Identity, Agency, and Adult Literacy in an Unequal Digital World

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Structure of Presentation

- Overview of foundational work on identity, investment, and imagined communities (Norton Peirce 1995; Norton 2000, 2013)

- Towards an enhanced model of investment (Darvin & Norton, 2015)
- Storybooks Canada
- Global Storybooks
- Storybooks Norway/Denmark

Integrating language learner and social world

How to theorize the complex relationship between the language learner & the social world?
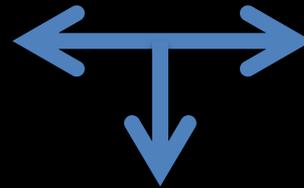
Under what conditions does social interaction take place?

To what extent do social relations of power – racism, sexism, elitism, homophobia – limit opportunities for language learners to speak?

Language, Power and Identity:
Data from Martina in Canada

Norton Peirce 1995

" *I feel uncomfortable using English in the group of people whose English language is their mother tongue because they speak fluently without any problems and I feel inferior.*"

Language and Identity

Every time language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with their interlocutors; they are organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. They are, in other words, engaged in identity construction and negotiation.

(Norton, 1997, p. 410)

Defining IDENTITY

"how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future.

(Norton, 2013, p. 45)

Extending communicative competence

"rules of use"
(Hymes)

"the right to speech"
"the power to impose reception"
(Bourdieu)

I was hoping the course would help me the same as we learnt [in the 6-month ESL course], but some night we only spend time on one man. He came from Europe. He talked about his country: what's happening and what was happening. *And all the time we didn't learn at all.* And tomorrow the Indian man speak something for there. Maybe all week I didn't write any more on my book.
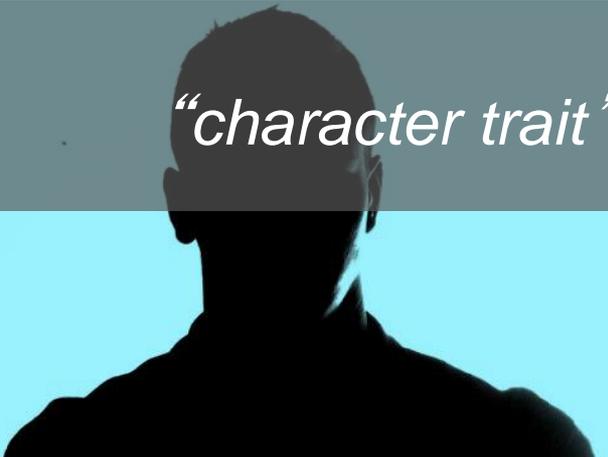
Mai, in Norton, 2013

Motivation & Investment

psychological

"individual"

unitary, coherent

"character trait"

sociological

"social being"

- complex **identity**,
- changing across time and space,
- reproduced in social interaction

centrality of power

Defining Investment

If learners invest in a second language, they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will increase their cultural capital and social power.

Norton (2013)

Symbolic: Language, education, friendship
Material: Capital, real estate, money

Mai's Classroom: Practices Imperfect

- Essentializing identity (ethnicity seen as only salient feature of identity)
- Focus on past not present and future
- Neglect of literacy as central to learning

Question: Was Mai "unmotivated"? What is Mai's **investment** in language learning?

Investment &
Imagined Communities

After work today when I was walking by myself on New Street then I met Karl who was go to the same school with me last course… I just told him about my job and the course I am taking. He said to me, "The good thing for you is to go to school then in the future you would have a job to work in the office.". I hope so. *But sometime I'm scared to dream about that.*

Mai, in Norton, 2013

Reframing questions

Are students motivated to learn a language? Are teachers motivated to teach a language?

Are students and teachers *invested in the language and literacy practices of a given classroom and community?*

(student and teacher identity is central)

Pre-Investment:
25 students, 9 remained.

Post-Investment:
29 students, 25 remained

" I began by imagining what a good English teacher would look like for my students …I altered my practice to reflect what I imagined their idea of a good school would look like". (Term paper).

2015

New economic world order

Evolving theories on language ideologies, linguistic capital, and symbolic competence
(Blommaert, Bourdieu, Kramsch)

Technology Mobility

(Gee & Hayes, 2011, Blommaert, 2013; Vertovec, 2010; Crompton, 2008)

Darvin and Norton, 2015

"Identity and a model of
investment in
applied linguistics"

*Annual Review of Applied
Linguistics*, 2015

Challenges for the 21ˢᵗ Century

- New "social world"

- New forms of "social interaction"

- New ways of conceptualizing "speech"

  CLAIMING THE RIGHT TO SPEAK IN THE DIGITAL ERA

Towards an expanded model of investment

claiming the right to speak given the way power operates materially and symbolically in the digital era

Capital

ECONOMIC: wealth, property and income
CULTURAL: knowledge, educational credentials, cultural forms
SOCIAL: connections to networks of power
(Bourdieu, 1986)

