Reading for Meaning: One thing lacking?

Tessa Welch

UWC Early Childhood Literacy Conference, 12 September 2018

Saide
Enabling successful
open learning for all

Much is being done – but we're not 'cracking the code'

- Graded readers
- CAPS curriculum African language inadequacies being addressed
- Lesson plans
- Ongoing coaching (for some at least)
- DBE Workbooks
- Nal'ibali reading campaign

Saide
Enabling successful
open learning for all

Resources are not really the problem

See LTSM audit of schools in Ruth Mompati District in the North West

Reading Books in FP	School A (least well organised)	School B (well organised)	School C (moderate organisation)
Lesson plans	No lesson plans	Create own lesson plans for a fortnightly period. HOD checks them.	Following NECT Lesson Plans. Grade 3 EFAL, and Grades 1 and 2 HL.
DBE workbooks	All FP classes	All FP classes	All FP classes
EFAL Big Books	DBE EFAL big books, as well as Shuter, Marumo, Cambridge Little Library	Oxford Successful English, Juta, Macmillan	DBE EFAL big books, as well as Heineman Spot On, Oxford Headstart and Oxford Successful English
Setswana Big Books	Molteno, Macmillan	Not in evidence	Cambridge Little Library
Setswana little books	Molteno, Marumo, Macmillan (in one class 21 different titles)	Molteno, Marumo, Macmillan, Kagiso	Vula Bula (Zenex), Cambridge, PRAESA, Kagiso, Molteno, MML Dumelang
English little books	Macmillan, Shuter (Cub series), Marumo	Oxford, Day by Day, Macmillan, Marumo, and many older titles	Cambridge, Kagiso, Oxford, Mapep, Juta

Grade 3 class, Ruth Mompati District – what is lacking?

'What factors influence the ability of education participants to convert educational resources into capabilities?' (Baxen 2014:100).

Survey of early reading books in 11 SSA countries - materials in 200 languages

40 languages have only one title each, 42 languages have between two and five titles, and 50 languages have between six and 20 titles.

The three languages with the largest number of published titles also have relatively large speaker populations: Kiswahili (808 titles for an estimated 100 million speakers across several countries), Chichewa/Nyanja (509 titles for an estimated 10 million speakers in Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique), and Amharic (366 titles for an estimated 26 million speakers in Ethiopia.

(RTI International 2016: 5)

This is where the African Storybook comes in - www.africanstorybook.org

An alternative publishing model

A website of storybooks for early reading www.africanstorybook.org

Where you can READ stories, TRANSLATE stories, ADAPT stories, and CREATE stories

From 2014 to date:

- 1033 unique storybooks, 5199 translated storybooks
- In 160 of the languages of Africa

African Storybooks in SA languages
(549 English ASb approved)

Banako ukwenza izinto
Xolisa Guzula
Wiehan de Jager
isiXhosa

Engijabulela ukukwenza
Foundation Phase teachers
Umlazi
Wiehan de Jager
isiZulu

Tselane Le Dimo
Lorato Trok
Catherine Groenewald
Setswana

Mmutla ka tlase ga mohlare
Dikeledi Queen Phokane
Wiehan de Jager
Sepedi

Palesa utsandza titjalo
Fakazile Armooh
Jesse Pietersen
SiSwati

141 isiXhosa	209 isiZulu	117 Setswana	99 Sepedi	72 SiSwati
48 Tshivenda	45 Xitsonga	95 isiNdebele	60 Sesotho	168 Afrikaans

ASb's main achievement 2013 to 2017

An African initiative

almost all storybooks written by the African communities that use the storybooks (individuals in a range of countries, community libraries, teacher colleges, schools)

Story development workshops

Methods of delivery

Digital projection (offline or online)   OR   Print

*Kibera Library
Nairobi*

*Lolupe School,
Turkana*

Ugandan Languages	# ASb books(Aug-18)
Acholi	22
Aringati	20
Ateso	55
Dhopadhola	65
Kakwa	8
Kinywarwanda (Uganda)	10
Kumam	13
Leblango	7
Lhukonzo	10
Luganda	271
Lugbarati	91
Lugbarati (official)	54
Lugwere	18
Lukenye	2
Lumasaaba	100
Lunyole	155
Lusamia	8
Lusoga	143
Ngakarimojong	1
Rufumbira	21
Rukiga	28
Runyankore	102
Runyoro	19
Rutooro	45
Sabinyi	11

African Storybook has been able to make a huge difference to the availability of titles in UGANDAN local languages, including not only the 12 languages recognised by the national reading programmes (eg the RTI School Health and Reading Programme in 2012 to 2017), but other smaller languages as well – a total of 25 languages.

