

The African Storybook, multilingual literacy, and social change in Ugandan classrooms

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Abstract

For over a decade, the authors have worked collaboratively to better understand and address the challenges and possibilities of promoting multilingual literacy in Uganda, which has over 40 African languages, and where English is the official language. We begin the paper with a description of our current work on the African Storybook, a groundbreaking initiative of the South African Institute for Distance Education (Saide), which is promoting multilingual literacy for African children through the provision of hundreds of open-access stories on a powerful interactive website (www.africanstorybook.org). We draw on data from two Ugandan classrooms, one rural and one urban, to illustrate the challenges Ugandan teachers face in promoting literacy in both the mother tongue and English. We analyse the data with reference to the possibilities provided by the African Storybook website, focusing on mother tongue as resource, multimodality, translanguaging, and classroom management. We then draw on a 2015 teacher education workshop in eastern Uganda, as well as Darvin and Norton's (2015) model of identity and investment, to illustrate how the African Storybook can help Ugandan teachers navigate classroom challenges and build on existing innovative practices. We conclude that the African Storybook can help implement the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

1 Introduction

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, quoted in Tembe [2008:141])

The teacher wrote sentences in English on the chalkboard and asked one of the pupils to read aloud for the rest of the class. The whole class then repeated the sentences in a chorus. However, some pupils simply kept quiet. At one point, to get all the pupils to respond, the teacher said thus to the class: 'look at me' and the pupils repeated the same phrase. (Tembe's observations of Karen Abbo, Ugandan Primary 1 teacher, quoted in Tembe [2008: 149])

These two vignettes, to be discussed in greater detail in Section 3 below, depict the challenges that Ugandan teachers face in seeking to promote multilingual literacy in Ugandan primary classrooms. In the first vignette, Andrea Mudodo, a Primary 1 teacher in a rural school, struggles to teach the local language, Lunyole, in the absence of resources and teacher training, a daily "gamble" on her part. In the second vignette, Karen Abbo is teaching reading in English to 76 Primary 1 pupils in an urban school in which 13 different African languages are spoken. She writes sentences on the chalkboard, and asks the pupils to read the sentences as a class. At one point, to get the attention of all the pupils, she raises her voice, and in some frustration, says

“Look at me!” The pupils, erroneously assuming she is referring to a written sentence on the chalkboard, repeat in unison, “Look at me!”

The vignettes help to explain, at least in part, the results of a 2014 UNESCO report, which highlights the educational and literacy challenges currently facing sub-Saharan Africa. The 2013/2014 *Education for All Global Monitoring Report* (UNESCO 2014) draws on an extensive body of research to outline these challenges, including the fact that nearly 30 million children in sub-Saharan Africa are out of school; over a third of children do not reach Grade 4; over half of the children who reach Grade 4 (called Primary 4 in Uganda) are not learning the basics in reading; and the pupil/teacher ratios are among the highest in the world, with the primary pupil/teacher ratio at 43:1. Such findings, illustrated not only in Andrea Mudodo and Karen Abbo’s classrooms, but also in a range of recent research (e.g., Bamgbose 2014; McIlwraith 2014; Norton 2014a; Romaine 2013; Ssentanda 2014), present an image of crowded classrooms and lost educational opportunity. While the UNESCO report focuses on sub-Saharan Africa more broadly, the data is representative of the educational challenges facing Uganda, which is the subject of this paper. The UNESCO report found, for example, that, “In Malawi and Uganda, access and quality did not improve significantly between 2000 and 2007, and the learning gap between rich and poor widened. These countries face a triple challenge, needing to strengthen access, quality and equity” (UNESCO 2014: 34).

As the authors of this paper, we have for over a decade visited many classrooms in Uganda, with a view to better understanding the challenges and possibilities that teachers encounter in promoting multilingual literacy in their classrooms (Norton, 2014a, Norton and Early 2011, Tembe and Norton 2008), with an increasing focus on the promise of the digital in educational and social change (Mutonyi and Norton 2007; Norton et al. 2011; Norton and Williams 2012). By “multilingual literacy” we refer to the development of literacy in both the mother tongue as well as languages of wider communication, such as English and French (Martin-Jones and Jones 2000; Hornberger 2003; Blackledge and Creese 2010). Our research has been informed by the large and persuasive body of research that suggests that literacy is best achieved in the mother tongue, and that the learning of a second language is in fact enhanced if there is prior literacy development in the native language (Cummins 2001, UNICEF 1999).

