

# **In Our Own Tongue**



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**(BTL)**



**In Our Own Tongue**

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# **In Our Own Tongue**

*Editor*

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“In our Own Tongue” is produced by Bible Translation and Literacy (E.A.). BTL, under the leadership of General Secretary Mundara Muturi, is at present carrying out research and development in 12 of the language groups in Kenya, with the aim of translating the Bible into these languages and promoting literacy among the people who speak them.

Part of the purpose of this journal is to provide a forum in which the field members of BTL can present their tentative analyses of some of the languages spoken in Kenya and invite interaction from other researchers with a view to perfecting their analyses.

The journal is also a forum for sharing ideas among the language projects, for encouraging one another in the work, and for celebrating success.

*Opinions expressed in this journal do not necessarily represent the views or official policy of the editor or of BTL.*

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## Preface from the Editor

Welcome to issue 5. Once again it has been a privilege to receive a variety of articles touching on some of the core issues that we are dealing with in BTL. It is also exciting to see how this journal has begun to stimulate debates in itself. Two of the articles in this issue are inspired by, or make direct reference to articles previously published by 'In Our Own Tongue'. I hope this trend will continue.

*Susan Nyaga* continues our series of articles on Mother Tongue Education, focusing on the reasons why the government's policy of educating children in their MT in the early years of school is still rarely implemented in rural areas.

*Shukrani Magundo's* timely article on financial empowerment stresses the link between poverty and illiteracy, while making the point that literacy classes by themselves will not fill people's stomachs. By encouraging the creation of CBOs and saving and credit schemes, we can assist the financial empowerment of impoverished people groups while at the same time ensuring the stability of our own literacy activities.

*James Ziersch* gives an in-depth analysis of promotion and marketing issues, following from our open debate in this journal. All projects can benefit from a thorough review of this core activity.

*Anna and Magnus Dahlbacka* reflect on the challenge of producing an orthography which is acceptable both to the linguist and to the target community.

Finally, we have an interesting letter from *Barbara Graham* also touching on the problems of orthographies. I can remember how excited we felt receiving a text message for the first time written in Digo. It seemed to symbolise the fact that the written form of the language was accepted and useful to the community.

How easy is it to use other BTL orthographies in email and SMS? Please send me your thoughts and anecdotes, along with articles, reports and responses to any of the topics raised in the journal. The deadline for submissions for the next edition is **30 September 2007**.

## Mother Tongue Negligence in Schools in Kenya

*Susan Nyaga*

### Introduction

Vesa, a seven-year old quoted by Honkala *et al*, (1988, p.249) once pondered on the difference between Mother Tongue (MT) and other languages like this:

*It is so strange; when you learn in a new language, even if you think you understand what those words mean, deep inside you still don't understand. But with your own language, you understand deep inside your innermost self what everything means .*

These sentiments of a Finnish boy coming to terms with the language realities in Sweden represent the voices of many minority children all over the world today, who are struggling with rediscovering their own identities. It has been said that rejecting a child's Mother Tongue (MT) in school is rejecting the child (Cummins, 2005). Cumulative evidence from researches carried out in different parts of the world, have clearly shown that one's MT plays a key role in the cognitive skill development and identity formation of a child (Baker, 2001; Williams, 1996; Cummins, 2000) among others. Yet education reforms in the last few decades often address the issues of language in education as an after thought.

In Kenya, the government supports the education of children in their MT for the first three years of primary schooling. According to the education language policy, MT should be taught as a subject as well as being used as the medium of instruction from Std 1-3 in rural schools (Republic of Kenya, 1976; KIE, 2002). The language policy has however not been implemented amongst the minority people groups in rural Kenya. This has meant that some children have not yet had the opportunity to learn their language, or that some have continued to use materials from other languages deemed to be closer to their own languages. It is against such a backdrop that this article seeks to investigate why mother tongue is

neglected in schools among these minority language groups in Kenya. The article discusses the reasons that people give for neglecting the MT, suggest possible solutions and makes recommendations based on an analysis of how similar issues have been resolved elsewhere.

## **Reasons for negligence**

### **1) Lack of teaching materials in the MT**

This is a major reason for the negligence of MT in schools, not only in Kenya but also other parts of the world (Musau, 2003; Malone, 2003; Muthwii and Kioko, 2003). Kenya is a linguistically heterogeneous society. Of the 50 languages spoken in Kenya, 30 are spoken by minority people groups whose writing systems have not been developed (BTL, 2005). Teaching materials have been developed for only 22 languages but even where materials have been developed, these have been inadequate for sustaining literacy in these languages (Mbaabu, 1996a cited in Musau, 2003). There are also languages that have writing systems but still have no materials developed for use in schools. This is due to a lack of personnel to develop the materials, or if they do, then they may not have the funds to print the books. Teachers therefore find it very difficult to teach a language without instructional materials, especially where they are teaching a language they do not speak. Faced with the dilemma of lack of materials and an unfamiliar language, they often end up abandoning it altogether.

### **2) Lack of MT trained teachers**

Commenting on teacher training for Mother tongue education programmes Dutcher (2004, p. 21) asserts that:

*Success of MT education programmes depends crucially on recruitment of teachers who speak the local language of the community and are comfortable using the language in an academic setting.*

This assertion echoes the role played by native language teachers in steering the success of a Mother Tongue education programme. Most minority people groups are however, characterised by high illiteracy rates. As a result, teachers who are not native speakers are posted into these communities. Since they are non-speakers of the community language, they cannot teach the local language and thus often abandon it altogether. This situation has also been attested to by Malone, (2003, p.13) who says that:

*One of the dilemmas facing endangered language communities that decide to invest their time and effort in a language revitalising bilingual education programmes is the lack of endangered language speakers qualified to teach in the formal school system.*

Indeed, a lack of MT teachers has been and continues to be a threat to MT education programmes amongst the minority people groups. One solution to this problem would be to train native-speakers to teach using the minority language as the medium of instruction, along with developing a minority language curriculum and instruction materials (Malone, 2003)

In other communities, literacy rates are higher but the native language teachers are very few and cannot teach MT in every school, so teachers abandon the subject for purposes of uniformity in the schools.

