

In Our Own Tongue



an in-house journal of
Bible Translation and Literacy (BTL)



Issue 4
March 2007

In Our Own Tongue

Issue 4

March 2007



Bible Translation and Literacy (E.A.)

P.O. Box 44456

00100 Nairobi, Kenya

In Our Own Tongue

Editor Alison Nicolle

“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.

Please address all correspondence to:

The Editor
In Our Own Tongue
BTL
P.O. Box 44456
00100 Nairobi
sa.nicolle@sil.org

Contents

Preface from the Editor	iv
Questions that demand answers	1
Propagating a Culture of Reading Through Community Libraries.....	9
Ensuring Realism in Results Based Management	11
Selling Chameleons	15
Discussion Forum: Are we selling ourselves short?	17

Preface from the Editor

Welcome to the fourth issue of 'In Our Own Tongue'. Once again I am grateful to all those who took time to prepare and submit items for publication. The overall emphasis of this issue is on the **Promotion of a Reading Culture** and the crucial role that BTL projects can play in this area.

Barbara Graham addresses some of the key issues that arise concerning the implementation of Mother Tongue Education and robustly challenges some of the assumptions that are made both by educationalists and by our target communities. **John Magundo** makes the case for promoting literacy and education through the formation of community libraries – bringing books to where the people are.

Dale Hoskins' article on project planning, while not strictly on this theme, raises important issues about how we plan our work at the day-to-day level, adjusting for the many 'unknowns' that can influence our work, either negatively or positively. Appropriate sequencing of tasks within a project will help ensure that project staff use their skills effectively. Dale can be contacted directly (hoskins@btlkenya.org) for more information about this method of detailed planning.

Alison Nicolle describes the challenges of trying to tap into the tourist market in order to raise funds for printing Digo books, learning the hard way that "10% of the effort should go on producing the book and 90% on marketing and promotion". This serves as an introduction to our first **discussion forum** where readers were invited to contribute thoughts on the question of marketing and promotion in BTL; *Are we selling ourselves short?*

I hope you find the responses interesting and challenging. I invite you to respond to any of the material in this journal, as well as submitting new articles, book reviews and workshop reports. Contributions of whatever nature should reach the editor by **31 May 2007** (or earlier).

Many thanks and good reading.

Questions that demand answers

Responses to some MTE queries

Barbara E Graham

In the course of gathering data for my study into the ongoing development of the Pokomo Mother Tongue Education (MTE) Programme, I found that I was not the only person asking questions. Many interviewees had questions of their own. As the researcher, and also being closely involved in setting up the pilot programme, I often found myself in discussion about the wisdom and feasibility of MTE, in a country where there are many languages, where English is the language equated with education, and where that language alone enjoys the strong support provided by textbooks and examinations. I will try to briefly outline the issues relating to some of the questions posed to me and list some assumptions that underlie them before giving a personal response. However, it may be helpful to first give a brief outline of the programme.

The Pokomo MTE programme was officially launched in 10 schools in 2004 after two years of materials development. It sought to assist the education authorities in Garsen and Kipini divisions in Tana River District to implement the requirements or recommendations outlined by the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) in the Primary Education Syllabus. In particular, those indicating that for pupils below standard 4, mother tongue (MT), or the language of the school's catchment area, should be the medium of instruction and taught as a subject in standards 1 –3. The programme began at the pre-school level. Books in the Pokomo language were produced and given to the pre-school classes of 10 primary schools after the teachers had been trained to use them in their lessons.

The study I am engaging in aims to explore the impact of the programme on those directly involved in its implementation as well as other stakeholders. A case study approach is used, whereby one school is taken as a case to be studied in depth. Interviews and discussions with a range of stakeholders form the core of my data collection methods, though class observations and documentary analysis are also used.

An immediate impression gained from the interviews was that even though the programme was underway in pre-school classes, most members of the community were not aware of this. Even teachers working in the same school were not aware that the pre-school teachers were using MT in their classes, or that MT books were available. Thus, rather than reflecting reactions to the ongoing MTE programme, responses often reflected reactions to the concept of MTE prompted by the interview itself. Therefore interview sessions frequently included explanations about the programme and the reasons for its existence.

There was some confusion about what MTE entails. Was it teaching the language? Was it teaching children how to read and write the language? Some thought MTE and the transition classes ongoing in some schools, where students who could already read another language were taught to read and write the MT, were one and the same. The idea of teaching curriculum subjects through the MT was a strange concept to many.

Why MTE?

Why MTE was the general question. There were participants who were very enthusiastic about the idea of MTE and supplied their own reasons why MTE was necessary:

- People can learn to read and write their language;
- They can increase their proficiency in the language;
- MTE can act as an antidote to the development of Sheng;
- Teaching in the mother tongue would increase learning;
- It is in line with up-country practice where students who have MT in their curriculum are perceived to be doing better academically;
- Children will come to know the Pokomo language very well from a young age, strengthening the likelihood that, among other languages, they will use the Pokomo language when they grow up;
- Children will learn Pokomo traditions;
- It may lead to the creation of a Pokomo radio station and create job opportunities for using the language;
- It may lead to the general development of the Pokomo community;
- It will guard against the disappearance of the Pokomo language; and finally,
- Because MT is stipulated in the syllabus as a subject and the medium of instruction up to standard 3.

Others, while being positive about the underlying rationale for MTE expressed concern about the feasibility of such an undertaking given prevailing education practices in Kenya. The rest of this paper will attempt to give responses to some of the questions asked by this group.

Why MT when all examinations are in English?

The issue

Examinations are the prime means by which teachers and parents determine the academic attainment of students. Exams are usually multiple choice questions administered at the end of each term. As I understand it, the KPCE examinations at the end of Standard 8 are the only ones centrally produced by the Ministry of Education for primary schools. Other examinations, from pre-school upwards, are bought locally. All these examinations are in English.

Assumptions

- End of term examinations are necessary.
- Exams must be in English from the beginning since the KCPE are in English.
- The language of the exams should determine the language in which lessons are taught so that children may do well in the exams.
- It will be impossible, or too difficult, to change the language of exams.

Response

While acknowledging that exams offer a fairly quick means of evaluating children's learning, I would suggest that there are other ways of evaluating learning, particularly for younger children. Observing and talking with children while they are doing their work, and noting the knowledge they are using to carry out a task is an important way of assessing the progress of their learning. The Primary School Syllabus, on page 129 (K.I.E. 2002) gives this instruction:

The Assessment activities for std. 1-3 should be carried out through the following methods:

- *Listening to pupils' oral answers*
- *Observing, recording and analysing pupil's oral performance/reading tasks/written assignments*
- *Probing or interviewing pupils on their reading/writing assignments.*

This kind of assessment is not dependent upon English and can be carried out informally as the children are engaged in their work. Indeed even under the present system, teachers often need to translate the papers into the MT in order for children to understand what they need to do. This negates the argument that teaching needs to be in English since the exams are in English.

The KCPE examinations occur at the end of 5 years of using English as the medium of instruction and 8 years of English being taught as a subject. In order to help children to fully grasp the concepts that the KCPE will be testing, it is better to ensure that the foundation is well laid, being based on the language they understand best. If the intention is to improve students' proficiency in the English language so that they may better cope with the language of the KCPE examination, attention may more profitably be paid to the methodology of teaching English, than to examinations in English in the early years.

Despite the Ministry of Education's instructions, examinations, even at the lower end of primary school, are such an integral part of the education system that a radical change would need to be effected to see exams give way to a more informal system of assessment. From the teachers' point of view, bought exam papers may be preferred as it releases them from having to prepare exams themselves; other schools use the same exams so results may be comparable; and other forms of assessment may be considered time-consuming. Parents too may be more comfortable with the immediate indication of their child's progress which ranking from exam results provides, especially if their child is near the top.

For a change in exam practices in the early years of education to take place, education practitioners and parents would need to be confident that such a change represents a change for the better. This cannot happen without teachers being trained or given refresher training and ongoing supervision in methods of informal assessment, and ways of reporting this. The acceptance of regular dialogue between parents and teachers will also support informal assessment in that teachers and parents will be able to tell each other what they have observed about a child's development. Informal assessment and parent-teacher dialogue will both be aided if the medium of instruction is in the MT. Teachers could concentrate on the understanding children bring to a task rather than whether or not they produce the "right" answer, and discussions about children's learning could proceed without resorting to English terms, which may have no meaning for parents.