In Uganda, a country of almost 40 million people, multilingualism is common, but the official language of English is not the mother tongue of the vast majority of speakers, where over 40 different African languages are spoken (Lewis 2009). Uganda’s current language education policy nevertheless subscribes to the philosophy, where possible, of using the child’s first language as medium of instruction in his/her first years of schooling. However, a distinction is made between rural schools, conceived as primarily monolingual, and urban schools, predominantly multilingual. In rural schools, the local language is a medium of instruction until Grade 4, with English as a school subject, while English is the medium of instruction in urban schools from Primary 1, with a “relevant local language” as a subject (Government of Uganda 1992). English, however, is the medium of instruction in all schools, rural and urban, from Primary 5 onwards, with all high-stakes assessment undertaken in English.

2 The African Storybook: A promising Saide initiative

Research has found that one of the key obstacles in implementing Uganda’s language policy is the drastic shortage of appropriate stories for early reading in languages familiar to young

African children (Abiria et al. 2013; Parry et al. 2005). Conventional publishing models, which rely on economies of scale, are unable to provide sufficient numbers or variety in the multitude of languages on the African continent (Welch et al. 2014). To help address this acute educational and social challenge, the innovative African Storybook (ASb) initiative, launched in 2013 by the South African Institute for Distance Education (Saide), seeks to promote multilingual literacy for young African students through open-access digital stories in over 60 African languages, as well as English, French, and Portuguese. Developed on a powerful interactive website, more than 500 stories have been developed for the three pilot countries of Uganda, Kenya, and South Africa, as well as over a dozen other African countries, and are freely available for download, translation, and adaptation. Further, new stories can be written and uploaded by teachers, parents, librarians and other community members. Juliet Tembe is the Ugandan in-country coordinator and Bonny Norton is the project's research advisor.

As Welch and Glennie (2016) note, while there are major national programmes in all three pilot countries to support multilingual literacy development in the early grades, there is a need for storybooks and supplementary readers that encourage reading for pleasure and practice. They note that local language stories are increasingly being used to support the teaching of reading, with promising outcomes: "Educators report that while with stories in English, children spell out the words in rote fashion with little or no comprehension, with stories in the local language, there is emotional and cognitive engagement." Further, as noted by Welch et al. (2014), one of the central questions that the ASb faces is how to support teachers, parents and communities to use stories effectively for literacy development. In order to address this question, it is important to better understand what literacy practices are already in place in African primary schools, a subject of this paper. Research indicates that in all three pilot countries, teacher education programs give very little attention to teaching early grade reading, particularly in African languages (Abiria et al. 2011; Kyeyune 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.

3 A view from Ugandan classrooms

As the ASb seeks to integrate effectively into Ugandan schools, classroom-based research can help us better understand the challenges that primary school teachers are facing, how teachers are navigating the current language policy, and the extent to which the ASb initiative might help support early literacy development. To this end, we provide insight into pedagogical practices in two classrooms in eastern Uganda – Andrea Mudodu's Primary 1 classroom in a rural school and Karen Obo's Primary 1 classroom in an urban school. These classrooms are typical of schools that Saide is targeting in order to promote early literacy for African children. As indicated in the first vignette, primary teachers like Mudodi in rural schools are expected to teach mother tongue literacy even in those contexts in which there is scarcity of resources in the mother tongue, and in which teachers have little training in the local language. Teachers are also expected to teach English as a subject, also in the absence of adequate resources. In urban schools, primary teachers are expected to introduce English literacy to large multilingual classes, much like Abbo's class, in the absence of mother tongue literacy, and with limited resources. Teachers are also expected to teach a local language as a curriculum subject.

The two classrooms we describe, pseudonymously called Bugagga Rural Primary School (BRPS) and Tiriri Urban Primary School (TUPS), are located in rural and urban communities, respectively. Observations of these classrooms were made by Tembe between March and May, 2006, and have been triangulated by visits both authors have made to many other Ugandan primary schools before and since that time. Descriptions of the school contexts and that of other teachers can be found in Tembe (2008). We highlight below key data from Mudodo and Abbo's classrooms, as illustrative of a wider range of classrooms observed, and then discuss the similarities and differences among the strategies adopted by Mudodo and Abbo in their contrasting sociolinguistic contexts. This is followed by an examination of the ways in which the ASb might strengthen existing strategies and possibly forge new ones, serving as a useful resource for primary teachers as they navigate both policy and practice in rural and urban classrooms.