There are also situations where the schools are staffed with speakers of the local community language but who lack knowledge in the use of MT in academic setting. A similar situation was also established in Nigeria when a study was carried out to assess the implementation of school language policy (Dutcher, 2004). In Kenya, a good reason as to why this happens would be because the teachers did not learn their own MT in schools. For example, Tharaka teachers learnt a neighbouring language in school for the subject MT so they lack confidence to use Kitharaka in a classroom situation.

Another reason for this is that primary school teachers in Kenya are not trained in the teaching of MT (Mbaabu, 1996b cited in Musau, 2003). It is generally assumed that a teacher who speaks a certain MT can teach it, or that a teacher can transfer the skills of teaching other languages into the teaching of MT.

### **3) The language itself**

Most Kenyan languages have several dialects. If a language has dialects, sometimes it becomes very difficult to decide which dialect(s) is/are to be used in the literature. Other times, the dialects may be so

distinct that each would need to be represented in its own right in the literature. Disagreement on the issue of dialects leads people to abandon the teaching of MT altogether.

People could also neglect the use of their language due to its status. Most minority languages are used in very few domains in society. Commenting about minority language use in minority language communities, Cummins, (2000, p.43) says that:

*It can happen that minority group devalues its own schools or refuses to have them because the group is ashamed of itself and its culture as a result of internalising the critical and scornful views of the majority group.*

Mother Tongue is also not examinable at the end of primary school. Teachers see it as a waste of time to teach a subject that will be dropped completely at the end of standard three so they choose to teach those subjects that will be examined at the end of the course. A similar situation existed in Kenya when Kiswahili (currently the national language) was made a compulsory subject in schools, but not examinable. The result was that both teachers and pupils did not take the language seriously, teachers instead concentrated on teaching the examinable subjects at the expense of Kiswahili (Musau, 2003). This same exclusion is being suffered by MT because it is not examinable at the end of primary school.

#### **4) The government**

The government through the posting of teachers has been seen to contribute to the problem of MT negligence. Most teachers are posted outside their home districts to areas where they cannot speak the local language of the pupils (BTL, 2004). This situation of pupils not sharing same MT with the teacher has led to the abandoning of the subject.

Frequent teacher transfers by the government also contribute to the problem of MT negligence to a large extent. This happens because, when a teacher who has been teaching MT in the school is transferred, the school is left with no other teacher to carry on with this. So, schools opt not to teach MT because they do not know who will be transferred or when. Such transfers result in a situation where the teachers and the pupils feel that time has been wasted on something that is not sustainable.

Another way in which the government contributes to the MT negligence in schools is by not doing anything towards the development of minority language groups. The 22 languages that have been developed in Kenya are majority languages and the government has provided teaching materials in these languages. Instead of developing the minority languages, the government designated that these neighbouring major languages were to be taught to minority language children for the subject MT. There are no indications anywhere that the government plans to do anything towards the development of the minority languages.

Moreover, the government has contributed to negligence of MT teaching by designating major neighbouring languages to be taught for the subject MT in minority language community schools. People fear to use other languages their MTs) as they may be breaking the stated policy. Others are content with the government's decision because they assume that the government knows what is best for them. Others have come to hate or devalue their own language as a result of this imposition hence giving it a very low status. This has led to the feeling that, 'The one designated is the best, ours is useless, why even bother to speak it to say the least.' The resultant situation is one where the people cannot speak the neighbouring language hence cannot teach it. They cannot teach their own language because it is 'prohibited' so they abandon the teaching of MT.

#### **5) The school**

Schools close to the district boundaries, those in major shopping centres and those near district headquarters encounter the challenge of mixed language classes. Children in the same class may come from diverse backgrounds and thus speak different mother tongues from each other (BTL, 2004). Teachers faced by such challenging situations find themselves confused as to which language to use as MT in class. They end up deciding that in order to be fair to the children who may not speak the teacher's MT, it is better to abandon it altogether.

Another factor within the school that leads to MT negligence is what is called 'the monitor system'. This is where the children from Std 4 upwards are not allowed to speak MT in the school. An intimidating object (e.g. a chicken's leg) is introduced in each of these classes as the monitor and the pupils are supposed to

monitor one another. If someone is heard speaking MT, he/she is given the monitor, which has a string, and the person holding it should hang it on the neck to show everyone that they have spoken the 'forbidden' language. At the end of the day, the teacher follows through all those who at one point held the monitor and they are punished. Aware of this, the parents resist the teaching of MT because they feel if this language is going to cause their children to be punished at some point, then there is no need for teaching it. They want their children to begin learning the preferred languages early so that they get better at them by the time they get to the grades where they will be monitored (Muthwii and Kioko, 2003).

## **6) People's attitudes**

Parents don't want their children to learn MT because it will not be beneficial when they look for jobs or join higher institutions of learning. Language status is another factor that contributes to the negligence of MT. A language could have a low status due to the uses to which it is put. Most minority languages tend to be used in very few domains in society. This makes the speakers of these languages want to abandon their own languages for those that are more widely used (Muthwii and Kioko, 2003).

As already explained, minority language speakers are at the core of their own language revival and revitalisation initiatives. Developing negative attitudes towards their own language due to pressure from majority language serves to accelerate language death or shift.