But even if exams are insisted upon, they could be set in the language that is being used as the medium of education. This could be a business opportunity for an entrepreneurial-minded person. At the very least, the system of translating exams into the MT could continue. The current exam situation cannot be taken to be an argument against including the MT in the early years.

Why MT - when there are no MT books?

The issue

The vast majority of books published in Kenya are written in English. One reason for this is that most books (90%) are textbooks aimed at a country-wide market and thus the maximising of profits (Ogechi and Bosire-Ogechi 2002). An argument given for using one language is that this lowers production costs, which will be reflected in the selling price. Currently, textbooks are developed by publishing companies according to the KIE syllabus. If these books are approved by the Ministry of Education, schools are able to buy them. However, even though the syllabus states that from standard 1-3 MT should be used as the medium of instruction and taught as a subject, publishers have not been quick to publish books for standard 1-3 in mother tongues. Before 1997 KIE was responsible for developing textbooks which were published by the state corporations: the Kenya Literature Bureau and the Jomo Kenyatta Foundation. During the 1970s KIE published books for the MT subject in 17 languages, including some of the languages with which I am now involved. I have received differing reports about how widely these books were used at the time. Currently, the books are not available or are not being used in the schools with which I am familiar.

Assumptions

- Commercially published MT books are imperative for teaching in the MT.
- Publishers currently in the textbook market cannot be persuaded to publish MT books since the language communities are too small to make this commercially viable.
- There can be no change to the present situation

Response

Since books are an integral part of formal education, concern about the lack of MTE books is a reasonable one. The publishing field is heavily weighted against MT books, both within and outside of the education setting. The financial returns will be smaller for MT books since MT publishing targets a smaller population with one printing run. Additionally, the communities who would benefit most from MT books have little buying power compared with those highly literate in English. Even the process of gaining KIE approval for school books is an expensive enterprise which larger publishers are able to bear more easily than smaller ones. Despite all this, or perhaps because of it, creative ways of providing reading matter in the MT must be sought.

It is usually assumed that books for schools have to be bought, but it is possible for teachers to supplement bought books, or to ensure the presence of reading material in their classes while waiting for commercially produced books, by generating MT materials themselves. Many teachers already create materials for use in their classes, such as charts and word trees. These are usually in English. Mother Tongue education would simply require that these be written in the MT. Story books, information books and books of words on a certain theme can be written by the teacher, either by herself or in collaboration with her students and others. These books can be displayed in such a way as to create a print-rich environment in classrooms, and to encourage children to engage with the books regularly. Such books need not be expensive to produce. For example, a small book of 4 pages can be made from one A4 sheet of paper folded in 4. Pages of a hardwearing book can be made from shapes cut from cartons and covered with paper. These can then be attached together using string tied tightly. (Book ideas courtesy of Edward Jillo, Acting Project Leader, the Pokomo Language Project).

However there is still a need for commercially produced books. This is why the development and publication of mother tongue books for schools is a major feature of BTL's MTE activities. Cost is an important factor and it is worth exploring the possibility of more cost-effective ways of producing MT books. All stages of the book production enterprise, from commissioning writers, assessing the ideas for each book, the actual writing and editing, preparation of camera-ready copies, costing, marketing and impact assessment would need to be reviewed in such an investigation. Currently, BTL as a publisher, do not envisage a profitable return on the sale of its MT books. This may change with KIE approval of some MTE books since schools will be able to buy these at market price. MTE will undoubtedly be strengthened if the full cost of books can be recouped by sales.

The important fact is that MT books are being produced. Proposals for MTE always include plans for book production. There may not be as many books as in English but the situation is not impossible. KIE, noting the

reluctance of publishers to supply MT books, is in the process of putting together a guide from which language communities may write their own material for the subject mother tongue. This may be helpful in cutting some of the costs. More challenging may be the provision of MT books for other subject areas in standards 1-3 to assist the teacher to carry out the stipulations of the syllabus that the subjects at this level are taught in MT.

Why MT - when classes are mixed?

The issue

The Primary Education Syllabus defines the Mother Tongue as “the first language a child is exposed to or the language of the school’s catchment area” (K.I.E. 2002). This is generally thought to mean that in urban areas the MT can be taken to be Swahili or English while in rural areas the MT is taken to be the dominant language of the area. However some schools located in larger centres of rural areas also argue that the mix in their schools makes MTE difficult.

Assumptions

- MTE is only viable where 100% of a school’s intake speaks the same MT.
- Only one language needs to be officially seen and heard in school.

Response

Schools that have 100% of their students speaking the same language are probably in the minority. Even in small villages, far from urban conurbations it is possible to find families which have migrated into the area from other language groups. How mixed does a school have to be for MTE to be considered not viable? What percentage of the school’s student body, or even members of staff, should be required to be speakers of a MT before a school can begin MTE? One school suggesting MT would be a challenge for them because of mixed languages has over 90% of one language group, with all the teachers being speakers of that language. The syllabus is quiet on the issue of percentages, but in conversation, an education officer suggested that if the school has 80% of one language group then a MTE trial could take place in that school.

However if there are benefits to be had from beginning education in the mother tongue, it seems a pity that 79% of children in a school can be denied these benefits even though theirs is the language of the catchment area. It can be argued that children who have migrated into an area will most likely have learned the language of that area while interacting with children native to that area. Perhaps the question should not be what is the percentage of language speakers necessary to begin MTE but how can we ensure that MTs are not excluded from the curriculum.

Teachers in the Pokomo pilot programme give some helpful examples of how they use Pokomo books in mixed classes. The children from other language groups understood the stories for the most part, but any words or concepts not understood were explained or expanded upon in discussions using whatever language was available. These children were also asked to suggest words or phrases in their languages that corresponded to a word or phrase from the story. In this way all the languages represented in class were acknowledged and valued. The issue of teachers from other language groups being used for MTE affects teachers of pre-school and standards 1-3. It would be helpful if schools were to ensure that mother tongue speakers, or teachers fluent in the language, were assigned to these classes.

There is also the question of mixed dialects in class. The books supplied by BTL so far have been written in one dialect but as more Pokomo writing takes place it is envisaged that there will be other dialects represented. Being exposed to other dialects is an important way of gaining knowledge about the different ways language is used and promoting acceptance of other dialects. The teacher can also model this by accepting the language each child speaks or writes, whatever the dialect.

Code-switching, where a sentence may contain two (or more) languages, is a feature of communication between speakers who speak more than one language. Therefore it is likely that some code-switching will take place in classrooms. There will be times when code switching is discouraged, such as in written material or in a prepared speech. However, where the exploration of ideas is in focus, it should be the idea and not correct production of a particular language that is evaluated.

Mixed classes do not necessarily constitute an obstacle to MTE, especially where one language group forms the vast proportion of the school.

Why MTE - when it offers no employment opportunities?

Issue

“Kenyan teachers and most parents see the usefulness of a language in terms of its future utility” (Muthwii 2004). This statement reflects the response from some interviewees indicating that English is more important than MT because English is needed for employment. MTE appears to offer nothing in terms of possible employment.

Assumption

- Education is primarily for future employment
- Education in English will enhance employment possibilities while MTE will not.

Response

Is future employment the only reason for education? The Primary Education Syllabus lists 8 national goals of education. Among them are those promoting the development of the nation by preparing students to play productive roles in its economy. But there are also goals promoting individual development and self-fulfilment in a range of areas. Such goals focus on the development of qualities and skills a student already has, as well as facilitating the development of new ones. These qualities and skills will not only be useful for future employment but for engagement with life, whether one is employed, self-employed or unemployed. They will be the foundation of new learning, the utility of which will be judged not only by the future, but also on how learners are able to make present use of the knowledge they are gaining.

It is also not true that MT offers no employment possibilities. There are a number of agencies that require people with knowledge of MT. For example, every member of staff in BTL, directly or indirectly, owes his or her employment to the ongoing work with mother tongues. Similarly in Kilifi, a research institute, thought to be the largest employer in the area, requires knowledge of the local MT from its field workers who need to engage with local people. The same may be true of other NGOs who need to communicate well with the people on whose behalf they are working. Other economic activities relating to MT include publishing books and other materials in the mother tongue, sign writing, translating, (both Scripture and other materials), community radio, illustrating MT books, teaching the language to NGO staff, organising festivals featuring MT performances and writing and recording songs in the MT and teaching in and outside of school. Additional ways of earning a living may well be necessary for people engaged in these activities, but as people become more comfortable with using and seeing their mother tongue used in different domains it is likely that the possibilities of economic activity will expand. However future employment opportunities should not be the only reason for evaluating the value of MTE. There are many other reasons linked with wider education, culture, self-confidence and development.