3.1 Literacy practices in a rural primary school classroom

BRPS, established in the early 1950s, is situated about 6km from the nearest town on the main gravel road that links the district to the only railway line in the region. Continuing on this road eventually leads to a tarmac road that goes into Kampala, the capital city of Uganda, about 230 km away. BRPS is a mixed day school with a population of 1148 pupils of whom 580 are boys and 568 girls. The language spoken by the majority of pupils is Lunyole, one of Uganda's minority languages.

Mudodo, a teacher with 13 years of experience, was teaching mother tongue reading and writing to a class of 86 pupils when Tembe went to observe her lesson on 26 March 2006. Apart from one pupil whose mother tongue was Dhopadhola, the rest spoke Lunyole, as did Mudodo. In the classroom, apart from the teacher's table and chair, there was no other furniture. All the pupils sat on the floor in neat rows facing a single chalkboard, and no texts were available. The observation lasted for thirty minutes, which was the length of the lesson. For most of the time, the teacher confined herself to the front of the classroom and remained standing throughout the lesson.

At the beginning of the lesson, Mudodo wrote on the chalkboard a number of letters from the Lunyole alphabet. She read them aloud and then asked the pupils to read after her in chorus. This was followed by her calling upon individual pupils to practice writing them on the chalkboard, while reading them aloud for the rest of the class. The rest of the pupils were told to watch, listen, and clap their hands to acknowledge a correct answer. Next, the teacher asked the pupils to read aloud the letters they had so far learnt to check if they remembered them. The pupils responded in chorus. Mudodo then introduced the next letter "r" to be learnt that day. She demonstrated to the pupils how it was written by writing it on the chalkboard and then pronouncing it for the pupils as they listened. All instruction was in Lunyole until the teacher interrupted the lesson with a prompt in English for the P1 (Primary 1) class thus:

Mudodo: P One?

Pupils: Yes please.

After getting the pupils' response, Mudodo then continued with the lesson by reading through the Lunyole alphabet. This ended in a song in Lunyole, followed by another prompt in English:

Mudodo: Hello P One?

Pupils: Hello Teacher.

Mudodo used these prompts throughout the lesson whenever she felt the class was getting disruptive. Throughout the lesson, the pupils used the English title of “madam” to address Mudodo and get her attention.

As the reading by the pupils progressed, Mudodo punctuated it with English phrases acknowledging their performance, such as “very good” or “sorry” for the correct or incorrect answers respectively. To draw the pupils’ attention, the teacher used phrases in English, such as “listen” and then proceeded to give instructions in Lunyole. From time to time, Mudodo would randomly call on a single boy and alert the other boys to their participation in the task. She would then turn to the girls to do the same. In trying to make the instructions clear, she said and wrote in English “boys” and “girls” above each list to be read by each group respectively. About the middle of the lesson, the pupils were told to go out to practice writing in the sand the letter they had just learnt. Mudodo moved around outside to check on the pupils’ work. When she sensed that many of the pupils were not writing “r” correctly in the sand, she called the class around her by the verandah and using a slate once again demonstrated to pupils how to write the letter they were practicing. When the lesson ended it was time for the mid-morning break.

In her debriefing with Tembe, Mudodo informed Tembe that although in college they had been trained how to teach reading and writing, it was with respect to teaching English and not a local Ugandan language. Student teachers were instead told to translate their learning into the local language. This situation posed some challenges:

Tembe: What challenges have come up?

Mudodo: We were not trained to teach reading and writing in Lunyole yet we are now forced to teach these skills in the mother tongue. It is difficult to pronounce some letters. We were told that we would be trained as we continued teaching but it seems they are not taking it as a serious matter.

Tembe: Why do you think they are not taking it as a serious matter?

Mudodo: Because since we were told we have not been trained. They tell us instead to make our level best and yet there are no textbooks, not trained so we just gamble.

