela Noske* of Microsoft. After providing interesting data concerning different African languages available on





Google, Microsoft and Facebook, she presented some of the challenges Microsoft has faced in trying to meet new markets through localisation of products.

A central theme for the day was that of encouraging literacy through the use of stories which could be digitally accessed or created. *Bonny Norton*, our plenary speaker, described how the African Storybook Initiative was enabling children to learn to read in their mother tongue. Research has shown that children who first learn to read in their L1 do so more quickly and that L2 learning is also helped, yet very few reading resources exist in the L1. The [African Storybook website](#) currently makes freely available more than 500 original stories, and over 2,500 translations in 60 African languages. *Ian Cheffy* described another recent [free resource](#) from SIL International for creating and translating simple books.

Last but not least, two talks focussed on technology as a medium of oral communication. *Abdulmalik Ofemile's* talk described his study of participants' reactions to interactions with synthesised and human voices giving instructions in English in a Nigerian context. *Rebecca Musa* reported on her research into the most effective way to teach English pronunciation in Nigerian secondary schools.

In the field

Spoken Corpus of Cameroon Pidgin English

We would like to announce the release of the Spoken Corpus of Cameroon Pidgin English, a pilot corpus consisting of 240,000 words of spoken Cameroon Pidgin English, a widely-used yet stigmatised and largely uncodified pidgin/creole variety.

The corpus is freely accessible as a resource for linguistic description and comparison at the [Oxford Text Archive](#). The corpus consists of 80 .wav format sound recordings of private and public dialogues and monologues, each approximately 10–15 minutes in length. The recordings were conducted in five different locations in Cameroon (Bamenda, Buea, Douala, Kumba and Yaoundé).

Miscellaneous

Free internet writing course and blog

The writing course *ThinkWriter* is a free internet writing/tuition project designed to improve writing skills for students-across-the-curriculum and help educators become expert composition teachers. It offers a weekly blog with two examples of good writing with comments – one general and one business-specific. The weekly e-learning tuition is free.





Contact: rodsethv@writetolearn.co.za

Website: thinkwriter.org

List of journals for applied linguistics in Africa

To address the question of where to publish articles on applied linguistics in the African context, we have compiled a list of journals that in our experience have an international audience and are interested in publishing on African themes.

Journals originating in Africa

- [Perspectives in Education](#)
- [Reading and Writing](#)
- [Journal of Education and Development in Africa](#)

Other journals

- [Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development](#)
- [Compare: A Journal of Comparative Education](#)
- [TESOL Quarterly](#)
- [Language and Education](#)
- [Journal of Language, Identity, and Education](#)
- [Anthropology and Education Quarterly](#)
- [Modern Language Journal](#)
- [International Journal of Educational Development](#)
- [Language, Culture and Curriculum](#)
- [International Multilingual Research Journal](#)
- [International Journal of bilingualism education and bilingualism](#)

These lists are far from exhaustive, and we encourage our readers to add to the list, and perhaps even add a short comment on this [Google spreadsheet](#).

Tell us about your research!

Send us a short profile (one paragraph) of the research you are undertaking on language or literacy education in Africa by March 20, 2017, for inclusion in our next issue.