The fact that MT is not an examinable subject causes it to be negatively viewed by parents, teachers and pupils and not taken seriously. However, as already explained, the role played by MT in the cognitive skill development should not be overlooked. Negligence of MT on the grounds that it is not examinable could result in poorer performance in other subjects, no matter how much time is spent on them at the expense of MT.

**Possible solutions to the problem of negligence and recommendations will be discussed in the next issue of "In Our Own Tongue"**

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# Financial Empowerment

By: *Shukurani Magundo*

A high proportion of those who live in the small towns and villages in Kilifi and Malindi districts have low levels of education and are poor (both physically and spiritually), they lack food security and they have little or no access to credit facilities and investment opportunities. This therefore renders them vulnerable to many problems. To solve these problems this paper shows how people can be financially empowered by savings and credit schemes through Community Based Organisations (CBOs).

## Observations

When I joined the Giriyama Language Project as a literacy worker I did not know that much was awaiting me. The programme entailed quite a number of things including teaching and supervising basic and transition classes, training basic and transition teachers, selling books, developing reading materials for the learners, organising and running Scripture Use activities such as seminars for pastors, church elders among many other activities.

As I travelled far and wide within Giriyama land, my home land, which includes Kilifi and Malindi districts I came into contact with many different people who made me gain experience in many aspects of life, and even though I knew the problems that my community was and is still facing I came to know them deeper and better while serving as a literacy worker.

Even though illiteracy was the major enemy that I was fighting out in the community it became evident that poverty was also eating my people from all directions and this was evident in that:

Even though the books that we were selling were relatively cheap, twenty shillings per book (KSh.20/=), still most people in the villages could not buy, not because they did not like them but because either they were illiterate or they did not have the money.

The literacy classes depended on volunteer teachers who received training from the project but whenever there was an opportunity somewhere they left. Most of them stopped teaching the basic and transition classes because the voluntary work was not providing them with food, clothing and healthcare for their families.

Some of the adult learners stopped attending the classes because they were expecting ready results, they therefore became discouraged when they realised that they were not getting money or food from the class.

Most of the pastors that we trained or whose churches we visited confessed that even though the congregations were big in some of the churches, the offerings were minimal not because the believers did not want to give but because they did not have enough to give.

In some cases we visited churches and most of the seats were unoccupied. When we later visited and talked to some of those who did not attend church they either said they had no food to eat, good clothes to put on or money to offer at church.

At one time, my colleague and I visited a church. In the middle of the service there passed a lorry outside believed to be carrying relief food, popularly known as *msolo*. On spotting the lorry the congregation left the church to go for the *msolo* leaving the pastor and about four elders.

In 2003 the Giriyama Language Project which had been enjoying the support of Bible Translation & Literacy (BTL) was in the process of publishing the New Testament. The donors were insisting that immediately after the dedication of the New Testament in 2004 they would stop financing the Giriyama Project. Turning to the local church for funds did not yield much fruit. We could see it in the faces of the people and even read through their hearts and minds that they really valued and liked the project and even wanted it to continue so that they could have a whole Bible (both New and Old Testament). We could also see that they loved and valued the literacy programme but they just did not have the financial capacity to support the project.

As a project we had not been able to assist the people to attain financial stability. Coming to learn to read and write was not bringing food to the table leave alone providing money for future use yet the people



were in dire need. Also they could not offer to support the project even though they loved it because they themselves expected to be supported financially. The community was experiencing a lack that they had not prepared for. They were experiencing a famine that they had not been able to save food or money to enable them to survive.

## **History**

Formerly, the people of Kilifi and Malindi districts were subsistence farmers, and in those days the rains were favourable such that people could get a good harvest almost every season. At harvest time the people would harvest lots of cereals, with maize being the main one<sup>1</sup>, and they would store them in granaries. This food would be used sparingly in order to take people through to the next harvesting season. Regardless of the amount of food that one harvested, people would rarely sell it and if they did then they would only sell the excess that did not fit in the stores or granaries. The kind of trade that they used those days was barter trade (where they exchanged goods and services for other goods and services).

As time went by things changed and the system of trade changed. The economy changed to a money economy where people required cash to pay for goods and services. People started to sell more of their crops, rather than keeping it to feed their families for the whole season. This change placed the people in a very new environment within their own environment; they became strangers in their own land, because they did not understand the money economy and they did not know how to exchange goods and services for money leave alone saving money for the future. This resulted in a poor society that had no savings, a society that was not prepared for future economic hardships.

It therefore became evident that the people needed a programme that was also relevant to the current situation. A programme with a long-term value and which would help the people to become less vulnerable. This kind of programme would ensure participation of the local people in planning, implementation, decision making, evaluation and financial contribution so that the right resources are delivered (Pottier, 1993).

## **The best time to begin**

There is an English adage that goes like this, “In times of peace prepare for war”. It is therefore considered unwise for a nation to start recruiting soldiers when their enemies have started advancing.

Saving is a very important aspect in life that requires good planning, and it should ideally be done when there is excess of resources. Alternatively one can decide to cut down expenditure in order to save for a particular project. One does not wait until there is nothing and then save. A good example is the story of Joseph in the Bible<sup>2</sup>. Joseph made a fourteen-year plan that saw the Egyptians through the times of plenty and the times of severe drought. The implementation of Joseph’s plan started at the onset of the first year of plenty of harvest, it did not start at the beginning of the first year of drought, for this would have reflected poor planning on the side of Joseph.

