

The African Storybook and Language Teacher Identity in Digital Times

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The African Storybook (ASb) is a digital initiative that promotes multilingual literacy for African children by providing openly licenced children's stories in multiple African languages, as well as English, French, and Portuguese. Based on Darwin and Norton's (2015) model of identity and investment, and drawing on the Douglas Fir Group's (2016) framework for second language acquisition, this study investigates Ugandan primary school teachers' investment in the ASb, its impact on their teaching, and their changing identities. The study was conducted in a rural Ugandan school from June to December 2014, and the data, which focus on one key participant, Monica, were drawn from field notes, classroom observations, interview transcripts, and questionnaires, which were coded using retroductive coding. The findings indicate that through the ASb initiative and its stories, Monica and other teachers began to imagine themselves as writers, readers, and teachers of stories, reframing what it means to be a reading teacher. Teachers' shifts of identity were indexical of their enhanced social and cultural capital as they engaged with the ASb, notwithstanding ideological constraints associated with mother tongue usage, assessment practices, and teacher supervision. The authors conclude that the enhancement of language teacher identity has important implications for the promotion of multilingual literacy for young learners in African communities.

Keywords: teacher identity; investment; technology; Uganda; multilingual literacy; education

When I see my name in there [online], ah! [excited] I'll be very happy. I wanted my name to appear such that people, people come, I mean, people begin to look for me. Who is this woman who writes this story? But when they reach here they will want to know who Monica is. (Monica, Interview, November 27, 2014)

MONICA IS ONE OF 12 PRIMARY SCHOOL teachers who were part of a study on the African Storybook (ASb) initiative at Arua Hill Primary School (henceforth Arua Hill) in northwestern Uganda. The school was one of the ASb's pilot sites, and its teachers were invited to use digital stories from the ASb website (<http://www.african>

[storybook.org/](http://www.africanstorybook.org/)) in their teaching. Hundreds of children's stories are now freely available in multiple African languages, as well as English, French, and Portuguese. Teachers can also contribute their own stories to the database, available not only in Uganda, but in other African countries, as well as the international community. Such stories can be projected on classroom walls using laptops, or other mobile devices, and battery-operated projectors. Monica was excited to see her name on the ASb website, as a writer and poet, in a poem about mosquitos, in both Lugbarati, her mother tongue ("Yiyia"), and English ("Mosquito, Mosquito"). It is clear from the opening vignette that the ASb initiative expanded the range of identities available to Monica in her community; "people begin to look for me," she said. Her participation in this initiative generated curiosity in her community, not only about the multilingual stories on the website, but the creators of the stories.

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Of central interest in this article is the extent to which the ASb is implicated in identity changes for the teachers who engage with the initiative, and the attendant implications for the increased use of multilingual digital stories for the development of children's literacy in poorly resourced African communities. Our interest extends not only to the practical possibilities and limitations of using digital children's stories in African contexts, but to what the research offers in terms of theoretical contributions to contemporary understandings of language teacher identity. To this end, we draw on Monica as a case study, while locating her data in the wider study, and we use Darwin and Norton's (2015) model of identity and investment as a theoretical framework. Our specific research questions are as follows:

- RQ1. To what extent was Monica invested in the African Storybook?
- RQ2. How does her investment provide insight into her identity as a language teacher?
- RQ3. What are the implications of Monica's investment for classroom practice?

We begin the article with an introduction to the ASb and the Ugandan context in which the research took place. We then present our conceptual framework, locating it within a review of research on digital literacy initiatives in the African context, and the implications of this literature for our research project. We then turn to an analysis and discussion of our data, focusing on Monica's investment with respect to the constructs of identity, capital, and ideology, and the implications of our findings for language teacher identity theory and classroom practice. Our analysis incorporates insights from the Douglas Fir Group (DFG) framework of second language acquisition, which incorporates identity and investment at the meso level, and seeks to "contribute useful knowledge for the improvement of education and instruction of any and all languages, including English with its special status as a global language" (2016, p. 22).

THE AFRICAN STORYBOOK AND THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

The 2013/2014 *Education for All Global Monitoring Report* (UNESCO, 2014) draws on an extensive body of research to outline the educational challenges facing sub-Saharan Africa, including the concern that over a third of children do not reach Grade 4, and that over half of those who do reach Grade 4 are not learning basic reading

skills. Such findings, contextualized in a range of recent research in language education (e.g., Bamgbose, 2014; McIlwraith, 2014; Norton, 2014; Romaine, 2013), present an image of crowded classrooms, lost educational opportunity, gender disparities, and urban/rural divides, with a major problem identified as the scarcity of reading materials in African schools, particularly in local languages (Altinyelken, 2010a; Magara & Batambuze, 2009). Conventional publishing models, which rely on economies of scale, are unable to provide sufficient numbers or variety of books in the multitude of languages on the African continent (Welch & Glennie, 2016). Reading materials in schools and libraries, such as textbooks and storybooks, are essential for providing children with adequate exposure to text, especially in places where there are few print materials available outside of school. Many teachers attempt to address this challenge by making wall charts, word cards, and other resources, but these materials are limited in that they cannot match books in scope or complexity.

Books found in African schools and libraries are often donated (sometimes discarded) from Western countries, reflecting foreign curricula, themes, and imagery (Dent & Yannotta, 2005; Rubagumya, 2009; Waruingi, 2009). However, the market for children's storybooks in Africa, particularly in African languages, is small, partly for economic and political reasons (Opoku-Amankwa, Edu-Buandoh, & Brew-Hammond, 2014; Parry, Andema, & Tumusiime, 2005), and partly because many languages have few speakers. Such reading challenges are well known in the Ugandan context, the site of our research, where there is a drastic shortage of appropriate stories for early reading in languages familiar to young children (Abiria, Early, & Kendrick, 2013; Ssentanda, 2014). Not only are such texts important for the development of literacy in the mother tongue, but also serve as the foundation for the development of literacy in other languages (Cummins, 2006), a very important consideration in a country of 37 million people, where English is the official language and over 40 African languages are spoken (Lewis, 2009).