Why MT - when all other learning is in English?

Issue

From standard 4, the medium of instruction in all subjects is English, apart from Swahili which is to be taught in Swahili (K.I.E. 2002). Many private schools use English as the medium of instruction from pre-school. Parents may put pressure on government schools to follow this practice, seeing time spent with any other language as time wasted since, in their view, the ultimate aim is English.

Assumptions

- Children already know their MT. There is no need to further develop it.
- The longer spent learning a new language the better.
- Children will do better the longer they learn English. MT will adversely affect their chances.
- There is no difference between learning a language and learning through a language.

Response

According to the syllabus, MT is given a favourable place at the beginning of primary school. The Introduction to MT section on page 117 states:

Mother tongue is the first language a child is exposed to, or the language of the school's catchment area. This is the language in which children first learn to express their thoughts and develop relationships with their

immediate social environment. Their experience in education, therefore, should provide for their Mother Tongue to enable them to learn and understand the values and concerns of the society. The school should attempt to amplify rather than replace these experiences. (K.I.E. 2002)

The experience of children in school may not reflect the favourable attitude towards MT suggested in the syllabus. MT, if it is used at all, is restricted to lower primary. Students must leave their MT completely behind as they advance in the education setting. Some schools reinforce this by punishing instances of mother tongue use in standard 4 and above. Parents too, whether or not they speak English, may applaud their children more for expressing a few words in English rather than for being able to express complex ideas at length in their MT.

Yet, the recommendation to include MT in education for as long as possible is based upon research from around the world where the medium of education is the second or third language for a large group of children. One study in the United States followed the academic achievement of 700,000 non-English speaking children for 14 years (Thomas and Collier 1997). Some of these students went to schools where they learned through English from the first day. Some learned through their own language for a short time before joining English only classes (“early exit model”), and others continued to have some lessons in their language for a longer time, learning through English and their own language for a while before being taught through English exclusively (“late exit model”). The study found that the longer children were taught through their own language, the better their chances for academic success in English, Mathematics and other subjects. This success continued even when the language of instruction changed to English entirely. An important factor in the success of these children was found to be the school’s provision of a supportive context for the first language. Another large US study reported similar findings (Ramirez. et al. 1991).

In Africa only the Ife Primary Education Research project in Nigeria (1970 – 78) and the PROPELCA model in Cameroon were late exit models. The Ife project used Yoruba as both the medium of instruction and a subject for six primary grades. Findings for this study showed a positive correlation between MT being the medium of instruction and the quality of cognitive and academic achievements (Fufunwa, Macaulay et al. 1989; Ninyi Akinnaso 1993). Currently research into the Kom MTE programme, a PROPELCA project, is being carried out (Yoder 2006). Ninyi Akinnaso (1993) reports that some 32 African countries have either experimented with or implemented MTE policies. From his overview of African studies he concludes that the efficacy of late exit over early exit model is not proven. This conclusion could be questioned since it is based on the comparison of the only 2 instances of late exits seen in Africa.

Many MTE scholars believe that the early exit model, which most African countries have adopted, may not be able to offer the full benefits of MTE, nor the “proofs” sought by advocates (ADEA 2005). The Ramirez study (1991) discouragingly reports that early exit programmes were found to be no more effective than those beginning with English only. A study in Mozambique sought to study the difference between control classes and MTE classes at the end of three years using test results and descriptive responses (Benson 2000). The researcher found that the results of the experiment were “somewhat negative or, at best inconclusive.” She suggested that inadequacies in the model, problems with the design of the experiment, with regulating control schools, and other logistical concerns served to complicate the interpretation of research results. However, the descriptive data provided strong evidence that bilingual schooling may significantly improve educational quality. The responses of teachers, parents and students showed overwhelming support for the programme. Reasons given by parents include the fact that children could read, write and count in both languages, that the value of the local language and culture had increased, and that using the MT made learning easier for the child.

The syllabus in Kenya is an early exit system but there is no reason why MT could not be positively supported in the life of a school even if the medium of instruction remains English above standard three. Notices around the school could be in both languages; school libraries, where they exist, could include MT books; a club activity at the school could be story time where MT books are read and stories told along with follow-up activities; festivals including traditional and newly created MT songs and poems could be instituted, and certainly children should not be punished for using their MT.

As the syllabus, page 117, further states:

The pupil’s ideas and thoughts are in their mother tongue and will continue to be so, long after they have learned to speak English. To be encouraged to think for themselves, the pupils must be helped to do so in their own language.(K.I.E. 2002)

Book 1 of the Kenya Pre-School Teachers’ Activity Guide Series, page 59, also states:

As they enter pre-school most children are fairly fluent in their mother tongue. Therefore mother tongue should be used as a means of communication in the pre-school. ... The child also develops his first thoughts and ideas and learns to express them in his mother tongue. He also develops pride in his mother tongue even in later years.(KIE 1990)

The aim of education is not to replace a person's MT with English so that as they grow he or she is no longer able to think or to speak in their MT. Instead, with their MT well established and developed by being used in many contexts, English can be added as another language they can use, without losing their first language. For some children English will be the mother tongue, or nearly so as they have many opportunities to hear and to interact with English at home. Such children are more likely to be successful in the education system, since they are being educated in their MT. Parents should not assume that just because those children do well, all children, whatever their MT would benefit from an English only curriculum. It is important to develop proficiency in English, but this is more likely to be achieved by focusing on good teaching of English as a second language, while developing the mother tongue, rather than by using English as the medium of instruction from the beginning of schooling.

Questions that need to be asked

The above concerns are by no means the only ones expressed in regard to MTE, but they reflect some of the questions regularly heard. It is my view however that there are other questions which are not often heard but which need to be asked. For example, how well are current education practices that demote MTE serving the needs of the majority of the population? One writer reports that a study into English mastery levels in 2001 showed that 35% of Kenyan standard 6 pupils were not able to recognize basic linguistic building blocks such as some letters and simple words considered the minimum for successful learning in standard 7 (Muthwii 2004). The survey also showed that 77% failed to reach a level considered desirable for successful learning at standard 7. Other worrying points in the same article include the high drop-out rate of those starting primary school, often resulting in the loss of whatever literacy they had achieved while at school, being forced to acquire literacy through a language that is hardly understood. The resulting low literacy rates is thought to be a strong factor in hampering economic take-off.

This last point is graphically illustrated by the results of the Kwale District Literacy Survey conducted by BTL in 2005 (BTL 2005), which rated illiteracy rates in rural areas as high as 70%. The survey found that illiteracy was related to non-attendance at school and high drop-out rates, for which a number of reasons were given. These included: lack of motivation for students who saw no hope beyond standard 8, broken families, early pregnancies and marriages, sickness, parental ignorance and poverty, death of parents, religious issues and child labour. Solutions to illiteracy therefore need to be tackled on a number of fronts. One of these must be a re-evaluation of the place of the MT in learning. If there is a possibility that MTE may be able to positively address some of the above issues, then we should be asking how we can facilitate MTE in our schools and improve the status of the MT in our communities. It is to be expected that raising the educational achievement for a large section of the population will be the result, and that this in turn will have a positive impact on the Kenyan economy.

However, MTE cannot just be about a change of language. Apart from suggesting that academic achievement is enhanced in schools that provide an encouraging context for MTs, the Thomas and Collier study (1997) also reported that interactive classes which used cooperative learning strategies and group work were particularly supportive. Ramirez et al (1991) suggested that the ideal learning environment was one where students had the opportunity to create and manipulate language freely and to engage in more complex learning. However, in their study they found that teachers did most of the talking, speaking twice as much as students, who produced language only when working directly with the teacher, giving simple information recall responses to teacher initiations. In Kenya too, Bunyi's research into MT mathematics lessons (Bunyi 1997) revealed that teachers' questions were mostly closed factual questions needing right/wrong answers, which did not require pupils to use language to construct understanding. Teaching was typified by repetition, choral response, Initiation-Response-Feedback sequences, translation and code-switching. The only difference noted between a lesson taught in MT and English or Swahili was that the teacher spoke more in the MT classes. Perhaps in these classes the teacher felt freer to use the language with which she was most comfortable. The teaching style however still constrained the children so that they were not free to use the language to their fullest capacity. Ramirez et al (1991) indicated that even with the shortcomings of teaching style, the result still showed better achievement for those who learned through their MT for a longer period. Nevertheless, if the style of teaching can affect learning positively or negatively a question that needs asking is: how can we assist teachers to teach in ways that allows students to better use language to assist their learning?