## **Attaining freedom**

It is worth noting that financial freedom, just like any other kind of freedom, be it political or mental, is achieved through struggle and not easily and freely granted, and it is best achieved by gathering local resources for the good of the people. At one Africa Leadership Forum, Olusegun Obasanjo remarked that 'Unless Africa takes the lead in helping itself, nobody will rush to help' (McNamara, 1990). Donor funding, even though it may have helped in some cases it does not always free people, it mostly creates dependency, may propagate laziness among the funded people, and it can make the people feel incapacitated in the absence of donor funding. I think the Israelites rendered themselves too dependent on the Egyptians during the drought and even after by staying in Egypt for a long time, the long-term

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<sup>1</sup> Kilifi district and Malindi district on the Kenyan Coast is the home of the Mijikenda people whose main staple food is *ugali* which is made from maize.

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 41:25-36

effect of this was enslavement of the Israelite people by the Egyptians.

## ***A proposed and tried idea for the people of Kilifi and Malindi Districts***

Applying the information above into the lifestyle of the current inhabitants of Kilifi and Malindi districts it emerges clearly that if poverty is to be kicked out then part of the solution lies in helping people to save from the little that they earn, create affordable credit facilities for them and help them to identify business opportunities that exist within their immediate environs and show them how to tap such opportunities.

I mention immediate environs and the people tapping the opportunities because as Nyerere said, rural development is achieved through the participation of people in a mutual learning experience involving them, their resources, external change agents, and outside resources. People cannot be developed; they can only develop themselves by participating in decision and co-operative activities, which affect their lives (Nyerere, 1968).

This being the case then, people would be organised into groups of between 20 – 50. Within this range the group is easy to manage and run, whereas bigger groups of more than fifty people are difficult to manage and run as experience has taught me. Each group would then be registered as a Community Based Organisation (CBO) at a government department such as the Department of Social Services, and then run a savings and credit programme within each CBO. The members can choose to save on a weekly basis or on a monthly basis, depending on what is convenient to them. On top of the weekly/monthly savings each member contributes a small fee to cater for office expenses.

Using the registration certificate from the government department the CBO can then open an account with a financial institution that charges low maintenance fees such as the Kilifi Teachers Cooperative (KITECO)<sup>3</sup>. Another banking institution that can be of assistance to such CBOs is the Post Bank.

One example of a CBO which is already up and running, is *Chandzo Kisha* in Marafa Division within Malindi District, where each member pays a non-refundable one-time registration fee of KSh.30/=, a weekly savings of KSh.20/= and a weekly contribution of KSh.3/= towards office running. In Kilifi town a similar CBO, called *Tuinnuane*, has similar administrative structures but their one-time registration fee is KSh.100/=, followed by a monthly savings of KSh.100/= per person and a monthly contribution of KSh.20/= towards office running. All monies go to a single account that is let to grow to a point where the members are able to draw loans.

## ***Advantages of the programme to members***

1. It enables people to obtain loans to invest in small-scale enterprises to generate income and create employment for themselves and others. Through the loans people improve their situation and also meet the needs of their families, by setting up a sustainable business (TOGETHER, April-June 2000).

Care needs to be taken here to ensure that the money that is loaned out is used on the right and intended purpose; that is to say if one applies for a loan to open a tailoring shop then the officials of the CBO have to make sure that the money is used on that very purpose and not on a 'liability investment' like throwing a party. The CBO officials need to make frequent visits to members to ensure that their small businesses are flourishing and in case of any problems then the officials note them early enough and come in to assist so that the business may not fail.

2. Loan application and payback process is simple. It is worth noting that people are more attracted to and helped by programmes that offer small loans, short terms of payment, simple loan application and payback processes. As McNamara argues, constraints and excessive controls on growth and development of Africa's entrepreneurs and business people need to be relaxed. Private small- and medium-scale enterprises, can be a potent stimulus for growth in Sub-Saharan Africa and the creativity of small, local enterprises and organisations working at the grassroots must be encouraged and promoted (McNamara, 1990).

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<sup>3</sup> KITECO is a teachers' Savings and Credit Cooperative society (SACCO) that has a banking section whose ledger fees and account maintenance fees are low compared to other banking institutions.

3. Opening a group account helps in that the account maintenance fees are thinly spread out and taken care of by the contributions made towards office running, hence the effect is hardly felt by each individual unlike when each individual keeps an account of their own and bears the whole burden of paying the bank charges alone. If there were one hundred members in a CBO and each of them opened an account individually with a bank that charges KSh.200/= per month then each would have to pay KSh.200/= per month towards the account maintenance fees. That is to say collectively they would be paying KSh.20,000/= per month to the bank not for anything else but to maintain their individual personal accounts. Alternatively, if they kept their money in a single account with the same bank they would only have to pay KSh.200/= to maintain the group account thus saving KSh.19,800/= as a group every month.
4. By each person having his/her personal savings within the group, it is possible for them to monitor their own progress and this helps in ensuring that development is people centred (Oakley, 1991).
5. Banking facilities are brought closer to the people who do not have access to them. Most people live in the hinterland where there is no bank and if they were to get banking facilities then they would have to travel long distances; it seems unrealistic to pay KSh.300/= as bus fare to go to the bank only to deposit KSh.100/= every month.
6. There is a feeling of ownership and a sense of hope for the future because the money comes from the members and no outside help is sought for from the beginning (Carter, 2000) and when individuals want to borrow then they borrow from their CBO whose terms they can regulate to fit the conditions of the members. Members do not borrow from a giant financial institution whose terms they cannot regulate even if they wished to. To the members there is a feeling that the future is secure; a feeling that reduces stress and encourages people to work harder and to even give generously to support community projects, if approached, without fearing to lose the little they have at hand.
7. It serves as a pension scheme for the self-employed and those who have no such scheme. This plays a big role in securing the people in old age.
8. Through the programme, the members receive training on investment, business management, marketing, inventory control and basic accounting procedures. It is also through the programme that people can be helped to see the various opportunities and talents available in the community and how to make good use them to better their lives.