African Storybook: Addressing the shortage of local language books, but also how they are used
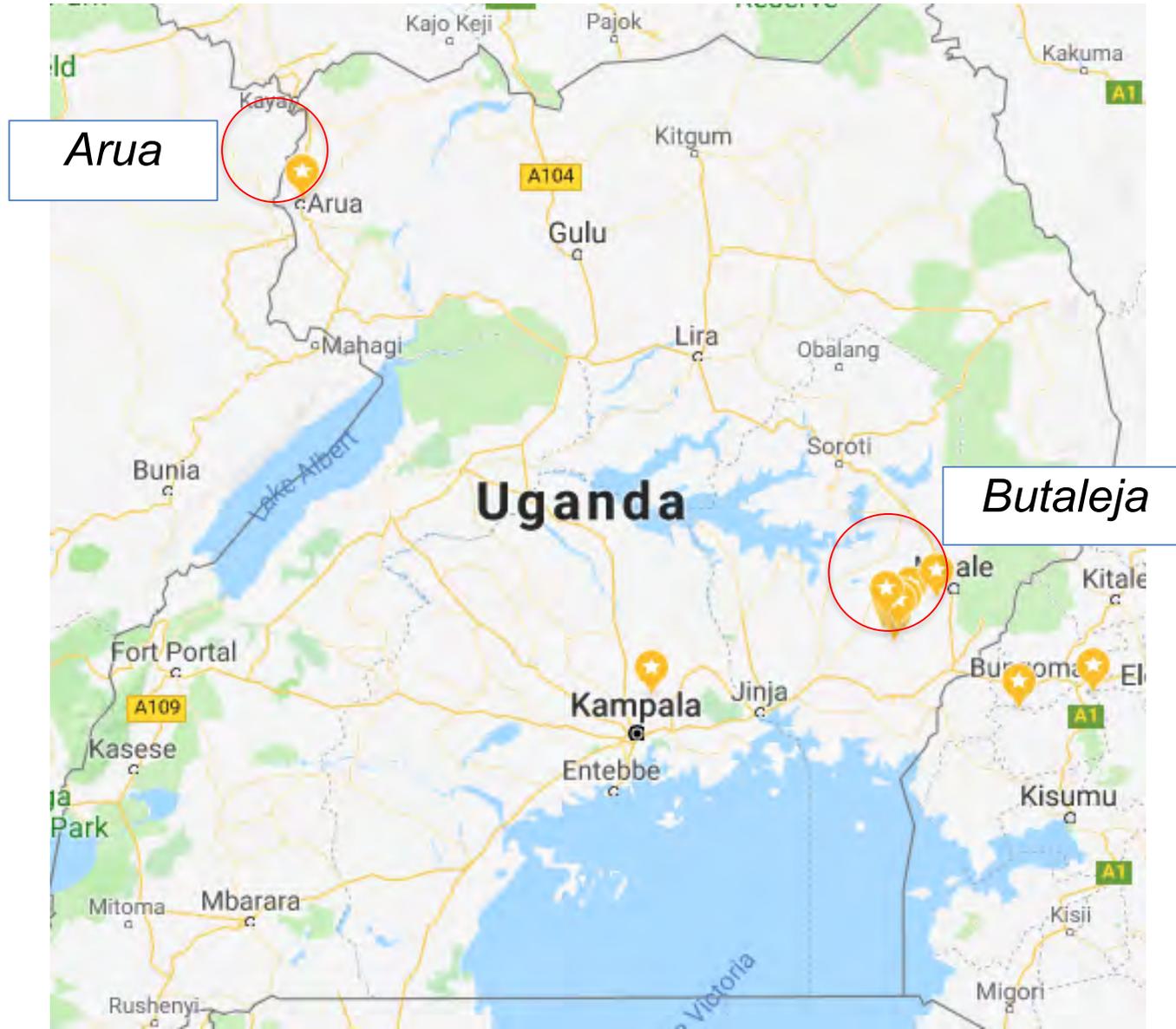
Lunyole teachers in Butaleja district

We were not trained to teach reading and writing in Lunyole yet we are now forced to teach these skills in the mother tongue … They tell us instead to make our level best and yet there are no textbooks, not trained, so we just gamble.