Conclusion

The questions asked by interviewees reflect current education practices, prevailing attitudes and economic realities with which MTE advocates must engage. Only by being aware of these very real questions can we, together with those asking the questions, seek answers for them. Putting ourselves in situations where we can present the claims for MTE will provoke dialogue that will inform us, as well as providing an opportunity to expand on the background to the issues and offer possible solutions. We may need to seek new forums for these discussions. As well as organizing advocacy meetings ourselves, we could take part in meetings and gatherings that form a regular part of other groups' activities. For example, we could offer to teach sessions on using books in the classroom at initial and in-service teacher

training institutions. The books of course would include MT books. We could ask to make a short presentations at meetings of head teachers and other education personnel, meetings of NGOs represented in our areas, health practitioners, women's groups, church groups, tradesmen, parents groups – in short any group of people gathered for whatever reason could become an audience for a short presentation and a question and answer session. At the very least, as well as informing, seeds may be sown regarding the importance of MTE. In addition to advocacy, MTE proponents will need to be involved practically in areas such as publishing, teacher-training, library-development and in partnering with agencies at local, national and international levels, who can make use of, or help to provide, MT materials.

Mother Tongue Education is not an easy option. Its advocates must be prepared to be change agents where change is often resisted. We cannot be satisfied with the status quo. Satisfaction with the status quo may be due to lack of knowledge about the wider picture, or the fact that the information given does not resonate with personal experience or is counter-intuitive. At a recent meeting with education personnel, one person took exception to the high illiteracy rates revealed by a survey. The results did not seem to reflect his experience. So shocked was he by the figures that he refused to accept them until he was told of two other studies which corroborated these findings. Hopefully this person will join efforts to make MTE a reality in his area. MTE is a continuous quest for the best education possible in current circumstances, and where possible and necessary, to help to change those circumstances. As in all things we look to the Lord for His help in this quest.

References

- ADEA (2005). *Optimizing Learning and Education in Africa - The Language Factor*. Windhoek, Namibia, GTZ, UNESCO Institute of Education.
- Benson, C. J. (2000). *The Primary Bilingual Education Experiment in Mozambique, 1993 to 1997*. International Journal Of Bilingual Education And Bilingualism **Vol. 3**,(No. 3).
- BTL (2005). Report on Kwale District Literacy Survey.
- Bunyi, G. (1997). Multilingualism and Discourse in Primary School Mathematics in Kenya. *Language, Culture and Curriculum* **10**(1).
- Fufunwa, A. B., J. I. Macaulay, et al., Eds. (1989). *Education in Mother tongue: The Ife Primary Education Research Project (1970-78)*. Ibadan, University Press Ltd.
- K.I.E. (2002). *Primary Education Syllabus Volume 1*, Kenya Institute of Education, Science and Technology, Republic of Kenya.
- KIE (1990). *Management and Language Activities*. Nairobi, Kenya Literature Bureau.
- Muthwii, M. J. (2004). Language Planning and Literacy in Kenya: Living with Unresolved Paradoxes. *Current Issues in Language Planning* **5**(1).
- Ninyi Akinnasa, F. (1993). *Policy and Experiment in Mother Tongue Literacy in Nigeria*. International Review Of Education **39**(4): 255-285.
- Ninyi Akinnaso, F. (1993). *Policy and Experiment in Mother Tongue Literacy in Nigeria*. International Review Of Education **39**(4): 255.
- Ogechi, N. O. and E. Bosire-Ogechi (2002). *Nordic Journal of African Studies* **11**(2): 167 - 184.
- Ramirez, J. D., S. D. Y., et al. (1991). *Final Report: Longitudinal Study of Structured English Immersion Strategy, Early-Exit and Late-Exit Transitional Bilingual Education Programmes for Language Minority Children*. San Mateo, CA Aguirre International.
- Thomas, W. P. and V. Collier (1997). *School Effectiveness for Language Minority Students*. NCBE Resource Collection Series, National Clearing House for Bilingual Education, George Washington University.
- Yoder, J. B. (2006). *News From the Field - Africa Area*. LITERATI. Dallas, International Literacy Office. **7**.

Propagating a Culture of Reading Through Community Libraries

John Magundo

Most communities in Kilifi and Malindi districts do not have libraries. This detaches the people from knowledge, and becomes a major obstacle in creating and promoting a culture of reading among the people. It is also a hindrance towards creating a literate environment.

Background Information

Realising that literacy is key to development it is by all means necessary to promote it. One way of promoting literacy is to ensure that people have access to literacy materials once they have graduated from literacy classes. This is vital because literacy does not end at attaining the basic reading and writing skills. The need is to develop environments in which literacy can flourish and where 'its value is recognised by individuals, households, schools and communities' (UNESCO, 2005). 'In a country such as the United States, positive background factors, including the availability of reading materials and literate parents, give young students advantages over their counterparts from developing countries' (Greaney, 1996, pg 79).

"Reading materials should be available when needed for the development of language abilities and to satisfy children's interests. Children tend to be naturally motivated to find information in order to respond to self-generated questions. Availability of appropriate reading materials results not only in greater learning of content and the development of information searching skills, but also in personal satisfaction and positive attitudes toward learning. In turn, these positive attitudes determine frequency of use of materials later in life" (Greaney, 1996, pg 110).

According to UNESCO (UNESCO, 2005, pg136) literacy is a fundamental human right and there is need for all parties to come together to ensure that men and women have the same opportunities for access to programmes of continuing education, including adult and functional literacy programmes. Literacy therefore ought to also include access to scientific and technological knowledge, legal information, means of enjoying the benefits of culture and the use of media.

The Community Learning Resource Centre (CLRC)

In order for the common man in the community to enjoy the benefits of literacy, the right facilities need to be within reach and accessible in the community. One way of attaining this is by establishing centres within the community to serve as learning resource centres. The Department of Adult Education has in the past and even now been instrumental in the opening of such centres, but as the land is so vast and the people that need to be reached are so many that the Department of Adult Education cannot do it alone. This calls for other parties to join hands with the Department to ensure that these services are brought closer to the people right in the community.

The Community Learning Resource Centre (CLRC) is a centre for the promotion of literacy, equipped with all or most of the necessary facilities required. The CLRC can aspire to have the kind of facilities that one would find in a modern library in town. It is important to note that being far from town should not mean being detached from knowledge and communication. The power of knowledge that is normally contained in books or libraries can liberate those who live in the hinterland, give them opportunities to make informed decisions, boost their morale and self-esteem and make them not feel inferior to the town dwellers. This is a key tool in the development of the common man, given that "the most effective development is the development of people rather than the development of technologies" (Pratt and Boyden, eds, 1985).

In my vision a CLRC in these districts should be equipped with:

- Story books in Kigiryama, Kiswahili and English. This is to ensure that the community can access reading materials to help them maintain a reading culture and sharpen their language skills in their Mother Tongue and other languages.
- Topical books. These should be as varied as possible to enable the community members to get more knowledge on such topics as psychology, forestry, agriculture, education, etc.
- Books on Rural and International Development.
- Journals, newspapers
- Research papers and reports on any work done within Coast Province that touches on the lives of the people of Kilifi and/or Malindi districts
- Television set, video machine, DVD machine and generator (for areas where there is no electricity) to be used for teaching at seminars and in the schools within the area
- Christian literature

- Other titles that will be helpful to the community

Materials not suitable to be in the CLRC

All material that has a negative impact on good cultural values, community development, literacy promotion and any other aspects of physical and spiritual development. Examples of the prohibited materials are pornographic magazines and tapes.

Beginning a Community Learning Resource Centre (CLRC)

First, the local leadership must be involved and the vision about the CLRC and its benefits shared with them. The local leadership then provides housing and personnel for the CLRC.