To help address this acute educational and social challenge in Africa, the innovative ASb initiative, launched in 2013 by the South African organization called Saide, seeks to promote multilingual literacy for young African children through the provision of open access digital stories in multiple African languages, as well as English, French, and Portuguese, which are official

languages on the African continent. The ASb has a powerful interactive website, and more than 650 unique stories and over 2,500 translations have been developed for the three pilot countries of Uganda, Kenya, South Africa, as well as over a dozen other African countries, which are freely available for download, translation, and adaptation. Further, new stories can be written and uploaded by teachers, parents, librarians, and other community members. In the pilot countries there are a total of 14 pilot sites, predominantly primary schools, which are given support to experiment with the website and report on their experience of using, writing, and translating stories. The first author of this article, Espen Stranger-Johannessen, has done much research and service for the ASb, while the second author, Bonny Norton, is the ASb research advisor.

As noted by Welch et al. (2014), one of the central questions that the ASb addresses is: "How do we support teachers, parents and communities to use stories effectively for multilingual literacy development?" (p. 93). Research indicates that in the three pilot countries, teacher education programs give very little attention to teaching early grade reading, particularly in African languages (Abiria et al., 2013; Kyeyune et al., 2011). If reading instruction is covered at all in teacher education programs, it is usually assumed that teachers can apply what they have learned about teaching reading in English, to teaching reading in any other language. As Norton and Welch (2015) note, however, this is a problematic assumption.

Understanding and supporting teachers is thus central to research on education in Africa, but reports on teacher education are discouraging (e.g., Bhalalusesa, Westbrook, & Lussier, 2011; Kyeyune et al., 2011; O'Sullivan, 2010). Further, research on literacy interventions in Africa tend to focus on the intervention as a whole, reporting on the measurable effects of teacher training and support, and the effects on student performance (e.g., Piper & Zuilkowski, 2015; Piper, Zuilkowski, & Mugenda, 2014; Sailors et al., 2014). However, such studies provide little insight into what such projects mean for the target audience and implementers—the teachers. A focus on the individual teacher allows for a different vantage point, and reminds us that behind the quantitative measures are individual teachers in large classrooms, navigating professional and personal challenges, while seeking to meet the expectations of parents, school leadership, the government, and NGOs (Early & Norton, 2014; O'Sullivan, 2002; Tao, 2013, 2014). Through the case of an individual

teacher, situated in a larger case study, as well as the wider educational and social context, it is possible to theorize language teaching and language teacher identity in a nuanced way (Tsui, 2007). While a single case is always unique, it can provide analytic generalization, which allows for the findings to be of relevance beyond the case (Kibler, 2014; Yin, 2014). The case in this article is Monica, a Grade 3 teacher in her 9th year of teaching at Arua Hill in Arua town, Uganda. Although we consider this a case study of one teacher, we contextualize it with data from some of the 11 other teachers, including Milly, Jane, Judith, and Santurumino, who were part of the larger study, which further illuminates the issues arising in Monica's data.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Identity has proved to be a powerful analytical tool for investigating language learning and teaching in diverse international contexts (e.g., Barkhuizen, 2017; Cheung, Said, & Park, 2015; De Costa & Norton, 2016; Norton, 2013; Preece, 2016; Varghese et al., 2016), and Norton's (2013) definition of identity applies equally to language learners and teachers: "the way a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (p. 4). Further, Norton (2013) has developed the sociological construct of investment as a complement to the psychological construct of motivation, arguing that while language learners may be highly motivated, they may not be *invested* in the language practices of their classroom if it is, for example, racist, sexist, or homophobic. While motivation is often considered a characteristic of a learner, investment is theorized as co-constructed by learners, teachers, and community practices, in the context of shifting relations of power. Although the construct of investment was originally developed for language learners, later work extends the construct to teacher identity since, as Norton (2017) notes, the promotion of learner investment often accompanies shifts in teacher identity, and conceptions of what it means to be a legitimate teacher. As Cummins (2006) and Kramsch (2013) point out, the construct of investment has become increasingly influential in the field of language education, and has been integrated into the Douglas Fir Group (DFG, 2016) framework of second language acquisition. The DFG model, which "embrace[s] explicit educational goals for

the field” (p. 21), locates identity and investment at the meso level, which focuses on sociocultural institutions and communities:

Importantly, the institutions and communities at the meso level are powerfully characterized by pervasive social conditions (e.g. economic, cultural, religious, political), which affect the possibility and nature of persons creating social identities in terms of investment, agency, and power. Together, these institutions, communities, conditions, and possible identities provide or restrict access to particular types of social experiences. (p. 24)

Given our increasingly digital and mobile world (themes also dominant in the DFG framework), Darwin and Norton (2015) have developed an expanded model of investment, locating it at the intersection of identity, capital, and ideology (see Figure 1). They draw on Norton (2013) to conceptualize identity as multiple, changing, and a site of struggle; capital as associated with economic, social, and cultural resources (see Bourdieu, 1986); and ideology as “dominant ways of thinking that organize and stabilize societies while simultaneously determining modes of inclusion and exclusion” (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 72). With reference to research in both Uganda and Canada, Darwin and Norton illustrate the ways in which the model might prove analytically useful as learners and teachers negotiate increasingly invisible relations of power in the 21st century. The model also seeks to bridge what the DFG describes as micro, meso, and macro relationships in language learning and teaching. In this spirit, the 2015 model seeks “to go beyond the microstructures of power in specific communicative events and to investigate the systemic patterns of control that communicative events are indexical of” (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 42).