IDEOLOGY
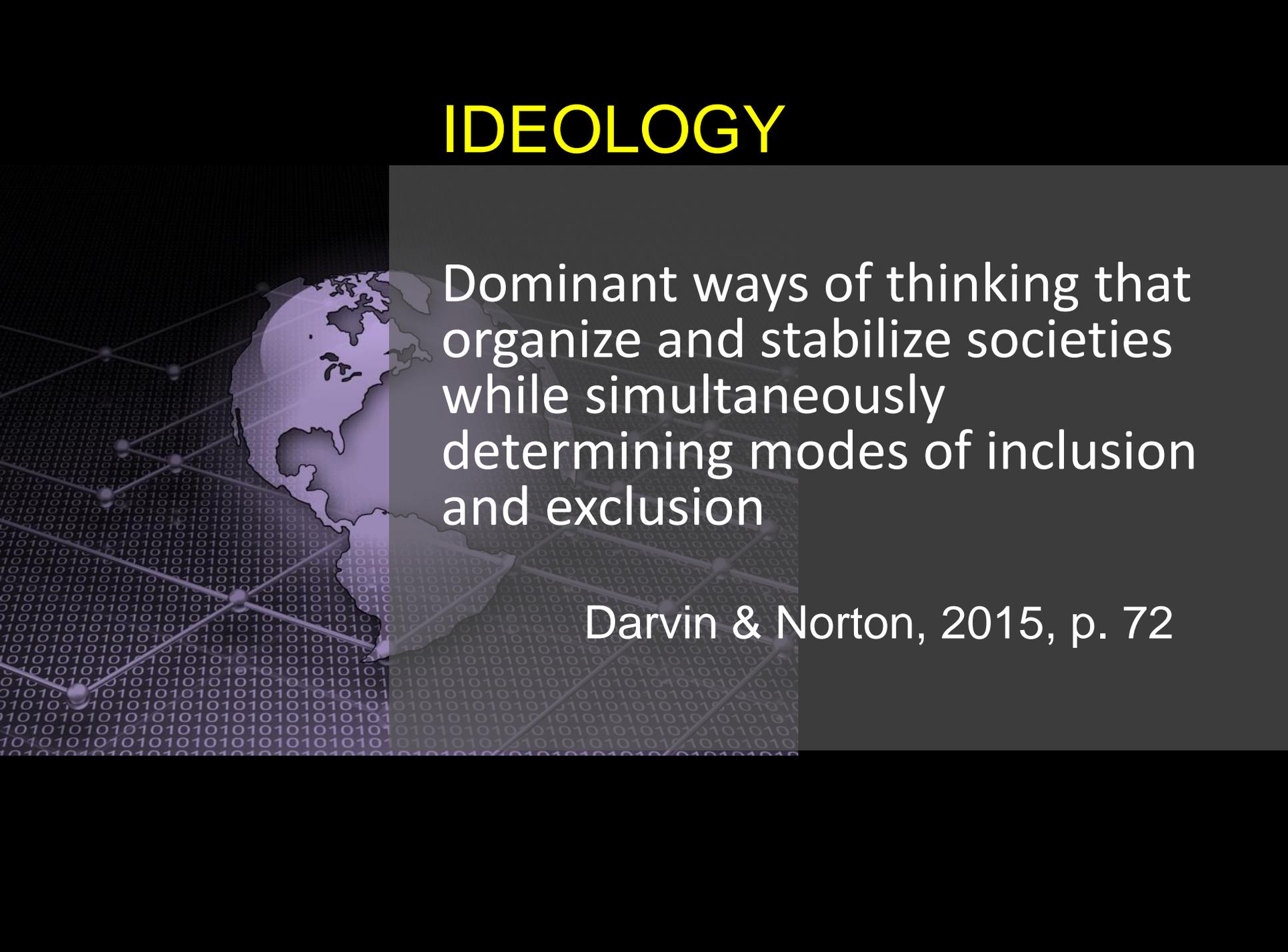
Dominant ways of thinking that organize and stabilize societies while simultaneously determining modes of inclusion and exclusion

Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 72

To what extent are language learners invested in the language and literacy practices of a given classroom or community?
Digital storytelling and family literacy