Second, a committee needs to be put in place from within the community to oversee the activities of the CLRC, and it would be very helpful and sustainable to have members from the local churches forming the committee. Preferably, but not mandatory, the committee should be composed of some of the officials of a Community Based Organisation (CBO) that is engaged in community development activities.

Third, there is need to identify all the possible partners within the community and bring them on board even before the work begins.

The fourth stage is that of implementation where the local leadership through the committee, and with the help of well wishers and supporters, shall get books and other materials, place them in the CLRC and have the services provided to the community.

Alongside the reading and other literacy materials that shall be put in the CLRC, there should be at least one basic and one transition literacy class attached to the CLRC to help reduce the levels of illiteracy. The learners in this class and any other if possible should be encouraged to borrow books from the CLRC on a weekly basis. The CLRC needs to be equipped to serve people of all calibre: new readers, fluent readers, primary school children, secondary school children, college and university students, teachers, development workers and the general public.

For people to come out of poverty they need to be empowered in many ways, but the most important and best way of empowering the people is to give them knowledge. As the Chinese saying goes ‘Don’t give fish to a starving man but give him the fishing line’; it is therefore imperative for people to get literacy skills if development is to be achieved and poverty to be kicked out of the society. ‘Literacy can be instrumental in the pursuit for development – at personal, family and community levels, as well as at macro-levels of nations, regions and the world’ (UNESCO, 2005). Through seminars and workshops, the community will have to be educated on the importance of reading for knowledge and not only reading for exams as is often the case with many people. The seminars also need to direct people to the CLRC and explain the benefits of it and the kind of materials that are available there. Such seminars need to be held for pastors, teachers, parents and other local leaders. The general public can be educated through public meetings (popularly known as *barazas*).

The local population shall be encouraged to write on issues that touch on the daily affairs of the community. These materials shall be collected and if funds allow they shall be published and placed in the CLRC for other people in the community to read. In principle, funds for the CLRCs should be sought from within the community before external support is sought. This will ensure that the community is contributing to positive change within from within and also ensure sustainability for the CLRCs.

Conclusion

Community Learning Resource Centres are one effective way of propagating a culture of reading among the people of Kilifi and Malindi districts. However, for them to succeed it calls for the local community to own the vision and work towards attaining it right from the beginning. Outsiders need only to come in as supporters and not as key players.

References

- Greaney, Vincent (ed). (1996). *Promoting Reading in Developing Countries*, International Reading Association, Delaware, USA.
- Pratt, Brian and Boyden, Jo. (eds). (1985). *OXFAM Directors’ Handbook – An OXFAM Manual for Development Workers*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK.
- UNESCO, *Literacy for Life*, 2005

Ensuring Realism in Results Based Management

Dale Hoskins – Feb 2007

Each year, project leaders are called upon to plan work for the coming year. We are currently using a framework called RBM – Results Based Management. RBM is an excellent tool for helping the planner see the "big picture." It asks one to look at the desired Impact, and then determine Outcomes, Outputs, and Activities needed to yield this desired Impact. Other systems tend to focus on accomplishing tasks, and with a task focus, the big picture can become muddled. But on the other hand, with one's focus primarily on the big picture, task management is sorely neglected.

As I was preparing the FY07 RBM, I first did a one-page RBM overview for the life of the Orma Project. This was a very useful exercise, but the challenge was then to determine which slice of that admirable long-term goal was achievable for the coming twelve months.

The RBM process helped me to know where we are headed, but unfortunately, it did not help me to realistically estimate how far we could go in one year.

What can we realistically accomplish in one year? This is an important question, and one of which some of our donors expect accurate answers. The key to answering this is good *task management*. Task management requires one to know how many tasks are required to achieve each outcome and output, who will perform them, how long will they take, which order they must be performed, etc. I would like to explain challenges to good task management, and a proposed solution based on the Orma experiment.

Some task management challenges can be planned for explicitly, but many cannot. Examples of problems common in BTL that cannot be planned for include: sickness, employee attrition, failing community support, theft, equipment failure, financial shortcomings, natural calamities (e.g. disease) or unnatural ones (e.g. banditry or tribal conflicts). Although we cannot plan for these, we can take steps to mitigate their effect on us (such as regular computer file backup and insured computers!)

Let's assume the Lord blesses us this year with the best of conditions such that we suffer none of these "un-plannable" problems. Even so, other challenges to realistic work planning remain. Consider the following:

- 1) learning curves How long does it take an employee to learn how to do something for the first time? This challenge is even greater when nobody on the team has done it, or when new employees are involved.
- 2) task dependencies Must a task be finished before another one starts? This common task dependency and is often called "finish-to-start." For example, one cannot send something to be published until the consultant has approved it for publication. Another common dependency relationship is "finish-to-finish". For example, you cannot finish the backtranslation until the translation finished.
- 3) employee (resource) dependencies Does our work plan make best use of all resources, keeping everyone busy, but without overloading a particular employee? Are the required personnel available to meet the scheduled work plan, or is a key employee going to be on leave or busy with another task?

The Orma problem

A few years ago, I worked daily with a team of Orma men, all of whom I knew their abilities and productivity levels. We could adjust to most uncertainties immediately. But in recent years, three of the four team members have been replaced and the team was relocated in another town than me. After this separation, task management became virtually impossible.

The LPM asked me to develop a more detailed work plan for the Orma team. I came up with an *Excel* spreadsheet that was helpful, but difficult to maintain or modify when assumptions changed, so I discontinued this method.

Another problem was the lack of reliable phone and email communication with the team. This is now very nicely addressed with our Celtel phone GPRS internet connections. But even with this, there were still many opportunities for misunderstanding, and I struggled to understand the ability level of our new employees. Realistic work planning and tracking continued to be elusive.

The Orma experiment

After trying several ideas, I finally developed two complementary methods which greatly improved our task management and planning. Each of the "plannable" challenges mentioned above were now addressed: learning curve uncertainties, task dependencies, and resource dependencies. Also, if one of the "un-plannable" challenges confronted us, it is easy to quickly incorporate them into the work plans.

The two methods involve the use of a computer program and a simple one-page *task status report* maintained in a *MS Word* document. The program is *Microsoft Project*.¹ It is a project management computer program designed to help one plan, organize, track, and manage tasks and resources to accomplish defined objectives within specified time limits.

The *task status report* summarizes the progress of ongoing Orma project tasks, providing for each task the responsible resource(s), start date, actual days worked on the task, estimated work days remaining, work status, and completion date. Estimations of remaining work days are realistic since they are provided by the employee doing the work. If he realizes he is working slower or faster than he had previously anticipated, then he revises the estimated time remaining. I recommend this report be updated weekly. See **Figure 1** for an example of a sample *task status report*.

FIGURE 1

Orma Task Status Report

Updated: 31st January 2007

Task	Resource	Start Date	Actual Man-Days	Remaining Man-Days	Work Status	End Date
Titus (Omar&Diba-PT)						
Steps #1-3 (1 st draft)	Omar	090107	2.5d	1.0d	Chap 2	
	Diba	090107	3.0	1.0	Ch2, studied 3	
#4 (AC)	Omar		0d	3d		
	Diba		0d	3d		
#5 (RA)	Omar		0d	2d		
	Mah		0d	2d		
#6 (BT)	Sof		0d	3d		
#7 (RevBT&Prf)	Omar		0d	2d		
	Sof		0d	2d		
#8 (Transmit to TA)	Omar		0d	0.5d		
2 Samuel (Mah PT)						
#1-3 1 st Draft	Mah	051206	3d	0d	complete	090107
#4 AC	Mah	170107	3d	0d	complete	230107
#5 RA	Mah	220107	1.5d	0d	complete	300107
	Sof	220107	1.5d	0d	complete	300107
#6 BT	Omar	180107	4d	0d	complete	230107
#7 (RevBT&Prf)	Mah		0d	2d		
	Omar		0d	2d		
#8 (Transmit to TA)	Mah		0d	0.5d		
#9 (TAIT NOTES)	Diba		0d	7.5d		
Esther (Sofia PT)						
#9 (TAIT NOTES)	Diba	090107	7.5d	0	complete	240106
#10 (TAIT check)	Diba	290107	1.0d	9d	ch1	
	Sofia	290107	1.0d	9d	ch1	
Numbers						
#6 type Numbers 17-28 (BT)	Sofia	190107	4.0d	0d	complete	240106
#6 backtranslate Numbers 33-36	Sofia	240107	1.5d	5.0d	Ch 33	

¹ Purchased from JAARS for about \$45.