(Andrea Mudodi, Ugandan Primary 1 teacher. In Norton & Tembe - in press:1)

African Storybook addressed this – with a start of 80 or more Lunyole storybooks, translated through the Lunyole Language Board.

But materials are not enough. Teachers have to use them.

Small scale research: African Storybook

- Decided to work with 6 teachers and a principal from two schools in the Butaleja district – meeting once or twice a week for a year to discuss how to use African Storybooks in class.

The original question,

'Could professional development activities based on ASb stories in Lunyole be productive for literacy teaching and learning?'

was modified in discussion with the teachers to become

'Could group reading and discussion of ASb stories in Lunyole lead to increased teacher competence and confidence in reading and writing in Lunyole and to greater use of Lunyole in the classroom?' (Tembe and Reed, 2016:5)

Saide
Enabling successful
open learning for all

Languaging in Lunyole

Reading a simple story together led to lots of discussion. For example, *hifanani* or *hifananyi*?

How to use the word *hifananyi* to generate further words beginning with *hi* in a word list: *Higalamu* (It is wide), *Himaali* (It is black), *Hihosa* (It is white) and *Hirando (*It is red)

Hino hifananyi hya mago gange.

Languaging around the Lunyole alphabet

- Neither *x* nor *q* is used in Lunyole.

- Lunyole uses a long-tailed ŋ.

- Words with a *v* or *z* as first letter are borrowed (e.g. *vumbula*

- from Luganda).

- *b* is the only consonant that can be doubled (plosive *bb*).

- The consonant before any word ending in a vowel must be *r* (e.g. *muliro*).

- In Lunyole, repetition of a vowel affects meaning: *Baasaala* (I was born), *Basaala* (They produce).

Gunyiiya.

3

Page from a storybooks, Omuliro (Fire)

Languaging about thematic vocabulary

- Example: *omugangi* which means *nurse* or *doctor* or even *a load.*

Omusaŋu wange
gaŋandiihira
omusomesa
wange ebbaluŋa
olwabbalasa.

Page from an African Storybook called 'Letters'
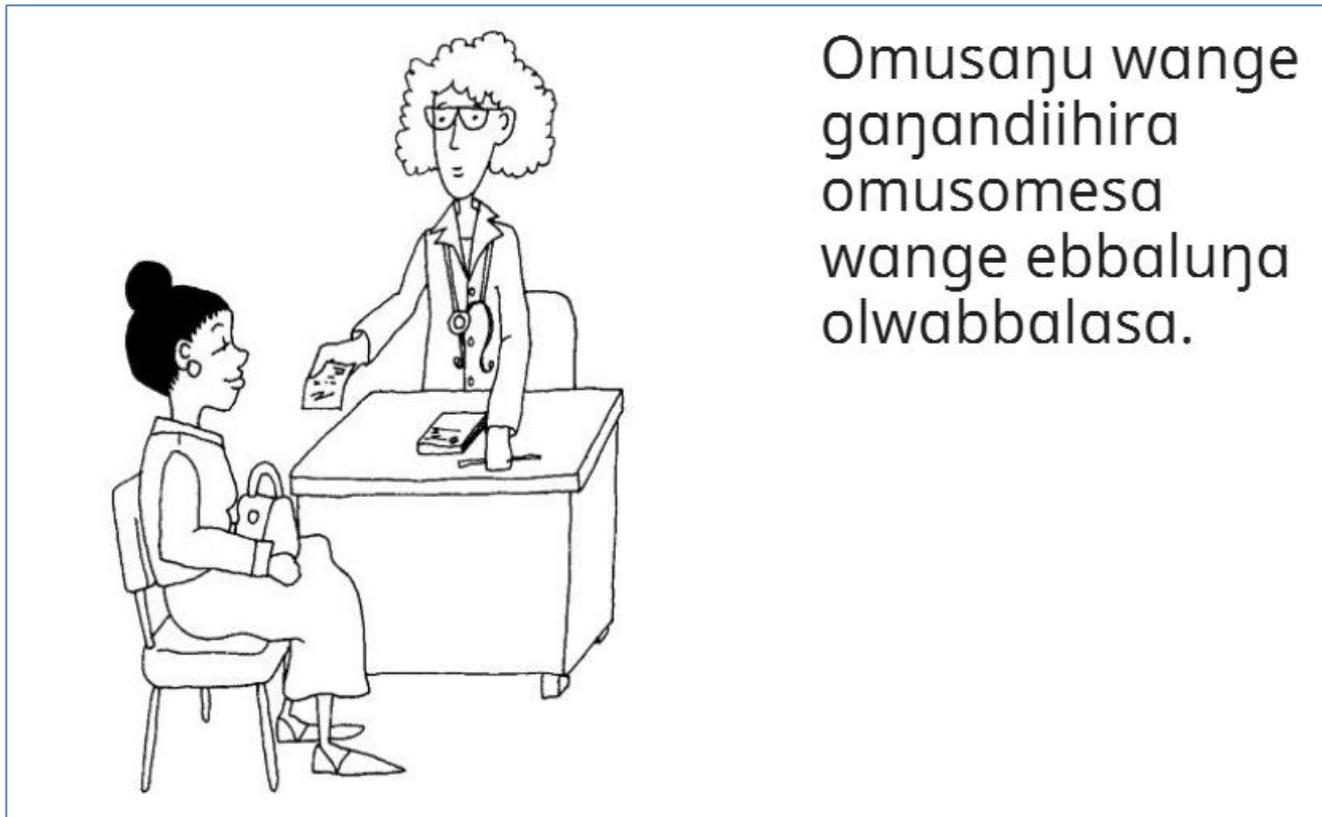
Languaging in a collaborative writing exercise