In terms of the 2015 model, learners’ and teachers’ hopes and desires for the future are considered powerful sources of investment. Several studies from East Africa, for example, have found evidence of the potential of digital technology to expand students’ and teachers’ conceptions of themselves, and their hopes for the future. Studies in a rural Ugandan community library, for example, have shown how the development of digital literacy gave students access to knowledge previously controlled by teachers; it also provided valued computer skills and enhanced expectations for the future, thus expanding the range of identities available to students (Norton, Jones, & Ahimbisibwe, 2011; Norton & Williams, 2012). A study from a girls’ after-school jour-

FIGURE 1
Darvin and Norton’s (2015) Model of Investment.



nalism club from Kenya similarly found identity shifts as a result of the impact of technology, in this case an Internet connection, audio recorder, and camera (Kendrick, Chemjor, & Early, 2012; Kendrick, Early, & Chemjor, 2013). In addition to learning about the use of the technology, the girls shifted their identity performance, developed journalistic competence, and challenged hierarchical distinctions. There were also indications of growing writer activism that took place after school, which might not have been possible within the formalized structures of the traditional classroom.

While these studies were conducted with students, research from Uganda with teacher trainers also shows how access to technology can have significant effects on teachers’ identities and conceptions of self. Andema (2014) equipped language teacher educators and teachers at a primary teachers’ college with a digital camera to take photos of their surroundings. One of the female participants asserted that she “felt like a man” and assumed a position of power and authority as she used the camera.

I feel very powerful like a man because I had never held a camera in my life. I have always seen only men carrying cameras and taking photos in big public functions like maybe independence celebration, political rallies and wedding ceremonies. But now as I move in the community taking pictures with my camera, I feel I am also very powerful, like a man. (p. 96)

This latter research on teacher identity in African countries focuses on investment and imagined identities, but there are other earlier studies in African contexts that provide additional

insights on teacher identity. These include Welmond's (2002) study from Benin, which takes a historical perspective on the role of teachers over time, while in a study from Tanzania, Barrett (2006, 2008) creates categories of individual teachers, which are indexical of age and gender.

RESEARCH SITE AND METHODOLOGY

Our research on the ASb is the most recent focus of a long trajectory of research on language education in Uganda, conducted by Norton and colleagues at the University of British Columbia for over a decade. In the context of the present study, Norton made a research trip to Arua in June 2012 when she visited Arua Primary Teachers' College (PTC) and Arua Hill Primary School, met with teachers and administrators, and conducted classroom observations in two rural primary schools. From July to December 2014, Stranger-Johannessen made a follow-up research trip to Arua, collected the data addressed in this article, and remained in regular contact with Norton by email and Skype.

Arua Hill, one of three ASb primary school pilot sites in Uganda, has more than 1700 students and 34 teachers, and is the largest municipal school in Arua town. The centre coordinating tutor (CCT), who provides in-service training and other support to 70 schools, has her office at Arua Hill, but is formally employed at Arua PTC, another ASb pilot site. Arua Hill is also one of the about 100 pilot sites of the RTI School Health and Reading Program (SHRP) in West Nile, which was introduced in Grade 1 in 2014 (the same year this study's fieldwork took place), and with it, Lugbarati was reintroduced as the language of instruction (RTI, n.d.). The school has a relatively well-stocked library, but all the textbooks are in English, except for a set of Grade 1 literacy textbooks donated as part of the SHRP project, and there are no titles with enough copies for students to read without sharing. Similarly, although there are a number of books in English and, for the lower grades, a limited number in Lugbarati, the main local language used in this region, there are not enough copies of each title for a whole class to read at the same time.

The current curriculum emphasises themes across subjects, child-centred learning, and mother tongue instruction in the Lower Primary Cycle, which is Grades 1–3 (Altinyelken, 2010b). It is divided into 12 themes with a total of 36 subthemes, which cut across all subjects, and are intended to provide cohesion and an integrated learning experience. The themes are broad,

such as "Health in our sub-county/division" and "Livelihood in our sub-county/division," and are intended to reflect the students' everyday lives. Previous subjects like "Social Studies" and "Science" have been merged with the subject "Literacy" in an attempt to integrate subjects and provide a stronger focus on literacy in the local language, Lugbarati. The subject "English" is a separate area of the curriculum. Specific learning outcomes are described as follows:

The major expected learning outcomes of this cycle are that children will develop: (a) basic literacy, mathematics concepts, and life skills and values, in a first language or familiar language, at a level that will enable the child to mature and be prepared for further learning; (b) sufficient skills in English to act as a basis for developing English as the medium of instruction in the Upper Primary Cycle; (c) an appreciation of their culture and the roles they can play in the society. (National Curriculum Development Centre, 2008, p. 3)

Since the ASb's target is children aged 6–9, that is, up to Grade 3, the focus of our research was on teachers in these grades, but we decided to include Grade 4 teachers in the study, since this is the grade for official transition from mother tongue to English as the medium of instruction. During his research trip, Stranger-Johannessen interviewed 22 participants in total: the teachers, the CCT, and the head teacher. Most teachers were interviewed twice, first about their background and general experience, and later about their experience with teaching the ASb stories. The second round of interviews at the end of the fieldwork focused on the stories the teachers had taught, written, or translated; reasons for their choice; what they had learnt; and any challenges they might have faced. The interviews varied in length, but usually lasted between 30 to 40 minutes. The interviews were transcribed and coded in NVivo™ version 11 for Macintosh. The coding process was retroductive (Ragin, 1994), moving between a priori codes based on our conceptual framework and literature review, and themes that stood out through the process of reading and rereading the transcripts (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2013). From the initial coding, a codebook served to define and delimit codes, which helped to assure the reliability of the codes. The next step involved identifying larger, overarching labels that connected the codes, consistent with the literature and conceptual framework (Grbich, 2013). We also used questionnaires, classroom observations, focus group

discussions, and field notes as a complement to the interviews, which helped to strengthen the validity of the codes and triangulate the data.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In this section we return to our three central research questions: (a) To what extent was Monica invested in the African Storybook? (b) How does Monica's investment provide insight into her identity as a language teacher? (c) What are the implications of Monica's investment for classroom practice? Given our conceptual framework, focussed on the 2015 model of investment, we present our analysis and discussion of data with reference to the constructs of identity, capital, and ideology, respectively.