Training						
Memorize books of Bible in English by section	Omar	191206	0.5d	1.5d	Prov	
	Sof	191206	0.5d	1.5d	Prov	
	Mah	191206	1.5d	0.5d	2Thess	
Memorize Orma names of OT books	Omar		0d	1d		
	Sof		0d	1d		
	Mah	260107	0.5d	0.5d	Esther	
Translation Principles	Sof	190107	3.5d	16d	ch10	
	Mah	100107	8.0d	15d	ch14	
	Diba	190107	1.5d	4.5d	ch10	

Although the *task status report* is useful as a stand-alone report, it also provides the data needed to update *MS Project*. The former is helpful for short term planning, but *MS Project* is great for looking further down the road, and for adjusting work priorities. The program allows for easy entry of tasks, the assignment of resources and scheduling information to those tasks, dependency relationships, employee leave, etc. *Results Based Management* (RBM) and Orma work procedures form the starting point for *MS Project* data entry. The *task status report* is used to keep it up to date.

MS Project allows for a host of sorting and viewing options to see one's work schedule. Its fundamental view is the *Gantt Chart* (see **Figure 2**). In this example, I have divided the translation of Titus into the tasks defined in the Orma translation procedure. Omar and Diba rough draft Titus together, then they accuracy check it together, then Omar does a Read-aloud check with Mahamud for naturalness, then Sofia backtranslates it and discusses her BT with Omar and Diba. Then Diba transmits the official translation and backtranslation to me for TA checking, and so on. You can see from the Gantt Chart how these various tasks are scheduled, with some starting after others are completed. The completion of Titus in the minimum time is dependent on the availability of these employees at the right time. Our actual *MS Project Gantt Chart* includes many other interrelated translation, literacy, training, and linguistic tasks, but only Titus is shown here for simplicity.

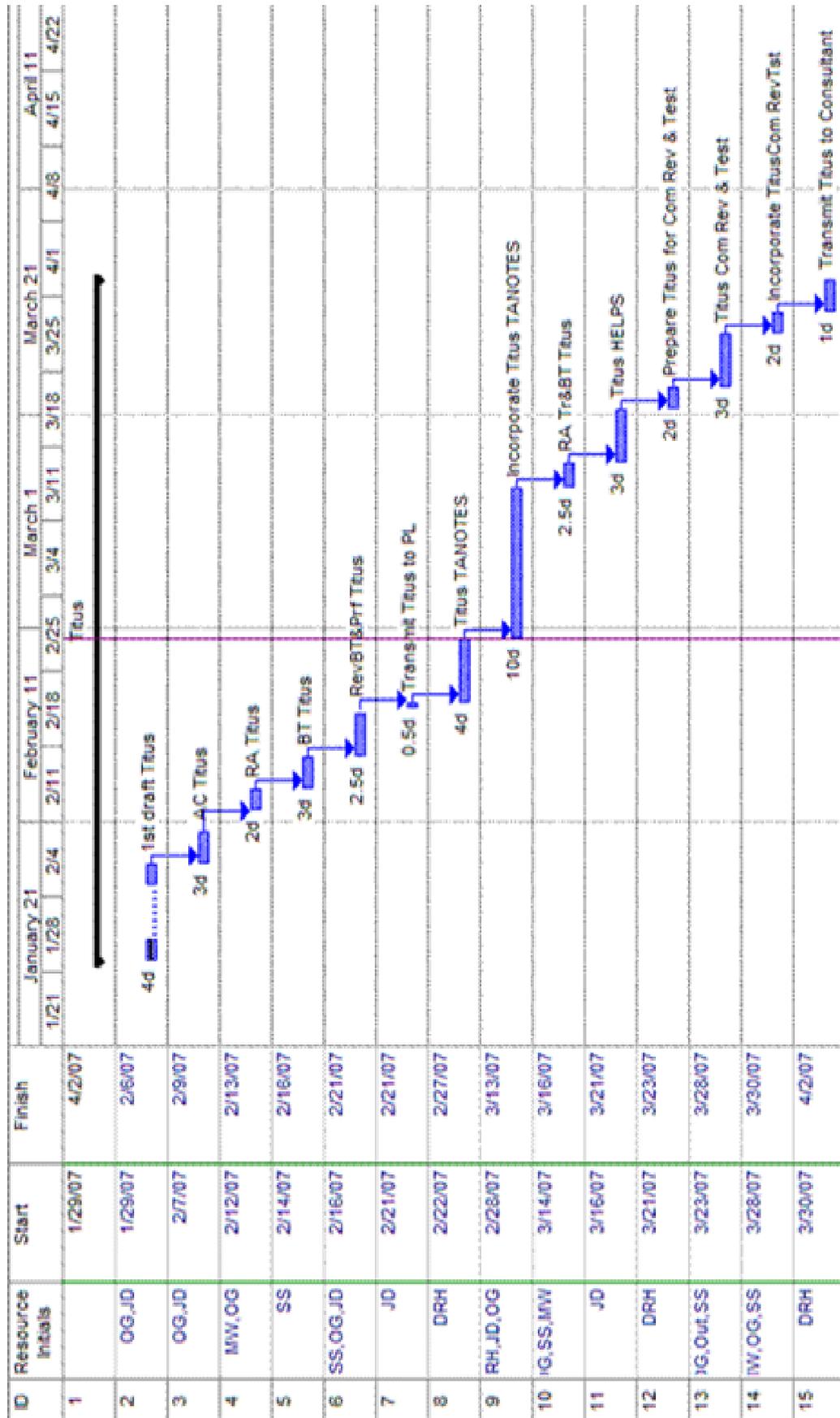
MS Project uses planning methods widely used in industry, commonly called CPM (critical path method). When I noticed that JAARS sold *MS Project*, I learned they had no experience with it. Later, I learned from a friend who is an engineer at *Bamburi Cement*, that it is used there to schedule their maintenance outages. He invited me to their plant to see how they use it. I was soon convinced it could be used for language project planning as well. The program is a bit more challenging than *Excel*, but it is a great tool for those who have learned it.

Can these tools work for you?

These two tools can greatly improve task management if the team and the planner are committed to the process and work well together, for no computer program can provide meaningful results without meaningful input (otherwise, *garbage in—garbage out*, as they say). If the planner does not work closely with the team, then one of the team members must be willing and able to take the lead to ensure accurate task data is transmitted to the planner. In the Orma experiment, this never seemed to work well and so the method was recently discontinued. Nevertheless, I am convinced that this could be of great benefit to some projects.

Figure 2 Gantt Chart

*Hypothetical Titus translation schedule
Sub-tasks based on Orma translation procedure*



Selling Chameleons

*What is the connection between lions and literacy? What do hyenas have to do with health education? The Digo Language and Literacy Project has come up with an innovative way of raising money to fund the publication of books in the Digo language. Author Alison Nicolle explains how she came to write **'Never Provoke a Chameleon: Digo Beliefs about the Animal Kingdom'**.*

BTL has traditionally sought various forms of funding for language projects. Funding mainly comes from outside the country from organizations, churches and individuals with a concern for bible translation and minority languages. Funding from these sources tends to be tied to specific tasks in specific projects (e.g. translation of the NT) and ceases once the given task is completed. Resources generated by extra activities (for example the Ruiru furniture workshop) provide an added boost to the general funds of BTL. Individual projects are also exhorted to seek local funding for project work. As I understand it, this is usually taken to mean raising money through the local church in the form of 'harambees' or special collections. For years, the Digo project has struggled in this area as the church is tiny and impoverished. Other members of the community tend to resist donating to what is seen as a Christian organisation (although on the whole they are happy to purchase and read the materials produced).

Part of the literacy strategy of the Digo project is to get the whole community involved in owning and using the written form of their language. If the language project is viewed as a purely Christian enterprise its appeal to the wider community is very limited. People would be suspicious of anything produced, fearing a 'hidden agenda' of evangelisation. From the late 1990s the project worked hard to produce literature that was of interest and value to the whole community. This included a highly popular ethnobotany, a much increased range of medical titles and a Digo-Swahili-English dictionary. A successful partnership with the Ministry of Adult Education led to an increase in the number of literacy classes and to the positive profile of the project, which led in turn to an increase in demand for Digo books.