It is true to say that financial empowerment is attained by putting in place a number of activities and in a marginalized and poor society such activities are best done in a group, such as a CBO. Once people are in a CBO, there are many other benefits that may directly or indirectly support their financial empowerment and if the CBO is founded on Christian principles then it makes it easy to administer and to solve disagreements between members. I mention disagreements here because 'groups are made up of individuals who may be willing for a time to submerge their own differences in order to achieve the task but who remain individuals and relate to each other independently of the task' (Rodgers 1996, pg 146).

## **Conclusion**

The structure and running of the CBOs, and the savings and credit scheme within them, borrows much from the Mijikenda cultural way of owning property. Culturally, land is owned by the community but within it each homestead gets a portion called *munda mubomu* which means 'the big farm'. Whatever the homestead harvests from the *munda mubomu* goes to one granary and is shared by all in the homestead. Alongside this each individual in the homestead is encouraged to cultivate a small piece for personal needs, this personal small piece of land is known as *kobo* which means 'small farm for an individual'. We can liken the individual personal accounts that people keep in a group to the *kobo* and the general account and the CBO to the *munda mubomu*.

Some of the savings and credit groups in Kilifi and Malindi Districts are now slightly over two years old and they have started giving loans, good progress has also been made in the savings, and I am convinced that this programme can help empower locals to be financially capable of supporting development projects in the community.

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## A Marketing, Promotion and Sales Strategy for Marakwet (Part 1)

James Ziersch

### Introduction:

Inspired by the discussion articles in previous editions of *In our Own Tongue*, the Marakwet project has undertaken a thorough review of its marketing strategies. This article presents some of the critical issues involved in the whole area of marketing, promoting and selling of our Marakwet literacy materials. Part 2 of this article (to be printed in the next issue) will present strategy recommendations for improved marketing and sales.

## SO FAR – THE ISSUES AND THE PROBLEMS

### 1. BTL– Marakwet vision

What is our vision? Any marketing strategy one has formed needs to reflect the vision one has built or holds to. If a vision is non-existent it is likely that those existent materials and those yet to be produced and marketed will not identify with people's deeper felt needs.

### 2. Which materials?

Before one can promote, market or sell materials you should know what mother tongue literacy materials would be valued by the community. That is, one needs to know what people want, what sells now and what is popular among the people!

### 3. A production versus a marketing approach

There are two major categories or points of view to consider when producing literacy materials. One can hold to a production mindset, (or way of thinking) or one can hold to a marketing mindset. We need to be aware of this as the two different views have very different orientations and outcomes.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Adapted from Marketing Principles for SIL, Keith Sayers, 1975, as quoted in *Lingua Links Literacy Bookshelf*, 2001.

## PRODUCTION- VERSUS MARKET-ORIENTED APPROACHES

Production-oriented	Market-oriented
To want to sell what you produce.	To sell what the public demands.
One stimulates a desire for a specialized product.	One produces for the majority purchasing power.
The market must fit the product.	The product must fit the market.

Obviously we would favour a marketing orientation to our materials since this reflects the vision and furthers the purpose of Bible translation and literacy. We in BTL are NOT merely focused on selling a product. We need the community to share and work with us in gaining materials which reflect the language project vision.

Let us remember and **continually** investigate while asking ourselves:

**Who** or **which** groups are we attempting to reach?

**What** sells well from the presently produced materials?

What sells **well** and is **popular** when looking at non-Marakwet materials?

What are the **reading interests** of Marakwet children, youth, men, women and wazee?

**Who** of the informed people in the community (such as pastors and teachers) can tell us **what type** of materials would benefit the Marakwet community?

### 4. Common faults in awareness and usage of present materials

- Assuming that because materials are presented in Marakwet they will automatically appeal and will immediately be appropriate
- Marketing present materials to groups with no immediate means of implementing the awareness gained from them (e.g. Diarrhoea booklet)
- Not having investigated appropriate titles desired and needed by members of the community, church etc. and thereby missing opportunities for growth and understanding in areas deemed important by the same community
- Confusing marketing with selling (See distinction set out below, with different tasks & skills)
- Inconsistently maintaining sales records or not ensuring sales records are up to date
- Not utilizing the sales records to determine buying and interest patterns so as to plan for future literacy sales and material design
- Not having a sales and pricing policy consistently adhered to.

### 5. Knowing one's materials

Once we know what people desire and then create materials available which the community value, we should then know and be fluent with the content and purpose of every title we're promoting. We also need to know which titles are appropriate for whom. This way we can promote and sell materials to give maximum impact for the audience at hand.

### 6. Marketing and sales issues

As a follow-on from the production versus marketing view mentioned above it is important to realise that marketing is one issue, selling materials is another. We need to recognize the differing roles of marketing and sales and implement them accordingly.

## MARKETING VERSUS SELLING

Marketing	Selling
Relates to the market	Relates to the sales
Concentrates on the total market as well as the acceptability of the product	Concentrates on the personal sale and the local environment

One of the consequences of this is that before outlining a strategy, one should identify **who** can best market and sell these mother tongue materials. Though for example each Marakwet staff member may have been employed to engender and encourage the Marakwet language, some staff will be more gifted in this area than in others. It is therefore more practical and efficient that at least one staff be appointed to head each area of this work. In doing this we will achieve greater efficiency and productivity.<sup>5</sup>

### A. Skills / Awareness of the marketing person

Knowing:

- the language characteristics and demonstrating these from time to time;
- the history of the project and the language's development processes;
- the geography of the Marakwet district and the communication lines between them;
- the different audience groupings for each area;
- the content, purpose and best usage of each title;
- the strengths and weaknesses of the published materials.