Identity and Teacher Agency

With reference to the relationship between investment and identity, Darvin and Norton (2015) note, "[r]ecognizing that they have the agency to assert their own identities, learners are able to negotiate symbolic capital, reframe relations of power, and challenge normative ways of thinking, in order to claim the right to speak" (p. 47). To investigate such agency, with respect to Arua teachers in particular, we needed to better understand Monica and other teachers' investments in the ASb and how their identities and practices as teachers shifted as they negotiated this innovative digital resource.

In the beginning of the project at Arua Hill, almost all the teachers were eager to teach stories and learn how to use a computer. However, over time, not all the teachers sustained this interest, and remained invested in the use of stories in their teaching. Whereas many teachers felt constrained by the demands of the curriculum and struggled to find connections to the ASb, others developed a more nuanced view of the curriculum and their relationship to it. This was particularly evident in Monica's data, as illustrated in Excerpts 1 and 2, which provide insight into her conception of "literacy" and "reading," and what it means to be a reading teacher.

EXCERPT 1

Monica: So the teaching of the reading in that curriculum, we as teachers we don't understand it. They use the curriculum in order to teach reading, as if they're teaching it as a subject like SST [Social Studies] or Science ... So it is not even—it does not emphasise on how to teach the real reading as reading. The

real reading I've seen can help us is when we use these stories. (Interview, October 27, 2014)

Monica's point, which the CCT also referred to, is that some teachers tend to focus on subject content, such as the life cycle of houseflies, instead of viewing literacy more broadly and integrating children's stories into social science themes. Monica noted that general themes like "Our environment" and "Things we make" could be associated with almost any story. For example, when she taught the story *Goat, Dog and Cow*, during the theme Culture and Gender, Monica said the story needed to be understood in cultural terms. As Monica interacted with the ASb texts, she thus exercised agency in their interpretation, taking on the identity of an active and creative student-centred "guide," rather than a teacher-centred instructor.

EXCERPT 2

Monica: This time I just guide them on what to do. It has made me become now very active. I used to not be active, because at times I—when I don't find learning aids to my, to my what—to my lesson, I squeeze it out. But this time I don't need. When I have a problem I search from the computer. It has really improved me a lot. Eh! [laughs] ... Even it has made me as a teacher to teach less. The whole thing is—the students see and talk. And this time I'm a guide, not a teacher. (Interview, October 27, 2014)

Monica integrated literacy and subject content in innovative ways, as she did with the story *Listen to My Body*, available in English, in the context of the physical education curriculum (see Excerpt 3). *Listen to My Body* tells the story of a girl who listens to the sounds her body can make, such as breathing and heartbeats, and who jumps up and down to hear her heart beat faster.

EXCERPT 3

Espen: You said you connected it to physical education, *Listen to My Body*. How did you do that?

Monica: I made, I made sure that every child does the action in the picture. So it appeared fun to them. Laughing and enjoying—the what?—the lesson. And, and the classroom was not enough for them. They became excited when they see and when I tell them: "Let's try what this girl is doing in the picture." They become excited, they were laughing.

When the story ended they wanted me to begin the story over and over and teach the story—the lesson would not end very quickly.

Espen: Did you repeat it?

Monica: I repeated it twice. When they wanted it to be the third time, I just stopped them. And when—the what? —the teacher for mathematics came, the children said: “I’m listening to my body.” They were now talking, they were now practicing, so it disorganizes the mathematics teacher a lot [short laughter]—until when she came up and told me: “Go and stop your children.” (Interview, November 27, 2014)

One of the 10 “fundamental themes” of the DFG framework is that “language learning is multimodal, embodied, and mediated,” making the case that “nonlinguistic, multimodal semiotic resources are used to make the coupling of a form and a meaning socially available” (DFG, 2016, p. 29). Monica found such multimodal strategies particularly effective with her young learners, and it was evident that for her, a multilingual literacy teacher is one who explores literacy as a social practice, connected to daily life in multiple and sometimes unexpected ways (cf. Coffey & Street, 2008).

In another physical education lesson, for example, Monica taught a story about a girl who wants to play football with the boys, *Andiswa Soccer Star*. The coach doesn’t let her practice, but when one of the boys is sick before a match, he lets her play. Andiswa scores, and her team wins the match. In the following excerpt, Monica comments on the attitude change that came about as a result of this story’s use.

EXCERPT 4

Monica: Yes, it really helped me. It changed the attitudes of boys. Where they could think that a girl is not supposed to play football. But this time when I go for my physical education lesson, when I prepare a lesson about football, they don’t now complain, they don’t kick the ball away from the girls. They just play together like that. This time they have started attitude change instead. It helped me a lot. (Interview, November 27, 2014)

Through teaching this story, Monica not only believed she shifted the attitudes of the boys, but also, since teacher and learner identities are mutually constitutive (Norton, 2017; Reeves, 2009), she re-negotiated her own identity as a change

agent in the process. At the same time, this particular identity position must also be associated with ideological practices in Ugandan society, in which children’s sports are highly gendered. Monica could, however, exercise agency as a teacher to challenge and transform existing gendered practices.