Each teacher drafted a version in Lunyole of the same story and then shared it with the group. Ideas, words and phrases from these individual stories were then selected for one group story, the first version of which was written on flip chart paper by the co-ordinator in response to dictation from the teachers. As a group they then decided on improvements to the storyline, grammar, vocabulary and spelling.

Omuliro
Deborah Namugosa
Rob Owen

ASb approved

Lunyole

African Storybook.org
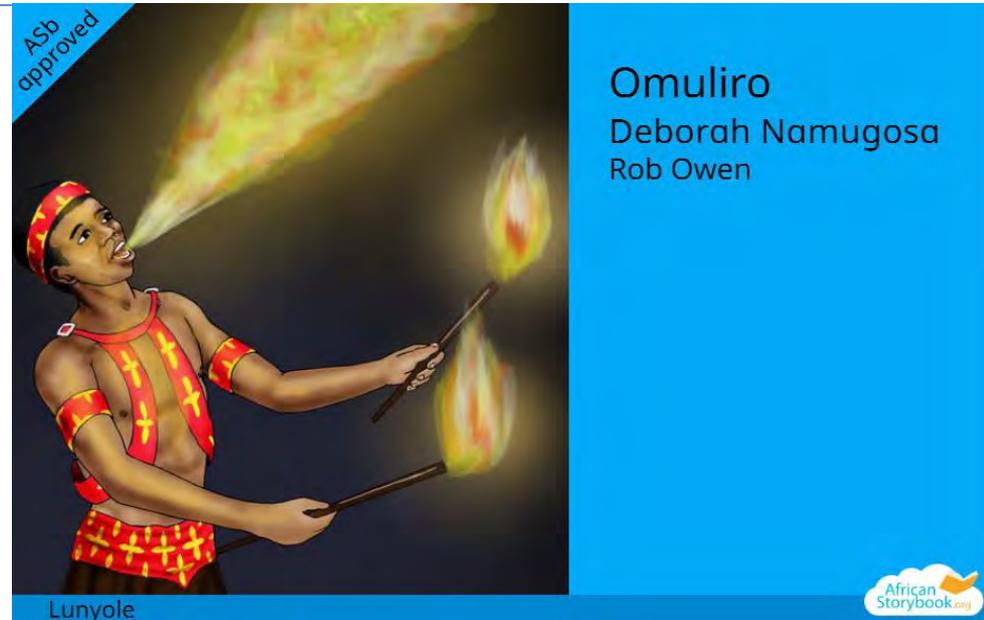
Now available in Arabic, Somali, Zande, Samburu, as well as Ugandan languages of Dhophadola and Lusoga