Mudodo also noted that she was not as good at reading and writing in Lunyole as she was in Luganda, which she had learnt while at school. One of the challenges she encountered was in the way the letters were pronounced. There were no books written in Lunyole except for one copy in the school, which was kept in the headmaster’s office, and some charts of the Lunyole alphabet. Although there was a school commitment to buy some more books, this had not yet been done. According to Mudodo, there was need for more reading materials and refresher courses for teachers to enable them to teach in Lunyole. She also pointed out, as Tembe and Norton (2008) have found, that some parents had negative attitudes towards using the mother tongue, and instead preferred that their children be taught in English.

3.2 Literacy practices in an urban primary school classroom

TUPS is located within Tororo Municipality in eastern Uganda. It is a large school, well fenced with barbed wire, with only one main entrance. The school was formerly managed by the Uganda-Asian community until 1972 when it was taken over by the then ultra-nationalist government of Uganda. It is a mixed primary day school with a large population of 1715 pupils, some of whom come from the rural area bordering the municipality. Each class is divided into a

number of grades. In this school, the pupils speak different languages as their mother tongue, with the common ones being Dhopadhola, Ateso, Samia, Lugwere, Lunyuli, Lumasaaba, and Lusoga. The first two belong to the eastern and western Nilotic language family respectively, while the rest are Bantu languages. However, the headmaster pointed out that when the pupils interacted with each other while at school, they tended to communicate mainly in Luganda and Kiswahili.

Tembe observed Karen Abbo's Primary 1 classroom on 13 June 2006. There were 76 pupils in the class speaking 13 different languages as their mother tongue. Given the location of this urban center, the majority of the pupils spoke the two predominant languages in this area, Dhopadhola and Ateso, with 29 and 16 pupils, respectively. Abbo, a teacher with 13 years of experience, spoke Dhopadhola as a mother tongue. The room was full of charts on the wall as well as cards with letters of the alphabet hanging on a string across the room, but no individual texts were available. The pupils sat on small chairs arranged around two tables. The lesson began at 10am and lasted for 30 minutes.

To keep order in class the pupils were told at the beginning of the lesson to keep their 'hands in the box' (which meant folding the hands onto the chest while keeping eyes on the chalkboard) and Abbo kept referring to this throughout the lesson to maintain discipline. She wrote sentences in English on the chalkboard and asked one of the pupils to read aloud for the rest of the class. The whole class then repeated the sentences in a chorus, although some pupils did not participate. As described in the opening vignette, at one point, to get all the pupils to respond, Abbo said to the class, in some frustration, 'look at me' and the pupils, with little comprehension of the meaning of the utterance, simply repeated the phrase in unison. A song in Kiswahili was also used in the middle of the lesson to gain the children's attention, and most of the pupils participated. Apart from some flash cards, no other teaching aids were used. During the lesson, the pupils interacted with each other in English. For example, in one incident, Tembe overheard one pupil reporting to the teacher while pointing to another pupil, "Teacher, this one is touch, touching me". Likewise, the teacher used English throughout the lesson except for the song, which was in Kiswahili.

In her interview with Tembe, Abbo noted that while she was aware of the new language policy, which required a local language to be taught as a subject, the policy was not being implemented because of the multiplicity of languages in the school. When asked who was supposed to decide on the relevant local language, Abbo mentioned the Municipal Education Office, noting that two possible languages that could be selected, which were Kiswahili and Luganda. Like the headmaster, Abbo thought that these languages could work because, as she explained, "Most of the children around here speak Luganda. Now this school is also near the Kenya border that is why I mentioned Kiswahili." She noted further that the language policy focus on mother tongue was particularly appropriate in the rural areas where the pupils spoke the same language. She also cited lack of books as a hindrance to implementing the language policy, in addition to a lack of proper training of teachers, as well as the fact that no particular local language had yet been selected to be taught as the relevant local language.

4 The African Storybook in Ugandan primary classrooms

The data presented above illustrate how Ugandan teachers are trying to promote multilingual literacy for young learners, despite large classes and limited resources. Of central interest to our

current work is determining how the ASb might help to address the challenges such teachers face, while strengthening the innovative practices already in place. In analyzing the data from these and other primary classrooms, we found four overlapping linguistic practices that provide insight into classroom pedagogy in both rural and urban Ugandan schools, including (1) the use of mother tongue as a resource, (2) songs and other multimodal practices, (3) code switching and translanguaging, and (4) specific linguistic strategies for classroom management. We discuss each of these practices in some detail, and consider some of the ways in which the ASb might enhance these practices, and possibly forge new ones.