Of particular significance with respect to Monica’s investment in the ASb is that she observed children becoming more active in class. As she noted, “my experience in using the stories has made children active in class” (Monica, Interview, October 27, 2014). According to Monica, this in turn translated to improved reading on the part of the children (see Excerpt 5), which was highly affirming for Monica as a teacher.

EXCERPT 5

Monica: [The African Storybook] improves children’s reading. Because when you project a story on the board like this, after you talk about the pictures, after you talk about everything, when they tell you what is going to happen, they read. They read! Every day, every day they learn new words, which they did not come across, and it improves reading. (Interview, October 27, 2014)

Social and Cultural Capital of Language Teachers

While Monica’s identity went through important shifts as she navigated her investments in the ASb, she also experienced changes in her social and cultural capital. The construct of “capital,” drawn from Bourdieu (1986), references economic, social, and cultural capital, which are indexical of resources valued in a given field or market. These include material or economic resources (what you own) and symbolic resources (who you know through social networks and what you know through cultural capital). With reference to the 2015 model of investment, we were interested in the shifting forms of capital that the Arua teachers associated with investment in the ASb, and what impact this had on their language teacher identities.

At Arua Hill, the material and symbolic resources that the teachers had available to them in the form of digital stories, multilingual competence, teaching skills, and local knowledge clearly shaped their investment in the ASb. As Monica mentions in the following excerpt, the abundance of ASb stories that were accessible to different reading levels offered new opportunities for multilingual learning and teaching.

EXCERPT 6

Monica: People had already phased Lugbarati out of Arua Hill. Now since this project came, I now had materials to be used. So the materials was in the computer, so that, that thing made me now to think of teaching Lugbarati for the children. So I began now from there. And this time they can read now in Lugbarati. (Interview, October 27, 2014)

The pictures in the texts were particularly appealing to the teachers. Theme 2 in the DFG framework recognizes that “language learning is semiotic learning” (DFG, 2016, p. 27), and includes visual, graphic, and auditory modes of meaning making. As Monica notes, a picture “raises children’s interest in reading” (Interview, November 27, 2014). In the following excerpt, she demonstrates how she fully considers the importance of pictures.

EXCERPT 7

Monica: The stories—the language in general—it is simple. It depends, according to the level of the class you are taking. So, for us, we pick those ones which can, which have few, few, few content. Like for P3 [Grade 3], when the, when—the what? —when the passage is very long, we don’t pick. When you pick them it takes long. When you pick lengthy, they don’t understand it. The pictures are not congested, they are easily understood by the pupils. When you tell them just to analyze the pictures, they tell you the whole story before they read. It’s just simple. I wish it could continue such that you also learnt a lot from it. (Interview, October 27, 2014)

In addition, with the introduction of the ASb at the school, all the teachers had the chance to explore and learn the world of computers and the World Wide Web. As the DFG (2016) notes, “[n]ew mobile technologies ... have reached even seemingly remote corners of the globe and are changing L2 [second language] users’ worlds” (p. 22). When asked about using the computer, with which she had no prior experience, one teacher, Jane, proudly stated: “But I know. In near future I’ll be a champion” (Interview, August 12, 2014). Although using the computer was still a major challenge for most teachers, and associated with problems such as power cuts, the skills and knowledge the Arua teachers had acquired, and the potential they had for learning

more, was very appealing. As Monica makes clear in Excerpt 8, technology provides them not only with increased cultural capital, but also makes it possible to have enhanced social networks.

EXCERPT 8

Monica: African Storybook Project has given a lot to me. At first I was computer illiterate. I’ve learned how to use computer through that project. I’ve now got friends, I have friends to whom I can talk through the project. I can now read something, I can now download stories, I can now do—try to do something to search in computer is the—the what?—the importance of African Storybook Project. (Interview, October 27, 2014)

Given the shortage of material resources prior to the introduction of the ASb, teachers often made charts and other learning aids, and sometimes wrote stories on the blackboard or a sheet of paper for display. However, prior to the ASb, these stories had little readership outside the school. With the opportunity to publish online, the teachers’ cultural capital was valued beyond the classroom, enhancing their investment in the project, and increasing the range of identities available to them. The Arua teachers found the idea of seeing their own names in a public online setting particularly exciting. As Judith noted, “I feel very happy. Because other people can go and read it somewhere” (Interview, November 19, 2014). Milly was equally enthusiastic: “Very interesting! [laughs] It’s interesting to see your stories with your names appearing in the web. It’s interesting, I like it” (Interview, November 26, 2014). As illustrated in the opening vignette of Excerpt 9, Monica went on to imagine people seeking her out, almost like a celebrity, and as her cultural capital increased, she claimed the identity “poet.”

EXCERPT 9

Monica: It has made me to become a poet now. Because I have given for you two poems, I still have there three poems, and I have some stories which has made me to think more and more, such that I also be remembered in future by other people. [laughs]

Espen: That’s great. And now you are writing.
Monica: I want to struggle all the time to, to do something. I used to not have time for those stories, but since I have known—the what?—the importance of using the stories, it has now made me to become creative, which I was not. (Interview, October 27, 2014)

Monica's enthusiasm for the ASb is partly explained by the responsibilities she was given in the project, and the social capital she accrued as a result. At the beginning of the year of research (before the ASb was introduced) Monica had been made head of the "infant" (lower primary) section, which gave her some more responsibility, including that of the ASb. In this capacity she was also the teacher chosen to go to Kampala for the initial workshop on the project, where she met colleagues from the other ASb pilot sites in Uganda, whom she referred to as "friends." In the following excerpt, she recounts these experiences.