As a result of this, the project encountered a problem: stock levels were very low, yet there were few funds to print extra copies. All Digo books are sold at a subsidised price, but it appears that even the limited funds raised through book sales are not channelled directly into the publications budget. It was clear that if this vital aspect of the project were to be sustainable, additional sources of funding would need to be found which were independent of the usual BTL donor funding.

The South Coast of Kenya where the Digo live boasts some of the most beautiful beaches in East Africa and attracts tourists from all over the world. The tourism industry is fairly well developed and there is also a sizeable expatriate population either working in tourism or enjoying retirement at the beach. Increasingly tourists are arriving in Kenya with a desire to "put something back" into the country they are visiting. As they travel to their hotels they can see the poverty around them and often feel uncomfortable if they spend all their time at the beach and the game parks, without coming into contact with "ordinary" Kenyans. New initiatives are springing up to bridge this gap, allowing tourists to become involved in small-scale development projects and make visits into the local community. One scheme is targeted at 'gap-year' students, who spend quite some time among the Digo community². 'Eco-tourism' – combining tourism and environmental conservation is also a popular concept.

Whenever we tell people in the tourism industry about our work and research among the Digo there is always a lot of interest, but we are often amazed at the levels of ignorance and misunderstanding not just among the expatriate population but even more so among the 'up-country' Kenyans living here. Often we would be asked if we had anything in English about Digo, to which we would reply that our task was to produce Digo-language materials, not English ones. In August 2005 the Digo Language and Literacy project held a writers' workshop where participants were encouraged to write about different aspects of their culture. I offered to keyboard the texts. Unfortunately for the most part the information was dull and repetitive – for example long lists of 4-legged animals classified according to whether or not they could be eaten. Once in a while a piece of information would really interest me, such as the fact that eating a certain type of fish while pregnant would produce a baby with bulging eyes, and eating another type would mean that the baby would pull itself forward on its tummy rather than crawling normally. At this point I had the idea of creating an English-language book on Digo culture with the aim of raising both awareness and funds. Choosing the animal theme was not difficult, given that most tourists come to Kenya with the hope of seeing animals on safari. It is also a fairly neutral topic – every language and culture has beliefs about animals, for instance calling someone 'chicken' or a 'bull in a china shop', and so was likely to have wide appeal.

The research itself was also fairly straightforward. I extracted the most interesting information from the workshop texts, gleaned further snippets from the dictionary and pulled out all of the animal-related proverbs from our database of over 400. I also polished up a translation I'd made of a story printed in a Digo storybook a few years previously. I

² Camp Kenya

then compiled a simple questionnaire covering topics such as pregnancy, good and bad omens, witchcraft and farming. My key informants were Juma Zimbu, who had previously assisted with the dictionary and had a proven flair and interest in the culture, and Asha Mwachisuse, one of the workshop writers. They provided the bulk of the additional information which I wrote up and which was then improved with the help of the Digo project staff as well as various friends and visitors. Juma Zimbu led me to a relative of his, Abdull Bwika, who proved to be a more than competent artist.

The book was published in June 2006, and a friend working in another organisation warned me that the hard work was about to begin. “10% of the effort should go on producing the book and 90% on marketing and promotion”, she told me. Unfortunately for me, marketing and promotion were two areas in which I had little or no expertise. I had a number of contacts in local shops and boutiques who agreed to have the books in their outlets. Another friend had wider contacts, and bought 60 from me up front to distribute in Mombasa and beyond. I produced publicity posters and asked a couple of tour operators if they would include the book as a gift to their clients going on local safaris. None were actually willing to do this, but they did offer to sell them as extras to clients. In October 2006 Alliance Jadini Beach Hotel held a media cocktail party at which the book was launched officially. This resulted primarily in a double-page spread featuring the book and the project in *The People Daily* newspaper, and a much-repeated interview with Steve Nicolle and Gideon M’mbetsa on Baraka FM. Following the ‘People’ article, a national distributor agreed to take and promote 50 copies of the book.

To date, however, sales of the book have not been as I had anticipated. Sales through hotels and gift shops here in Diani have totalled around 20 in the first 6 months. Even fewer have been sold through BTL in Nairobi, despite presumed levels of interest in the Digo people as the New Testament dedication draws nearer. Where I have made big sales, however, have been to personal contacts. Around 120 copies have so far been sold directly to friends and supporters in the UK, 20 in the USA and about 100 locally. It seems that if I have a chance to explain the book personally, there is interest. I addressed a local women’s group on the work of the project and sold all the copies I brought with me, having prepared a humorous quiz based on some of the information in the book. I have also prepared a round of questions based on the book which formed part of a local fun quiz night.

It seems therefore that this book doesn’t ‘sell itself’. There are various possible reasons for this, which underlie to me how important the look, as well as the content of a product is if we are to persuade people to buy, especially when there are so many other attractive goods on offer. Due to time constraints, I typeset the book myself and although I am a competent user of desk-top-publishing, I am self-taught and lack professional skills in this area. The book was gift-wrapped in plastic, leading to a longer shelf-life, but preventing people from glancing inside (although most retailers also had a display copy). Although information concerning the purpose and content of the book appeared inside, a clearer ‘blurb’ on the back cover would probably give a faster idea of why they should buy the book. To address this, I later added a sheet entitled “5 Reasons to buy Never Provoke a Chameleon” to the back cover. A further issue, explained to me by another local author, is that books are notoriously difficult to market, so that perhaps my sales figures are comparable to other publications. There are also outlets and opportunities which I did not fully exploit, such as face-to-face selling at hotel ‘Africa’ markets. Such activities require a significant ongoing time commitment and enthusiasm, which I did not always possess.

Despite some setbacks however, I believe the project was worthwhile and has stimulated local interest in the Digo project, as well as providing a useful resource for supporters and the wider community. The first set of reprints of Digo health books using income generated by the book are already available. I would like to encourage other projects to consider innovative ways they can ‘tap’ into the community around them, though I would caution them to get good advice from retailers as to the types of products likely to generate income, and not to underestimate the time and effort involved.

Discussion Forum: Are we selling ourselves short?

In the last issue of In Our Own Tongue, readers were encouraged to debate the issue of marketing and promotion. I am grateful to those who responded in such a positive way. I have tried to pick out the key points that were raised, so that we can all learn from each other. If you have further comments, ideas and suggestions to add to those below, please send them to the editor for inclusion in the next edition of the journal. Try out some of these suggestions and tell us what happened!

Unlabelled comments are from James Ziersch, Alison Nicolle and from Samson K Iha.

Key Points:

We are good at doing what we do

Bible Translation and Literacy is a faith organisation working in several languages in Kenya. Our desire is to see people in small language groups read the word of God in the language they best understand. This cannot happen miraculously but through literacy.

BTL over the years has done a great and wonderful job of identifying communities that were left behind in development and facilitating them to have the word of God by writing the Bible for them.

Marketing is essential and benefits from specialist training

I think marketing is so important that it is worthwhile getting a marketing specialist from a successful company to talk to all BTL staff about what the company does in terms of marketing and why. (Barbara Graham)

The project staff that are in charge of promotion should be sent for special training in public relations and or communication to enhance their levels of production.

New Strategies are being adopted which take on board the need for vision sharing.

Today BTL has opened up and we have adopted a new Literacy strategy (CELLADEV) Centre for Literacy and Language Development. Indeed with this strategy we have begun vision sharing with the communities and though this vigorous activity the community has begun buying into the vision of Bible Translation. What is happening currently is to empower the communities to appreciate the knowledge. BTL is seriously making itself known widely. The big question is whether we are doing it enough.

Allow me to state here that we were doing it to the best of our ability. The shortfall would be that the only one person directly vested with the job of building capacity is the one literacy trainer who finds the job quite overwhelming.

Pokomo in Coast, Marsabit, and Suba have been initiated into the process of capacity building. In all the areas we have gone the projects have been given a face lift and begun afresh.

Marketing is often neglected, especially at project level

BTL Marakwet are becoming increasingly aware of the need to promote materials. However that is easier said than done. If we are presenting a united face to the community, although we may have our own individual views of promoting literacy, we as a total staff need to be united in what we are saying, doing and practising

In the projects like Sabaot, Tharaka, Duruma, Giryama and Pokomo where the New Testament have been dedicated, the work of BTL has spread and has been appreciated. The biggest question is: Have we marketed ourselves enough? This is a very technical question because it is open-ended. In 1996 when I joined BTL as Public Relations Officer I managed to unpack books that had been lying on shelves and sold them within three months.