4.1 Mother tongue as a resource

The classes observed were large, and typical of many of the classes we have visited in Uganda over the past decade. However, at BRPS, Mudodo was able to draw on the common mother tongue, Lunyole, as an oral resource for the purposes of explanation and elaboration in the teaching of both mother tongue and English literacy. Nevertheless, the teaching of literacy in Lunyole still presented a range of challenges. The teachers did not feel comfortable using Lunyole for reading and writing purposes, as they themselves had received initial literacy training in Luganda rather than Lunyole. Further, there were few instructional materials in Lunyole as the Lunyole orthography had only just been developed by a local organization in partnership with the Summer Institute of Linguistics. Further, there were no materials to help with children's reading and writing, and pupils needed to go outside to practice writing in the sand.

With the ASb, the problem of limited resources is being addressed, at least as far as the availability of digital texts in both the mother tongue and English. While our 2006 study found that BRPS had only one Lunyole text available for teachers and pupils, there are now over 120 Lunyole stories on the ASb website, and the number keeps growing. Some of these texts are authored by Ugandan teachers, who have worked collaboratively to improve the range of multilingual literacy materials for their pupils. However, the teachers still need access to technology, such as battery-operated projectors, as well as training, in order to utilize these resources effectively.

At TUPS, where many languages were spoken in any given class, the pupils used English to interact with the teacher as well as amongst themselves. However, there were also pupils who remained quiet in the class. The teachers mostly employed the 'Initiation Response and Evaluation' (IRE) discourse pattern (Cazden 2001) by posing known-answer questions, as demonstrated by the "look at me" vignette in Abbo's class. The emphasis on literacy development was thus on recall and response of correct answers. The ASb initiative (as illustrated in section 5 below) encourages teachers to incorporate a wider range of multilingual pedagogical practices in their classrooms, with a view to increasing learner participation in classroom activities. Further, at TUPS, there was little effort made to teach the local language as a subject, as recommended by the new language policy. Although the teachers appreciated the advantages of the child's home language in the development of literacy skills, their position, and that of the headmaster, was that there were many local languages in the school, and therefore it was difficult to decide on which one should be taught as a subject. Because the ASb currently incorporates 18 Ugandan languages on its site (see Table 1), teachers now have a much wider range of Ugandan languages to draw on, and can also translate existing stories into the languages used by the children in their classes.

Table 1. The African Storybook in Ugandan Languages

Language	Stories
Alur	1
Aringati	20
Ateso	29
Kakwa	7
Leblango	3
Luganda	109
Lugbarati	84
Lugbarati (official)	50
Lugwere	1
Lumasaaba	68
Lunyole	122
Lusamia	1
Lusoga	36
Ma'di	1
Ng'aturkana	102
Runyankore	1
Rutooro	2
Sabinyi	10

Despite the challenges faced by Mudodo, Abbo, and other Ugandan teachers, the latitude they had to draw on the mother tongue as a resource contrasts significantly with the experiences of Ugandan teachers at secondary school. Early and Norton (2014), who have studied linguistic practices in Ugandan secondary classrooms, where English is the medium of instruction, found that teachers were very reluctant to use the mother tongue as a classroom resource. Not only does the Ugandan language policy call for the exclusive use of English at the secondary level, but “in public opinion, use of the mother tongue as an instructional strategy positions secondary teachers as incompetent” (Early and Norton 2014:686). As resources for the mother tongue become increasingly available in Uganda, particularly through the ASb, it may be that the value of the mother tongue as a resource for learning will be enhanced at both the primary and secondary level.