EXCERPT 10

- Espen: Can you tell me about the training you received—the—you said you went to the PTC, have you also been to Kampala, or any other training =
- Monica: = Yes [excitedly], my first time to sleep in a complicated house! [laughs]
- Espen: A hotel?
- Monica: [inaudible] Hotel. I have not and ever. It was the project who took me there.
- Espen: Tell me about that =
- Monica: = And it was—it was a tour for me. That one was yet the second time I have reached Kampala. And the first time I have enjoyed something in a hotel. (Interview, October 27, 2014)

Significantly, then, Monica navigates new identities not only in relationship to her students, but also in relationship to her peers, where her identity as a mentor of other teachers becomes enhanced and enriched. An early adapter of the ASb technology, Monica helped her colleagues set up the equipment, search for stories, and project them on classroom walls. While this responsibility did not come with a reduced teaching load, Monica embraced it, and when other teachers shied away from handling the computer, she considered this an opportunity to hone her skills. In Excerpt 11, she describes the experience of learning to use technology.

EXCERPT 11

- Monica: Now, it makes me learn more. When you help someone, you don't forget what you have already learnt. It helps me learn more. And I'm even very happy when a teacher comes to me, "I want to learn [inaudible] computer," such that I will also learn more than her—or him. (Interview, November 27, 2014)

Further, Monica's newly acquired skills and experience with the ASb earned her an invitation to a workshop for teacher candidates at the nearby Arua PTC. The opportunity to teach adults, including those who once trained her, was both daunting and exciting, as she notes in Excerpt 12.

EXCERPT 12

- Monica: It went on well. We trained them for 2 days. The first day was for year twos, and the second day was for year one. It has now exposed us! [cheerfully] I can now talk on, in front of these people, which I used to not to do. I wish it could continue. But I also learned a lot. It has made me learn a lot! (Interview, October 27, 2014)

Such data provides convincing evidence that technology is indeed "changing L2 users' worlds" (DFG, 2016, p. 22), and that the social and cultural capital associated with investment in the ASb is enhancing the identities of Monica and other Arua teachers, increasing the range of identities available to them.

Ideological Practices and Teacher Identity

Having analysed our data with reference to investment, identity, and capital, we would like to turn to the fourth construct in the 2015 model: Ideology. This construct is also of much interest to the DFG framework, which locates ideology at the macro level of the framework, noting in Theme 9 that "[i]deologies permeate all levels" at the micro, meso, and macro levels. While Darvin and Norton (2015) define ideology in broad terms, as "dominant ways of thinking that organize and stabilize societies while simultaneously determining modes of inclusion and exclusion" (p. 44), the DFG focuses more directly on linguistic ideology. In particular, it draws on Kroskrity (2010) to define ideology as the beliefs, feelings, and conceptions about language structure and use that are indexical of the political and economic interests of speakers, groups, and nation states. In seeking to make visible ideological practices in the Arua context, the questions that need to be asked include an investigation of the systemic patterns of control, such as policies, codes, and institutional practices, which enabled or constrained teachers' investment in the ASb. How, then, did prevailing ideologies structure Monica's investment, and that of other teachers, and how did these impact language teacher identity? As the DFG (2016) note "ideologies influence the access, investment,

and agency into a new language that learners may or may not (be able or willing to) exert” (p. 33). In our study, we found that Arua teachers’ increased social and cultural capital, and their investment in the project, was not necessarily associated with regular use of the ASb stories. Apart from practical challenges of electric power, bandwidth, and time pressures, teachers had to navigate complex ideologies associated with mother tongue usage, learner assessment, and teacher evaluation, respectively, to which we now turn.

First, with regard to mother tongue usage, Monica recognized the students’ mother tongue as a valuable symbolic resource, which supported the development of literacy in both Lugbarati and the official language, English. As she said, “We were talking about Lugbarati. It introduces children to reading easily. When they first learn how to [use the] Lugbarati, reading English becomes simple for them” (Interview, October 27, 2014). This latter emphasis is well established in the literature (see Trudell [2013] for a comprehensive review), and consistent with Theme 1 of the DFG (2016) framework, which notes that “[m]ultilingual speakers will deploy their semiotic resources by choosing across their languages and/or varieties and registers in response to local demands for action” (p. 26). In Arua, mother tongue usage was a regular part of the discourse on language and literacy in education, promoted by the government and supported by powerful nongovernment organizations (NGOs). But the discourse of English, specifically the need to study in English, dominated at the grassroots level, notably among parents, and to some extent among teachers, as noted in Excerpt 13.

EXCERPT 13

Monica: At first when they introduced thematic, we were teaching in Lugbarati. Every learning area was handled in Lugbarati, except English. So they found there were lots of challenges—the what?—the parents didn’t like us to teach their children in Lugbarati. At home they speak Lugbarati, so they have sent their children here in order to learn English. So they decided in their PTA meeting no teaching of Lugbarati in Arua Hill. It is now this RTI which has brought teaching in Lugbarati only this year. It used not to be there. (Interview, October 27, 2014)

While Lugbarati was a valued resource for the majority of students, who spoke it as a mother tongue, English was the medium of instruction from Grade 4 onwards, and thus seen to be

paramount for the students to learn and develop in the earlier grades. English was also, according to Monica, easier for the South Sudanese students in the school (and those of other ethnicities), thus teaching in English also helped that group of learners. Monica’s response to this dilemma was to teach in both Lugbarati and English to her Grade 3 class, accommodating demands for both languages, and supporting the students’ early literacy development in their mother tongue. In response to a question about which language she taught in, Monica responded: “Both. Because when I teach in Lugbarati, the [South] Sudanese [students] don’t understand, they disturb a lot” (Focus Group, September 11, 2014).

Second, with regard to learner assessment, Monica references RTI (Excerpt 14) as the NGO program that supports the use of Lugbarati and had re-introduced it in the year our study began, starting in Grade 1 (Grades 2 and 3 were to be included the following 2 years). One of the ideological principles of the RTI program (as understood by the teachers) is that there was to be no written work in the first term of the program. A compelling finding with respect to ideological practices, then, was the struggle teachers faced in navigating the requirements of the RTI program, which avoided assessment of writing in the early stages, as well as the desires of parents, who were “hot” for feedback on and evidence of their children’s progress in writing. In the following excerpt, she considers this more carefully.