Marketing doesn't just happen, it needs to be planned and budgeted for

We should have researched and shared the best locations for sales, the most gifted people in the staff and the right venues for promoting and selling materials. Many times it's easier to simply apply an ad-hock type approach to these issues believing that if the books or materials are in mother tongue, they will naturally appeal to most people.

It is important to know what content does not appeal and why?

It is important to investigate issues such as colours of materials that are/are not appealing and why?

When I was PL for Giryama after being hired as PRO, due to my zeal of PR/Marketing I managed to use the Literacy Supervisor and also hired a lady who went to churches, schools and other institutions. She could take orders and then by the use of motorcycle either I or the Literacy supervisor would go to the institutions by motorcycle carrying the lady to lead the way and a box of books. That was the catch! But when I moved up that method died slowly. Marketing of our materials remains a big challenge. Another limiting factor in marketing at the project level is transport which is compounded by limited budget. A member of staff might have saturated the nearby area with materials but wants to go far from that area, his/her hands might be limited by transport.

Do we sufficiently value the product we are selling? If books are funded from donated money, do we try hard enough to recoup these funds through sales?

Is it wise for staff to sell to their friends who often expect materials free of charge or who try and barter to the extent that materials are as good as given away instead of returning fair returns from printing and donor subsidising costs?

The fewer sales we make, the less money we generate to print new books. The smaller our range of titles, the less interested people are likely to be in our materials. If sales are high and we are able to regularly produce new and interesting titles, interest in our stock will be maintained. BTL is more likely to approve book funding for projects with good sales records than for those with poor records.

The policies and practices of other NGOs can be a factor in how successful we are in selling books.

It is vital to understand the impact NGOs have in making their materials free of charge and therefore defeating or negating any policy of paying for materials, something BTL insists upon.

Some successful strategies for marketing are simple and inexpensive

- Up to date price lists (e.g. printed at the back of a calendar)
- Displaying books prominently and attractively in offices
- Having books wrapped in plastic adds a little to production costs, but means that they keep in a better condition, especially if they are being carried around a lot.

In some projects there are deliberate moves to display books at an open shelf. In other projects they are stored in a room and in boxes! Lists of the books are not displayed and no brochures containing published books are in place.

Offices are not usually the best place to make sales (unless you are in a prominent location and use good promotion, for example, posters and price lists outside the building)

It is good to find alternate avenues than an office for sales. Most people we found didn't necessarily want to travel to an office. However if you always travelled with a sample of materials and employed a 'sell as you go' approach, you would attract far more interest and therefore, sales.

When project staff attend meetings they mostly have brochures for vision and mission of BTL, which is excellent but they need to complement these with brochures or Newsletters showing the project progress. Mere talk leaves the community with very little in their minds.

We need to understand who different materials are appropriate for and target sales appropriately

It is important to know the relative reading complexity of the literacy materials and therefore their appeal to various and different groups within the community. Many times for example we may be trying to sell materials such as NT booklets requiring a higher level of literacy competency to readers who are only reading at a most basic level, if at all!

We need to investigate methods of selling. To do this we need to be aware of the material's contents, approach and purpose. It is important to give potential readers and buyers a small précis of the material. We need to know and apply knowledge about what groups the particular materials are designed for.

Target sales of health materials to people attending clinics and hospitals. They often have both time and money.

Not all project staff are equally talented at PR and sales

The big shortfall in BTL policy is in recruiting marketing personnel at the local project level, this I am told is not allowed. The argument behind it is that a Project Leader must always be having a PR skill.

Good sales people are prepared to use their mouths and 'talk up' their product. They make the most of every opportunity and convince people of the value of their product.

During the months of January-March 1996, I remember going to Kaloleni, Malindi, and Kilifi town in Kilifi district, Coast, and displaying books alongside those from very established publishing companies like Oxford University Press, KIE, Jomo Kenyatta Foundation, and Macmillan. Since my books were written in the mother tongue teachers at first sight ignored them but after delivering a small speech they would leave all other books and come to buy those books.

When I was appointed RLPM, I together with Murage went to Mt Elgon or Sabaot project and when we did advocacy a lady educationist vowed to be reading the Sabaot bible and use it for teaching the children.

Promotion of materials does not require a special public baraza nor an official appointment, but some bit of discipline by interrupting with love and on time to catch the attention of a group of elders, school children, or at a bus station people boarding a matatu. Draw their attention and begin reading a story. The reader MUST be humorous, eloquent, natural and entertaining. You would sell books like hot cakes! Try it and see.

We should be Ambassadors of a Reading Culture

People often want to enjoy a live reading of materials before they are convinced it is truly their mother tongue language. This is especially so for those who have little or no awareness that mother tongue work is being carried out in their area. For example, when we produced the first Marakwet calendar employing proverbs for each month, they reacted very warmly and positively, often sharing it with those around, being more ready to practice the simple proverb phrases themselves, though they had never attended a Marakwet literacy class.

Develop a habit of carrying at least two copies of literacy books as we travel either in a matatu or when attending a baraza.

MTE programmes have to involve a lot of community awareness to be successful. Much can be learned from MTE programmes

I want to contribute to the discussion by sharing some experiences from the **awareness and advocacy programmes** for the Mother Tongue Education programmes, funded by the Commonwealth Education Fund.

Until the awareness and advocacy programme was put in place in 2004, the Sabaot project battled with the challenges of attitude and negative belief. This was despite the fact that the pilot MTE programme had been going on since 1998 and the adult literacy programme had been going on for many years as well.

Dr. Jayne Mutiga, Department of Linguistics and Languages, University of Nairobi, carried out an evaluation of the programme in November 2005, and her findings showed remarkable achievements in only the **two years** of vigorous awareness and advocacy campaigns. On the question of "How do we ensure that what we produce is of interest to the people we hope to buy them?" the findings showed that we must ensure that the community has the right attitude and a positive belief by making the community first and foremost aware of WHY are we offering this product/programme. Dr. Mutiga noted that parents have gradually been convinced to appreciate the implementation of the MTE programme in Sabaot. They have begun to embrace the language and consciously advocate for its implementation. The report showed that initially they had a negative attitude arising from a number of issues. To them, education was equal to English. However, the official approach to MTE implementation has softened their stand and attitude.

We should not produce products, however useful we may think they are for a community, and then hope to sell them by using the best marketing strategies. Instead we should ensure that what we produce are of interest to the people through awareness creation. This also answers the question "Do our target communities agree with us?" because she also noted that the parents have been educated on the benefits of the initiative and their participation has been solicited.

On the question of what are the most effective ways of getting the community behind us and enthusiastic about what we are doing, she noted that the use of promotional materials such as T-shirts, calendars, paper

caps, and posters to publicize the programme has facilitated the pupils' parents' active participation in the change of attitude towards the MTE programme.

I just want to conclude by saying that awareness creation is necessary for the success of every programme. It requires resources in terms of funding and personnel and the use of the right tools and skills for awareness creation and advocacy which call for creativity and cultural sensitivity. It must therefore be built into every programme if we will want the community support the programme, buy and use our products.

Cyrus Murage

The community we are dealing with is one such that needs some awareness. Indeed the first time you share the vision and mission of BTL you will get opposition. Mother tongue is seriously opposed by some of the elites. Even education officials find it difficult to accept it at its introduction. The good part of it is when you take time to explain, you easily win support both from the education officials and community level. Whoever is fronting the issue of MTE must have facts concerning Kenya Curriculum, Education Acts and UNESCO. It is advisable when meeting the educational official you meet them as a team. The moment the officers have accepted then meetings with other stakeholders are arranged and easily get a breakthrough.

Vision sharing at a national and international level is more successful

BTL shares greatly its expertise and this has made us known from community level to national level as one of the best providers and partners of Education. We value partnership and have partnered with Ministry of Education/KIE, Department of Adult Education, and UNESCO, to mention just a few examples. BTL partners with universities public and private.

However, we need to be sure that the vision we are sharing at a national and international level corresponds to what is actually happening in our projects. There is the danger of over-selling ourselves at the top level by promising more than we can deliver, and under-selling ourselves in our target communities.

Happy selling!