And the story-making continued after our project ended

Buttons
Nahyuha Sarah
Wiehan de Jager

English

Comments from the Butaleja teachers

- 'I'm learning how to write the grammar'.
- 'Workshops have helped me to learn how to teach in the literacy hour'.
- 'I can write a story in mother tongue, considering the age level of classes'.
- 'Children are now participating actively in my lessons'.
- 'I used to contest teaching in the mother tongue but now I'm interested'.
- 'The time is not enough for professional development'.
- 'The lack of support from the Department of Education is disappointing'.
- 'I need more books in Lunyole'.
- 'I'm disappointed that I still can't create rhymes and tongue twisters'.

African Storybook: Addressing the shortage of local language books, but also how they are used

Arua

Butaleja
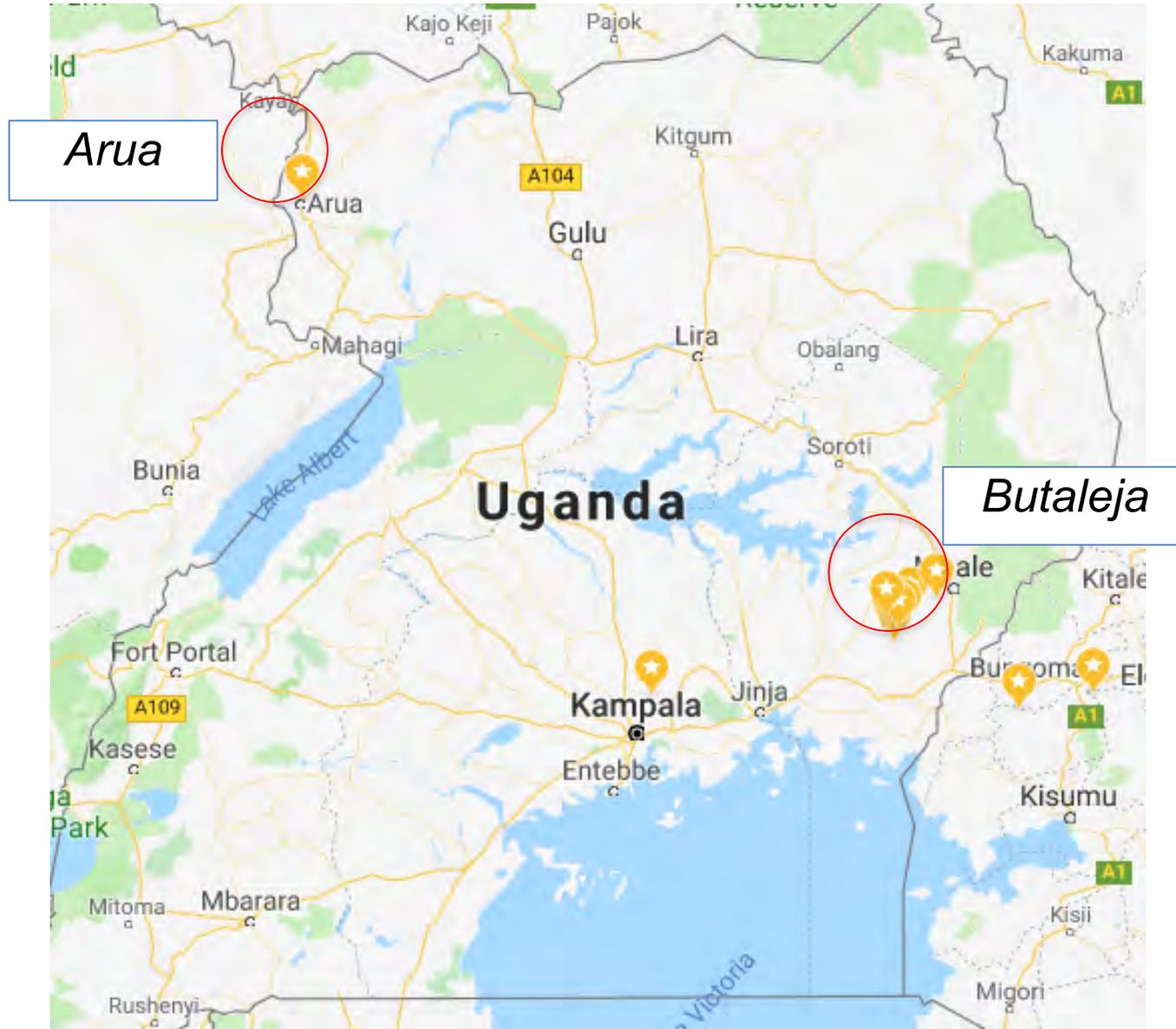
Findings from Stranger-Johannessen's PhD study of African Storybook in Arua (2015 – 2017)