### B. Skills /Techniques /Awareness of the Seller

- Knowing the content, purpose and best usage of each title.
- Knowing which type of literature members of the community desire.
- When located in the market place, move throughout the market place more than once, especially in the hour just before closing. Some customers with money left over will buy at such a time.
- Try the approach - "I'll buy your product if you'll buy mine."
- If two people are selling, split up and go in different directions.
- Use a selling psychology: if someone wants to pay 20/= for a book that costs 50/=, present him with a book that sells for 20/=.
- Reading booklets to the customer, choosing the most interesting parts.
- Keep a record of which booklets (and how many of each) are sold for each sales trip so that you will know what are the most popular titles.
- Decide whether or not market days are good selling times and sell accordingly.

### C. Some Tasks of the Marketing Person

- Establishing a pricing and record-keeping policy for all material sales.
- Ensuring all policies are clearly understood and adhered to by staff and seller/s.
- Noting sales trends and patterns and plan and report these to staff.
- Present recommendations about product acceptability, alternative products and alterations as well as future materials to the project leader and staff.
- Creating awareness about products, those in process, or those already produced.
- Relating to the salesperson for planning, sales, areas of distribution, discussions of possible buyers etc.
- Arranging for display of materials - locations and related physical issues.
- Making arrangements for materials to be transported to where they will be distributed and/or displayed.
- Reporting regularly to the Project Leader on planning and implementation issues.

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<sup>5</sup> **NB.** It is worth noting however that each and every staff member needs to be involved in this marketing of the materials at some level, since each can support the work and contribute to a unified outcome, even it is only being a support to those marketing and selling the materials.

#### D. Some Tasks of the Seller

- Creating distribution opportunities.
- Going to where the buyer is located.
- Setting out materials for display.
- Enabling the buyer to view materials with ease and convenience.
- Describing and relating benefits or different aspects of the material/s.
- Demonstrating how the material/s may be used (creating conviction).
- Demonstrating readings of various materials.
- Making simple records of the number, location and type of materials sold.
- Collecting money from sales and keeping simple financial records.
- Reporting back to promotion & marketing staff regarding sales trends, records, difficulties, experiences etc.

### 7. Maximising opportunities and allotting of times for promotion and sales

It is clear that BTL-Marakwet has been quite successful in the last three years in promoting the cause of the language project. We have had numerous sensitisations for the alphabet, a large language and culture event in Eldoret and the usual seminars and a good number of meetings held in village churches. The areas of sales has had less focus, however much has been achieved in this area of promotion when seeing the growing awareness in the community generally.

However it is still surprising and quite alarming to hear of numerous individuals and groups surprised about the work BTL is doing when giving casual presentations and offering on the spot literacy sales. At such times, many have little to no idea at all of the language progress and the materials produced. This should not be so. We need to be constantly and specifically addressing this lack of awareness with a deliberate and carefully planned form of attack.

To be honest, a good deal of our promotion opportunities have come about through casual or incidental meetings or gatherings. Others have been well planned in advance. Of course these casual meetings are a necessary for gaining awareness, but there is an important place for creating more carefully planned promotion and sales. And this is where a marketing planning role is so important for promotions and sales to be successful.

#### Marketing issues/questions: (Tick boxes for checking which are achieved each quarter)

- Do we have members of our own PAC and Literacy Committee actively promoting the language project work (not merely attending meetings and events)?
- Do these two groups have materials for promotion and have they been specifically asked or informed about what to promote and who to encourage in the language work and with the available materials? That is, have we specifically equipped them in the task?
- Have we considered *all groups* represented within the community for our promotions and sales?
- Have we involved numerous other key individuals and opinion leaders to promote the language project work?
- Are we associated with and do we regularly visit key government, education, NGO and Church bodies?
- Have we made contact with and have some degree of influence with health organisations such as hospitals, clinics, prenatal and mother's groupings, NGOs working in this area etc?
- To what extent are we known and have regular interaction with local Chiefs and other government representatives in *every* location?
- Are we known by key Provincial Government figures as well as national representatives, and do we involve them in our visits, giving of material updates and updates of our progress?
- Have we actively involved the same government groups and individuals in literacy class inaugurations, seminars, dedications, fundraisings or any other organized events?
- Do we have a regularly scheduled event where the community can expect to receive literacy programme updates and information?

## 8. A pricing policy

Books and booklets are subsidized in BTL. However it is BTL policy that all such published materials bring a return so that these funds can be used in funding more materials. Once materials are produced there can be a tendency to hand out copies free of charge as a show of generosity and good will. We in BTL-Marakwet have had intermittent times of success in gathering full prices for booklets sold. Prices should never be arbitrarily set due to the seller's own feelings or discretion. Though potential buyers may struggle to pay for materials, the selling of materials (even at greatly subsidized prices) encourages a sense of ownership by the buyer when books are bought, not given away.

Success in this area seems to revolve around having a policy and sticking to it. A project needs to construct such a policy, agree to it as a staff and have approval by the PAC and Language Committees. They should then hold to the policy so that they can see gains in multiple literacy titles and increased variety and coverage for the total language area.

Issues to consider when pricing literacy materials:

- the book's original production cost when produced by BTL (i.e. the number of pages and cover costs);
- the cost of posters and papers when photocopied or printed;
- how old the materials are and the degree of interest/disinterest shown by the buyers (e.g. if there is little turnover of a given booklet/title, then it may be justified to consider reducing the cost of that article);
- when a NT is nearing completion, old scriptural materials will have successively less value as one gets closer to the dedication and should therefore be given a lower price;
- in special instances where materials are given as gifts to government officials and other key persons, these can actively promote literacy and awareness (they should therefore be considered as promotional materials rather than saleable materials).