4.2 Songs and multimodality

In Mudodo and Abbo’s classrooms, as well as others we observed, there was repeated use of songs by teachers. For example, at BRPS, Mudodo set an oral practice exercise for the pupils where they were required to work as a team of boys and girls. In order to give the pupils time to prepare for this exercise, she began to sing and the pupils participated with enthusiasm. Teachers at TUPS also made use of songs in their classrooms. While the headmaster and teachers said it was not possible to teach a local language in their school, the teachers constantly used songs in local languages to punctuate their teaching of English. In Abbo’s case, for example, a song in Kiswahili was a useful resource to get the pupils on track after a lengthy explanation in English seemed unsuccessful. When Abbo’s class was struggling to understand English, she started a

song in Kiswahili, and thereafter continued with the lesson in English. Thus, the use of songs was a common strategy in both schools, used to stimulate interest at the beginning of the lesson, transition from one activity to another, and maintain attention during the lesson.

In their research with primary school teachers in northeastern Uganda, Abiria, Early, and Kendrick (2013) also found that songs and singing were common pedagogical practices, and they drew on the work of Kress (2000) to demonstrate the importance of multimodality in meaning making in Ugandan schools. Abiria et al found that teachers used a wide range of multimodal resources in their classrooms, including drawing, games, role-playing, and songs. Our study provides further insight into the specific pedagogical contexts in which songs are used in large, multilingual classrooms. We also found evidence of other important multimodal practices, such as the practice of clapping, that was often used to help focus the attention of pupils, and promote whole-class participation. In addition, the practice of drawing in the sand was a creative, albeit expedient, response to the lack of resources in the school, also providing the young pupils with the opportunity to move their bodies and stretch their legs.

The ASb has embraced songs and multimodality as genres, and 67 songs, poems, rhymes and games can be found on the website. ASb is also experimenting with the development of storybooks that have line drawings, so that these can be downloaded and coloured in by children. We have also found that teachers use ASb stories such as *Listen to my Body* (available on the website) to encourage children to move their bodies energetically as they read and learn (Stranger-Johannessen and Norton, 2017). Analysis of our 2006 data suggests that the ASb initiative is indeed highly responsive to teachers' innovative practices in primary Ugandan classrooms.

4.3 Codeswitching and translanguaging

While codeswitching has for many years been recognized as a common practice in African education (Kamwangamalu 2000), more recent research theorizes the fluid use of two or more languages for educational purposes as “translanguaging” (Garcia 2009). This construct refers to the practices by which bilingual teachers and students access different linguistic features of autonomous languages in order to “maximize communicative potential” (p. 140). The construct contributes to a contemporary conversation in sociolinguistic and educational theory that challenges theories of language as independent and bounded (Blommaert and Rampton 2011; Makoni and Pennycook 2007). Our study provides insight into the conditions under which different linguistic repertoires are used in these particular Ugandan classrooms, and what this might mean for theories of literacy as “translingual practice” (Canagarajah 2013).

At BRPS, where instruction was predominantly in the mother tongue, English was often used either as a way of promoting literacy engagement on the part of pupils (Cummins 2011) or clarifying a point. For example, in Mudodo's Primary 1 class, her lesson had progressed in Lunyole until she suddenly halted and interrupted the lesson with a prompt in English. The teacher used these prompts throughout the lesson whenever she felt the class was losing attention or becoming disruptive. Further, praises in acknowledgment of a correct response were expressed in English. For example, in Mudodo's Lunyole lesson, as reading by the pupils progressed, she would punctuate the reading with phrases in English, acknowledging their performance with expressions such as “very good” if the answer was correct, or “sorry” if the answer was incorrect. In addition, to draw the pupils' attention, she used phrases in English, such as “listen!” and then proceeded to give instructions in Lunyole. Pupils also used English to

welcome and greet strangers, including Tembe, and the pupils used “madam” when they wanted to draw the teacher’s attention to select them to do a set task.

In TUPS, where there were multiple mother tongues, translanguaging took on a different form, and teachers used a variety of local languages for diverse purposes. For example, while pupils were encouraged to clap for those who had given a correct answer, those who gave incorrect answers were often ridiculed in Kiswahili. Further, in teaching the sounds of English in the urban school, there was a tendency for teachers to relate the sounds to the local languages in order to make it easy for the pupils to understand. In addition, when a pupil appeared not to be following the lesson, the teacher would use the local language with that particular pupil. Thus, translanguaging was used in a variety of targeted ways to promote learning and provide whole-class feedback by the teacher. Given that there are almost 20 Ugandan languages on the ASb website, with approximately 650 stories available in a variety of translations (Table 1), there is rich opportunity for translanguaging, not only between English and Ugandan languages, but also between one Ugandan language and another. There are also 145 stories in Kiswahili, which is also spoken in Uganda