EXCERPT 14

Monica: We are just implementing government policy. So the school has its own policy, so we have nothing to do, we are to follow. Now when the RTI also came this year, also there is exam in that class. The RTI does not allow these teachers to give written exercises in first term for these children. So the parents became hot! They don’t like that one.

Espen: It seems you have pressure from the =
Monica: = Pressure from outside and pressure from here! [With animation]

...

The pressure from outside is when we don’t follow the outside, the government policy. And from the school is from the parents. “We want you to do this, and this time you are teaching our children vernacular and you do this.” It’s just there. (Interview, October 27, 2014)

The issue of assessment remains a huge challenge in the Ugandan and other African contexts, where high-stakes tests are in the medium

of English, despite support for mother tongue instruction (Early & Norton, 2014; Rea–Dickins, Yu, & Afitska, 2009; Tembe & Norton, 2008). Because the stories in the ASb are not designed for assessment purposes, but as supplementary readers, issues of formal assessment did not arise. However, it is possible that precisely because the stories were not incorporated in formal assessment procedures, conducted in English, that some teachers may have been reluctant to use the ASb stories on a regular basis. This connects to what the DFG (2016) refer to as the “contested and ambivalent role of English as a global lingua franca” (p. 26), and speaks to the need for such innovations as the ASb to be supported at higher administrative levels. On the other hand, the digital education afforded by the initiative appealed to many parents. Monica noted that a father had transferred his son to Arua Hill precisely because he thought the child would learn how to use a computer, saying “the father is a teacher, the father also brought him here in order to learn how to use computer” (Interview, October 27, 2014). She also noted that the parents found the stories appealing, and one parent had transferred his daughter to the school “because of how we are teaching here using the stories” (Interview, October 27, 2014).

A third ideological practice concerned the process of what was called “supervision” of teachers. Government-appointed inspectors, as well as the school leadership, are required to approve the teachers’ lesson plans and schemes of work. These documents were frequently handwritten notes, consisting largely of themes and phrases reproduced from the curriculum, with formulaic expressions about learning aids and activities. Teachers took a great deal of time to write these schemes, and Milly in particular was concerned with all the tedious writing required: “You have to write everything you are teaching down. So how can we write more than five things? You may take your time just writing. But doing it—doing the real, maybe the practical work—may not be there” (Interview, November 26, 2014). The teachers were nevertheless anxious about the outcomes of these inspections, and the extent to which their lesson plans were consistent with school and government policy. This led to mixed investments with regard to the ASb, as she noted in Excerpt 15.

EXCERPT 15

Monica: It is those ones who are teaching the real subjects, the real learning areas, who are getting problems in using the

stories. Because when they will be, when in terms of supervision, at times they get the curriculum, at times they get the books. Maybe they fear that area which they are—they are fearing—the what?—the supervisions. So they don’t pick—the what?—the stories which appear. (Interview, October 27, 2014)

Such an assessment is supported by data from another teacher, Santurumino. As Excerpt 16 highlights, there was concern that a focus on the African Storybook would compromise the need to “cover the syllabus.”

EXCERPT 16

Santurumino: And it is our weakness that we have not taken the books for the children. Because we mostly dwell on the coverage of the syllabus. And those ones—they may not give us time to—no—reading separately is not there on the curriculum. So, once you include reading lesson, you have already gone out of curriculum. ... Mostly when we teach, we teach what the curriculum specifies for us. But we add reading on top of that. ... The scheme [plan for the term] is fully filled with what is on the syllabus. Because of this one, it causes us only to teach the syllabus continuously because we want to finish its coverage. So that is the greatest challenge. (Interview, November 26, 2014)

Partly because of concern with government inspections and expectations, teachers sought to creatively navigate the “pressures from outside” with their desires as teachers; Milly’s observations in the following excerpt show this.

EXCERPT 17

Milly: The curriculum actually is a guide. If it is not there—it is just there to guide us. But —but we—it’s only this time that we have realized it—as being a guide, anyway. Most of the time we used to follow what is in the curriculum. But this time at least we are trying to take it as a guide.

Espen: Why, why this time, why not before?

Milly: This time—because—because we wanted to use it—the stories. And we have found that the use of the stories also is very good. So for me, particularly, I’ve decided I will use the curriculum even co-currently with the stories. (Interview, November 26, 2014)

DISCUSSION

Our research set out to address to what extent Monica was invested in the African Storybook, how Monica's investment provides insight into her identity as a language teacher, and the implications of Monica's investment for classroom practice. The 2015 model of investment (Darvin & Norton, 2015) provided a useful framework with which to analyze Monica's investment, and its connection to identity, capital, and ideology. With respect to valued capital, Monica and other teachers were invested in the ASb because it provided useful resources for their large classrooms; it also encouraged the development of computer skills and digital expertise. Perhaps more importantly, however, it provided opportunities for the exercise of teacher agency. As we saw with Monica's poem "Yiyia," translated into English as "Mosquito, Mosquito," teachers' own stories and language repertoires were seen by Monica as meaningful and valuable aspects of education. Her bilingualism and her knowledge of traditional stories (and poem styles), as well as her knowledge about diseases associated with mosquitos, were valued cultural capital encoded in the local language and English. The use of such resources, or more precisely the affirmation of such resources, positioned Monica as a capable, knowledgeable teacher with a repertoire of cultural resources relevant to classroom practice.