## 9. Storage and display of materials

It needs to be said that materials stored in a clean, organized and orderly fashion greatly assists the sales and staff persons in maintaining order and in being far more productive. The same can be said for display of materials. Hence it is very important to secure a clean room where materials are shelved away from insects and the ill effects of rain and dust. For example, one should never store materials in their original transit boxes. This is an invitation for insects of all type to invade and destroy booklets. A simple solution is to build storage shelves in a room where the roof does not leak. If there are leaks, this can be easily mended with tar bought at a local hardware store. Shelves should be *off* the ground and if possible, constructed so that less dust settles on them. Shelves should not be cramped or in the dark, thereby inviting termites.

**Regarding material displays** – Some tips to note:

For Permanent Displays

- Display in such a way that titles are clearly visible, not overlapping one another.
- Try to display booklets singly and in a standing position so that they can be easily read.
- Ensure that materials on display are marked in pencil - "Display copy" since they will be eventually become marked and soiled from continual use (these can be later sold at a cheaper price). Do not sell your display copies so that more and more copies are soiled as they are put on display.
- Display at least one copy of every title so that a buyer may see all that is available.
- Use attractive posters advertising the benefits of mother tongue to the church, community, for one's health, etc.
- Regularly dust and reorganize your display materials (it is very unattractive to have a dusty, disorganized display and very few people will want to buy in such an environment).
- Ensure the display is in a good location where people frequently come (people rarely travel a distance to see something new and unfamiliar).
- Ensure there is adequate light and a pleasant environment – maybe mats as one walks in, a reading table to sit at, chairs or a bench outside, etc.



For Displays at Markets, literacy seminars etc.

- Always carry a sample of the main titles, especially popular ones.
- Organize a float of money so that you can easily and quickly give change.
- Read some materials to demonstrate the content of materials and to show how mother tongue can be read fluently and easily.
- Make materials visible on a small mat or table so all can see them.

## RECORD KEEPING OF MATERIALS

### Records of stock

A carefully constructed record sheet listing incoming stock and consecutive stock counts every few months can be kept quite easily. It is also important to keep note of stock taken from the main store and sent to alternative locations or offices.

### Sales records

It is important to record every sale clearly with a date, the person who sold it and the total number of sales for a title. Leaving such records to another time and another place means it is easy to forget. Once forgotten, records can be easily confused and inaccurate resulting in a lack of accountability and often, a loss of income.

## Brief Workshop Reports with some Reflections

*Anna and Magnus Dahlbacka*

The Samburu/Ilchamus project had two orthography workshops in April, one in Maralal (Samburu) and the other in Marigat (Ilchamus). We want to share a bit with you about what happened.

### ***Outline of the workshops***

Both workshops ran for three days each. Each day had its own topic and goal. One day was dedicated to a presentation of tone and suggestions on how to mark them in the orthography. Another focussed on vowels and consonant sounds. The last day was meant for decision making. Our hope was that the decisions would build on the facts presented in the two preceding days. Regarding the way of writing and symbolising the sounds in the language, we based our suggestions on research done by Dr. Doris Payne and Leonard Ole-Kotikash. Anna and Magnus Dahlbacka facilitated the workshops with assistance from Leslie Pinkley in Samburu and Ilchamus and Joel Sheard in Ilchamus.

These were our goals for the workshops:

- To reach people who did not attend a similar workshop in 2005, in order to get a broader base of people who are aware of orthography issues; in particular to reach teachers, women, leaders/politicians, and reviewers.
- To make a decision on how to *start* writing the language as the translation work starts, and to go a step forward in relation to the previous workshop (in 2005) in terms of reaching a tentative orthography.
- To create a positive awareness of the characteristics of the Maa phonology and the implications it has/should have for orthography and to make people proud of having a unique language, which may require a unique orthography.

### ***The unique Maa sound system***

“What is so unique about the Maa language family to which Ilchamus and Samburu belong?” We tried to answer that question together with the workshop participants. It was thrilling to see the peoples’ enthusiasm about discovering features in their languages that not everybody had been aware of. At the same time, it might be good to point out that of course every one was a fluent speaker of their respective language! But I think that noticing exactly *what* makes the Maa phonology unique was something everybody appreciated.

### ***Three distinctive tones***

The most important phonological feature in Maa that carries distinctive meaning is tones. Depending on how you pronounce the words, the meaning changes. These tones are the high tone, which we suggested to mark as an acute accent on the corresponding vowel (á), and the low tone, which we suggested to be left unmarked in writing (a). The third distinctive tone is a falling tone which we suggested to be marked by the circumflex above the corresponding vowel (â). The falling tone only occurs at the end of phrases.

In Maralal (Samburu), a fourth tonal feature also was presented. When two separate high tones come together at the end of a phrase, a downstep-high feature can be observed in the last syllable(s) of the phrase. Downstep-high is phonetically a lowered high tone which is pronounced with a mid or low tone pitch. When we presented this, we used a line above the corresponding vowels (ā) to mark it. This tone is not distinctive in the Samburu language, because underlyingly it is a high tone.

Examples of how tone alone communicates meaning can be seen in these sentences, which without tone marking are ambiguous:

*Nejoki ninche* Yesu can mean (a) they said to Jesus, or (b) Jesus said to them.

*Meisisi Nkai* can mean either (a) May God not be praised, or (b) Praise God.