4.4 Linguistic strategies for classroom management

Inadequate infrastructure was evident in both rural and urban schools in our study, regardless of the medium used for teaching, and Mudodo and Abbo repeatedly mentioned this during interviews. This situation, coupled with the large classes, made individual assistance for pupils very difficult. The demands of keeping order in the crowded classrooms limited the opportunity for pupils to interact with the teacher and with one another. Even the use of small groups was not as effective because the groups remained large (8-15 pupils) and had to share one book, when it was available. Further, the known-answer questions limited the pupils’ choice, voice, and agency in relation to the learning goal. The recitation drills, especially in the urban school, were to enable the teacher to fulfill their management roles rather than their pedagogic ones, given the lack of opportunity for meaningful interaction. The mode of interaction was thus between teacher and class as a whole.

The teachers’ use of gender distinctions to get the pupils to participate in the oral exercises was common in both schools. This was done by giving the boys and girls different tasks, some of which set up competition between the genders. For instance, at BRPS, Mudodo constantly employed this strategy during her lesson. In trying to make the instructions clear, she said and actually wrote in English “boys” and “girls” above each list to be read by each group respectively. The same strategy was used by the teachers at TUPS, particularly during oral practice. Whenever the teachers wanted to reinforce what had been taught through practice, they used choral responses, with boys and girls called upon to respond in separate gendered teams.

While the large classes made it prohibitively difficult for teachers to focus on individual learners, there was greater ease when pupils shared a common language. In BPRS, use of the local language enabled the pupils to communicate freely. Certainly, Mudodo and other teachers relied a great deal on the use of the mother tongue for the purposes of explanation, even when the subject they were teaching was English. In such situations, where there were no books in either the mother tongue or English, creative use of the mother tongue was a common pedagogical strategy. On the other hand, at TUPS, the teachers spent much time explaining the concepts in English, despite the often-limited comprehension of pupils, and there was a lot of repetition and use of choral practice in English. The practice exercises involved a few isolated sentences written on the chalkboard, which had little real meaning for the pupils.

Common to both schools, as pointed out by the headmasters and the teachers, was the challenge of obtaining suitable instructional materials. Further, with rare exceptions, there was little instructional time devoted to collaborative group work in the classrooms observed, and the teachers did not explore opportunities to support the pupils in their learning through exploratory talk. The ASb offers exciting opportunities for an increased range of materials and pedagogical strategies, both for learning and classroom management, as discussed next.

5 The African Storybook and teacher education

Language teacher education is central to educational change in African communities (Makalela, 2009). Teacher education workshops on the ASb can encourage student teachers to explore the ASb stories when they go on teaching practice, and to consider what kinds of questions might provoke discussion among young learners. Student teachers could discuss how they might encourage the children themselves to ask questions, how readers can make predictions about what the story is about from the pictures, and how to use stories for the development of vocabulary and the understanding of verb tense. In this process, the student teachers' multilingual expertise is affirmed and they are in a position to make a substantial contribution to the development and use of local language resources. At the same time, student teachers are improving their own English skills, while having access to many local language resources for teaching reading in their classrooms.

The usefulness of the ASb for teacher education purposes is powerfully illustrated by a 2015 teacher education workshop conducted in a primary teachers' college workshop in eastern Uganda (Welch and Glennie, 2016). The workshop, run by Tessa Welch, the ASb project director, and Tembe, took place in April, 2015. There were approximately 250 student teachers in the workshop, who spoke a variety of languages including Ateso, Lumasaaba, Lugwere, Lusoga, Leblango, Luganda, and Lunyole. The largest number of storybooks the students had read throughout their primary school career was five; many had read only one storybook from Primary 1 to 7. In addition, only 10% of the students had been taught to read in the language they spoke at home. The workshop focused on the use of the story, *Chicken and Millipede*, which was written by Winny Asara, a student teacher at Arua Primary Teachers' College in West Nile, Uganda, and can be found on the ASb website.