Through the ASb, Monica not only became a writer, but also gained new insights and skills as a language teacher, centred on using African children's stories drawn from an innovative digital initiative. In a context of rural poverty, recent civil war, and challenging educational conditions, Monica was committed to educating her students and enhancing the opportunities available to them, illustrating the promise of teacher change that is being increasingly researched in African education (e.g., Dubeck et al., 2015). Further, her name is now online on the ASb website, and it is possible to search the site for her contributions to the initiative. Her identity as a writer and poet has been validated, and her cultural capital has been acknowledged and enhanced. Further, Monica's social network has expanded, and with it her social capital. Going to Kampala, staying in a hotel, and receiving training enabled her to make new friends and learn about computers, and afforded the time for reflection on theories of reading, literacy, and language, and their practical application in the classroom. With an enhanced range of identities, she shared the

knowledge she had gained with her peers, as well as her former instructors, and "can now talk on, in front of these people." Whereas many teachers struggled to find the time to teach ASb stories due to the content specifications and themes of the curriculum, Monica embraced the stories to teach English and local language literacy, inspired by a broader interpretation of the curriculum. In this way she was able to claim legitimacy as a language and literacy teacher, use time more efficiently, and still have the liberty to teach the stories that she saw as pedagogically rich.

With regard to the DFG framework (2016), relevant to our research is Theme 6, "Literacy and instruction mediate language learning," explicated as follows: "[B]oth instruction and literacy need to be understood as sources of influence on L2 learning, and disciplinary knowledge about them has particular potential to improve the learning experience of millions of children, adolescents, and adults worldwide" (p. 30). In this regard, our study provides convincing evidence for the importance of the ASb in promoting teacher investment in literacy as a mediator of language learning. To consider two examples: First, the data provides examples of teachers using stories to enrich language use both inside and outside classrooms. The story about the football player, for example, opened a space for the teacher to engage in a conversation about gendered social practices in Ugandan society, while stories such as *Listen to My Body* encouraged students to play with and speak English in meaningful and student-centred ways, multimodally mediated by text, images, and body movements. Second, the ASb encouraged both teachers and students to become multilingual writers. For Monica, the focus on stories validated her own stories and gave her an opportunity to be recognized as a poet. While she might have written these poems independently of the ASb, it was only when her creative potential was recognized in a public forum that she identified herself as a poet, and began to use poems in her teaching. Similarly, stories can inspire students to write, and make their own stories, as one girl in Grade 4 did. Making stories can take many forms, combining text, drawing, drama, and other modes in the target language and the students' first language (Naqvi et al., 2012). This helps them to create their own "identity texts" (Cummins & Early, 2011) to bridge language and literacy barriers that might otherwise prove too challenging. This can also take the form of digital storytelling (Darvin & Norton, 2014; Hafner, 2014; Toohey,

Dagenais, & Schultze, 2012) if digital tools are available.

At the same time, however, the data highlight the challenges that some African teachers encounter as they try to navigate the promise of innovations such as the ASb with administrative structures, curriculum demands, and parental expectations. It is clear that the investment of teachers in the ASb needs to be matched by the investment of administrators, policy makers, and departments of education, if the ASb is to achieve its full potential.

CONCLUSION

In her teacher development work with the ASb, Tessa Welch, the project leader, found Darwin and Norton's (2015) model of investment helpful in making sense of teachers' engagement with the initiative. As she notes in a blog post:

I was looking for a way to think about the increase in teacher agency as teachers use the African Storybook website and stories. The model Norton and Darwin propose ... can explain why the African Storybook initiative not only has the potential to work for the marginalised 80% of teachers of a large variety of African home languages, but is beginning to do so already. It is being embraced as leading to *increased capital*—increased technology skills, which people understand as essential for participation in the global economy. But at the same time it acknowledges ordinary teachers' own capital—people's own stories, and people's own languages. (Welch, 2015, paras. 2, 6–7, emphasis in original)

Further, because the stories are all in English (as well as multiple other languages), the ASb website is extending the English competence of multilingual teachers as they engage with stories and reflect on how to mediate and/or translate stories from English into local African languages. This is a meaningful exercise that enhances language learning as well as professional development. In addition, at the level of ideology, Welch (2015) notes, "the presence of many languages on one platform gives a powerful message about multilingualism" (para. 11).

In our analysis of data in our Arua Hill study, we also found that Darwin and Norton's (2015) model, incorporating constructs of identity, capital, and ideology, served as a useful lens through which to interrogate teacher investment in the African Storybook. We found that teachers were able to explore a wider range of identities as language teachers, whether as "guides" in the classroom, digital "champions" in the school, "peer in-

structors" in teacher education institutions, and "global citizens" in the community. These shifts of identity arose from the teachers' enhanced social and cultural capital, notwithstanding ideological constraints associated with mother tongue usage, assessment practices, and teacher supervision. Also helpful in our analysis was the DFG framework of SLA. As noted in Theme 7, "Language learning is identity work," and this applies equally to teachers as to students. As teachers such as Monica incorporated the ASb into their classrooms, they began reframing what it means to be a good language teacher, more broadly, and an effective reading teacher, more specifically. Indeed, the very inter-relationship between teacher identity and learner identity was a common theme in the data: As teachers became more active and creative in the classroom, students became more active and engaged readers.

However, Monica, like her colleagues in other parts of the world (Ruohotie–Lyhty, 2011), faced a number of demands, or "pressure from outside and pressure from here" as she noted. In addition to the ideological challenges around mother tongue instruction, learner assessment, and government inspections, were the materially challenging working conditions of large classes, long hours, and paucity of materials. It is in this context that we must recognize Monica's agency as a teacher, innovatively using stories to promote gender equality in and beyond her school, and engaging students in (literally) hands-on learning about the sounds that the body makes. The ASb initiative invites Monica and her colleagues, not only in Uganda, but throughout Africa, to imagine themselves as writers and teachers of stories, and as teachers of "real reading." The implications for language teacher identity are compelling, as is the potential to improve the reading and learning experience of millions of young children in African communities.

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