*Ikincho layieni lai ndaa* can mean (a) We will give my son food, or (b) Give me food, my son, or (c) My son, he will give you food.

*Ltepes* can mean (a) An acacia tree, or (b) Acacia trees.

An example of how the downstep-high appears phrase-finally is seen in the following sentences. Note that whenever a downstepped word is not phrase final, only the underlying high tones surface.

*Kádōl* ‘I see.’

*Kádól ntítō* ‘I see a girl.’

*Kádól ntító nabô* ‘I see one girl.’

### ***Vowels***

Maa has four additional vowels compared to Swahili. We symbolised these with the symbols ɨ, ɛ, ɥ and ɔ. Previously these sounds have been written with i, e, u and o. This makes texts ambiguous, because i, e, u and o are also present in Maa as distinctive vowels. Below are a few examples to illustrate this fact. The word to the left represents the traditional spelling while the words in brackets represent our suggested spelling:

*amit* can mean either ‘to refuse’ (*amít*) or ‘to go dry’ (*amít*)

*mbene* can mean either ‘leaves’ (*mbéné*) or ‘bag’ (*mbéné*)

*rruk* means ‘strong wind’ (*rrúk*) while *rrug* means ‘hump’ (*rrúg*)

*abol* means either ‘to open’ (*aból*) or ‘to pry open the jaw of an animal’ (*aból*)

In the workshop in 2005 it was decided that the barred letters ɨ and ɥ should be used instead of the international phonetic symbols [ɪ] and [u], because the difference between these and the English and Swahili vowels i and u might be hard to see when texts are handwritten. Otherwise the symbols were taken from the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA).

## ***Consonants***

The presentations on the consonant sounds did not involve anything “new”. However, the exception was the so called velar nasal. We suggested that it would be symbolised by ŋ, rather than by the Swahili trigraph ng’. The Maasai orthography used in the Maasai Bible has already represented all the distinct consonants in one way or another. Therefore the lessons on the consonants mainly aimed at agreeing on some spelling rules.

## ***Decisions***

After two days, everybody agreed that tones, nine vowels, and the consonants form the sound system of Maa and are distinctive in meaning. On the third day, when decisions were to be made, it turned out that people did not feel comfortable with the tone marks and the other new symbols. People were willing to make decisions on spelling rules concerning the consonants, but in terms of new, previously unmarked sounds, they were very hesitant to have them in the orthography. Generally speaking most of the pastors turned the new suggestions down, whereas most of the teachers were in favour of them.

## ***Conclusions and thoughts***

The conclusion of the workshops was to start writing the New Testament using the old Maasai orthography, without any changes at the moment. Such decisions can be very discouraging from a linguistic point of view. At the same time it was good to hear that people were willing to learn more about how tones and the previously unmarked vowels work. Thus many people expressed an explicit wish for further training on the “new things”. Somehow, then, one of the major goals with the workshops was at least partly achieved: to create a positive awareness of the characteristics of the Maa phonology, and the implications it has/should have for orthography, and to make people proud of having a unique language, which may require a unique orthography.

We were able to create positive awareness, but the implications this should have for writing down the language was not fully understood and/or accepted by the participants. We look forward to new workshops on orthography issues and to God making these workshops a uniting factor for the community and us as a team.

I want to conclude my article with the wise words of Jacob Njagi, Ilwana project leader, who two years ago concluded his article on an Ilwana orthography issues in this journal with the same words. I think they pretty much summarise the feelings of what the orthography workshops in Maralal and Marigat created in my heart.

*“...it can be noted that orthography making is as much a social process as it is a technically linguistics process. The linguist cannot succeed if he/she leaves the community out, nor can the community manage to develop a satisfactory orthography without the linguist. The two parties must understand that each of them is indispensable in this process and should therefore agree to work together for a better result.” (Njagi 2005:9)*

There is still a lot to be done to reach a satisfactory orthography. We can only do it if we are united in Spirit and truth!

## ***References***

- DAHLBACKA, A. , 2007, *Report of Samburu and Ilchamus Orthography Workshops Including the Facilitators' Reflections. Maralal 11-13 April 2007, Marigat 18-20 April 2007.*
- NJAGI, J. ,2005, “Doing Kiwilwana Orthography”. *In Our Own Tongue Issue 1. p. 8-9.*

## Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I was just in the middle of submitting some Pokomo stories for an anthology that is being put together of African stories in different languages. It underlined for me questions I have had for sometime about orthography. I wanted to write one of the titles in Kipfokomo but it needed a diacritic. I could only put it in by using one of the nine Kenya fonts. Of course the form on which I was inputting the information was not in one of these fonts. I either have to write the information with one of those fonts or just leave out the diacritic.

I have been thinking that while the orthographies that are endorsed by BTL may be linguistically reflective of the language, they may be restrictive if diacritics that cannot easily be accessed are included. Are we in danger of forming a kind of club only accessed by SIL related individuals. How widely do we see the reach of literacy in these languages? For example, as far as I know this email could not include the diacritics needed for the Pokomo orthography. I have heard of Unicode but it does not appear to be as easy as just choosing a font.

Also, is there an official body in Kenya that approves orthography or is it up to each group to use whatever orthography is accepted by a group of people?

I am wondering if it wouldn't be possible and easier to have all the differences in a language indicated by use of combination of letters rather than diacritics which are not that easy to access.

I would be interested to hear the view or experience of others. For example how many people reading this journal use their mother tongue in texting or writing emails? How do they get round the diacritics where the orthography includes this. And do they have difficulty in reading writing without diacritics.

I look forward to receiving feedback on this.

Barbara Graham

***Please submit your responses to this issue as well as any other topic raised in the journal to the Editor (sa.nicolle@sil.org).***