Student teachers were asked to read the level 4 version of the story, translate the simple level 1 English version of the story into their local languages, and then "perform" these translations to the whole group. Preliminary support was provided in the identification of stylistic features of a text, such as repetition, sentence patterns, and the selection of words to create particular effects. While students struggled a little with some of the English words in the level 4 version of the story, such as "grumpy", "fuss", "beak", "swallowed" and "burped", it was clear to Welch and Tembe that the students greatly enjoyed the story, and the pictures in particular. After discussing how the story could be adapted for Primary 1 children, the facilitators read the story page by page, and the student teachers wrote each sentence in the new language. When the translations were complete, ten of the 250 students read their translations - a different language each time - with highly positive outcomes: "The other students really enjoyed this - and there were roars of appreciation when a particular student used a clever word or phrase. Clearly the student body is multilingual, and this kind of activity affirmed their multilingualism, as well as their knowledge of their own home language" (Welch and Glennie, forthcoming).

More theoretically, Welch has found the model of identity and investment, developed by Darvin and Norton (2015), helpful in making sense of events at the workshop. The sociological construct of investment, developed by Norton in the mid-1990s as a complement to the psychological construct of motivation (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2013), has now been more fully developed with respect to the constructs of identity, capital, and ideology (Darvin and Norton, 2015). Investment, now included in the Douglas Fir Group framework of second language acquisition (Douglas Fir Group, 2016), addresses a learner's commitment to language learning, and the conditions under which they speak, read, or write an additional language. In addition to asking, for example, whether students are motivated to learn a language, teachers are encouraged to ask whether learners are *invested* in the language and literacy practices of a given classroom or community. Further, 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. In drawing on the 2015 model of investment, Welch notes in a blog post that the African Storybook website "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).

Welch continues her analysis with respect to the power of the ASb website itself, and the ability of the platform to incorporate the languages, identities, and cultural heritages of people whose languages or cultures are not mainstream. Further, because the stories are all in English (as well as in African languages) the website can help to extend the English competence of educators as they engage with a story and reflect on how to mediate and/or translate stories from English into local languages, or from local languages into English. Finally, at the level of ideology, one of the components of Darvin and Norton's model of investment, Welch notes that the presence of many languages on one platform gives a powerful message about multilingualism: "Ordinary users are positioned both as participants and experts in a global process, and can be freed from the constraints of single language prisons or impoverished English backgrounds – investment in the process is potentially huge." (Welch, 2015).

6 Conclusion

As Luke (1997) notes, while earlier psychological perspectives conceived of literacy as the acquisition of particular behaviors, cognitive strategies, and linguistic processing skills, more recent insights from ethnography, cultural studies, and critical literacy have led to increasing recognition that literacy is not only a skill to be learned, but also a practice that is socially constructed and locally negotiated (Janks 2010; Prinsloo and Baynham 2008). In this view, literacy is best understood in the context of larger institutional practices, whether in the home, the school, the community, or the larger society. Further, as Norton (2014b) notes, it is also useful to explore literacy practices with reference to the complex and changing identities of readers and writers, and their investment in diverse language and literacy practices. Her research in a wide range of classrooms in the international community suggests that if readers have a sense of ownership over meaning-making, they engage more actively in the reading process, and develop the identity "reader". Reader investment in the text, and reader identity, more broadly, is strengthened when readers can bring their background knowledge to meaning making, challenge assumptions, and make predictions, thereby engaging with the substance of the text as well as its conventionalized form. While learning the linguistic code of a particular language, and becoming

phonemically aware of the relationship between sound and symbol is important in learning how to read, so too is investment and “literacy engagement” (Cummins 2011).

Data from the Andrea Mudodo and Karen Abbo’s classrooms suggest that large class sizes and limited resources make it difficult for teachers to promote investment and literacy engagement. Nevertheless, the teachers’ use of translingual and multimodal resources was a creative and innovative response to the challenges they encountered in focusing on both form and substance in teaching reading and writing. We have argued in this paper that the African Storybook initiative helps provide the resources needed to promote more active investment and literacy engagement by drawing on the mother tongue as a resource, and engaging in translingual and multimodal practices. While the African Storybook cannot address systemic poverty and global educational inequities, it can help support teachers such as Andrea Mudodo and Karen Abbo, who are striving to transform their large, poorly-resourced primary classrooms, promoting both multilingual literacy and social change. The implications for the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals, formulated in 2015 to “transform our world” by 2030, are promising and exciting.

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