- Because the books are narratives there can be natural language learning, 'new words every day'.

- Because the books are local, teachers and learners feel empowered to engage and interpret what they read. They read for meaning – 'hermeneutic empowerment'.

- Because the stories are picture storybooks, meaning can be made from the pictures as well.

- Several of the stories also enabled teachers to challenge traditional gender roles. For example, a story created by a South African, *Andiswa soccer star*, enabled productive discussions of the fact that girls can play soccer too.

- Teachers were excited to be able not only to consume the material that was given to them, but also to contribute their own.

  (Stranger-Johannessen & Norton 2017: 51ff)

Theorising the effects

All groups have contributions to make to curriculum (Comber)

- *The assumption that all students are capable of researching how language works, that all cultural groups have significant contributions to make to understandings of literate practices and that all texts should be subject to question is central to 'curriculum justice' for all* (Comber 2016:5).

Importance of igniting teacher agency – not something people have, but something they do (Priestly et al 2012). Agency

- *denotes a 'quality' of the engagement of actors with temporal- relational-context-for-action, not a quality of the actors themselves. Viewing agency in such terms helps us to understand how humans are able to be reflexive and creative, acting counter to societal constraints, but also how individuals are enabled and constrained by their social and material environments.*

Theorising the effects – the notion of investment (rather than motivation)

The Modern Language Journal, 101, Supplement 2017

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

Investment is not just about the individual, but is 'co-constructed by learners, teachers and community practices, in the context of shifting relations of power' (Darvin and Norton 2015).

Contexts in which investment is likely to be high

Investment is enhanced when the pedagogical practices of the teacher increase the range of identities available to language learners, whether face-to-face, digital, or online.

To affirm learners' complex identities, classroom practices need to draw from and legitimize learners' cultural capital – their prior knowledge and experience - while seeking to better understand and affirm learners' imagined identities.

Stranger-Johannessen and Norton, 2017

So what is needed?

I propose that what is needed is a concerted effort to a stimulate the investment of teachers in African language reading teaching.

- We need to recognise the language and cultural capital our teachers have and give them opportunities to build on this capital to extend their existing identities – as story makers, contributors to the curriculum and digital citizens.

Saide
Enabling successful
open learning for all

So what is needed?

- We need to create spaces for teachers to explore the patterns and nuances of living varieties of African languages.

- We need to encourage teachers to use dictionaries and lesson plans as guides and supports, rather than as rules to be followed mindlessly.

- We need to stop complaining that teachers don't have agency, and rather create opportunities for them to practise agency.

References

- Tembe, J. & Reed, Y. 2016. Languaging in and about Lunyole: African Storybook materials as a catalyst for re-imagining literacy teaching and learning in two Ugandan primary schools. *Reading & Writing* 7 (2).

- Stranger-Johannessen, E. & Norton, B. 2017. The African Storybook and Language Teacher Identity in Digital Times. 101. *Modern Language Journal.* 45.

- Darvin, R. & Norton, B. 2015. Identity and a Model of Investment in Applied Linguistics. 35. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics.* 36.

- Norton, B. & Tembe, J. In press. The African Storybook, multilingual literacy, and social change in Ugandan classrooms. *Applied Linguistics Review*.

- RTI International. 2016. *Survey of children's reading materials in African languages in eleven countries - Final report*. USAID: Washington.

- Comber, B. 2016. *Literacy, place and pedagogies of possibility*, Routledge, New York.

- Priestley, M., Biesta, G. & Robinson, S., 2012, *Teachers as agents change: An exploration of the concept of teacher agency,* Working Paper No. 1, Teacher Agency and Curriculum Change, University of Stirling, Stirling.

Thank you!