African Storybook.org
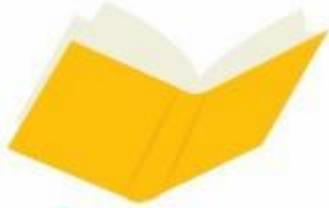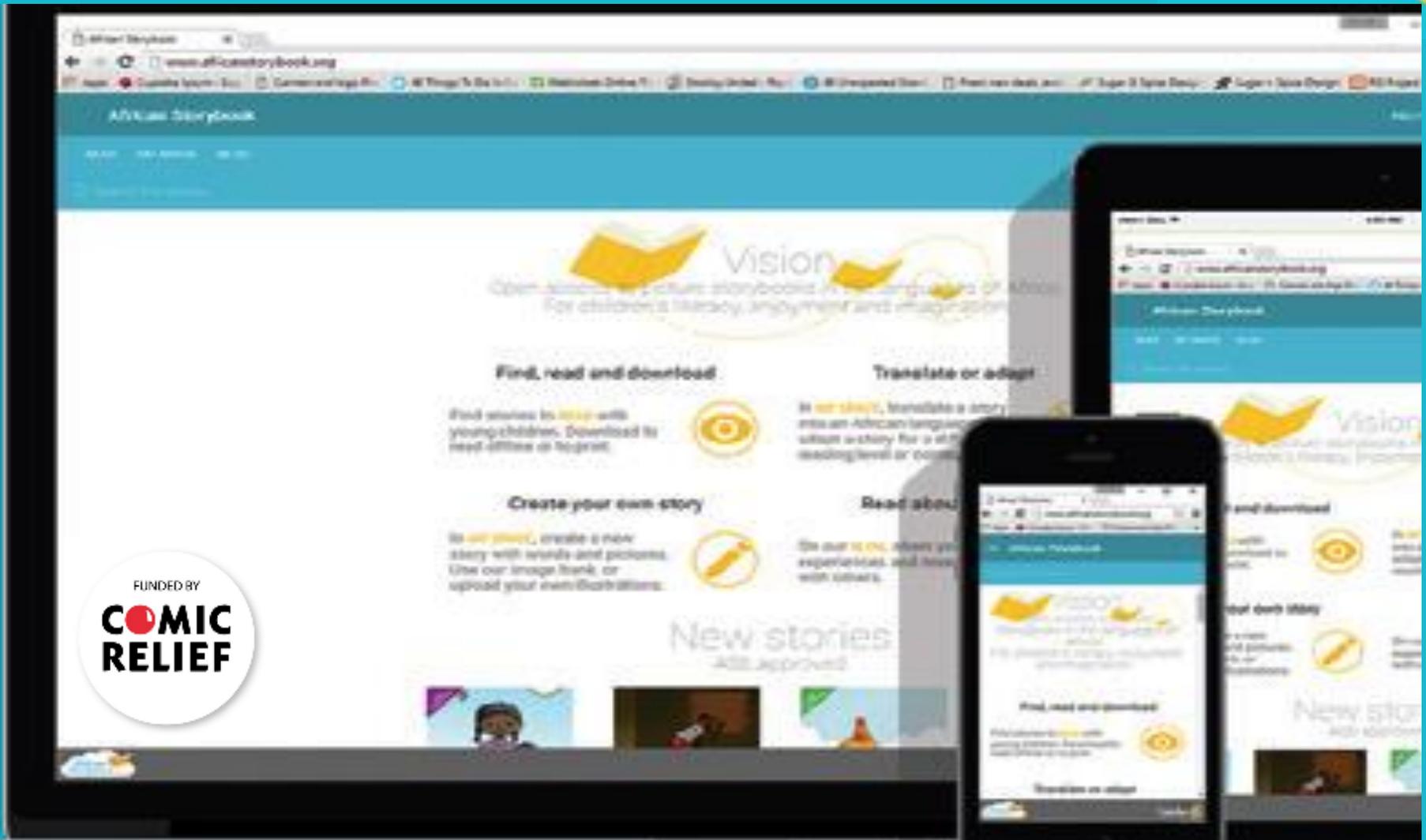
The bed was too short.

The mattress was too short.

Èrɨ vɨlé é'bʉ rɨ
ndráa èrɨ
nɨ́ àlíárʉ́ tʉ̀

Lugbarati and English

WWW.AFRICANSTORYBOOK.ORG

> 1000 UNIQUE STORIES
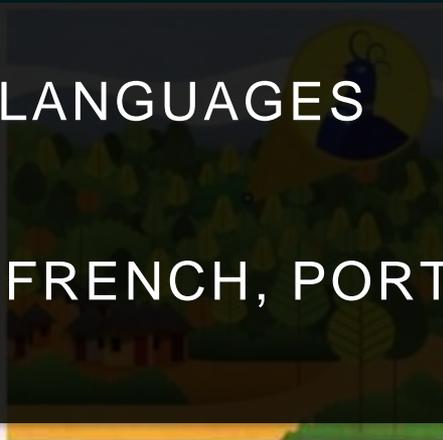> 5000 TRANSLATIONS

>150 AFRICAN LANGUAGES

AND ENGLISH, FRENCH, PORTUGUESE

Abaana bo mubulimbo
by Southern African Folktale, in Lunyole

The Rain Bird
by Joanne Bloch (retold folktale), in English

I enjoy Ninafurahia
by Ursula Nafula, in Kiswahili

Tselane le Dimo
by Lorato Trok, in Setswana

Wapi paka wangu?
by Clare Verbeek, Thembani Dladla, Zanele Buthelezi, in Kiswahili

Anansi gives people stories
by Ghanaian folktale, in English

Anansi and Wisdom
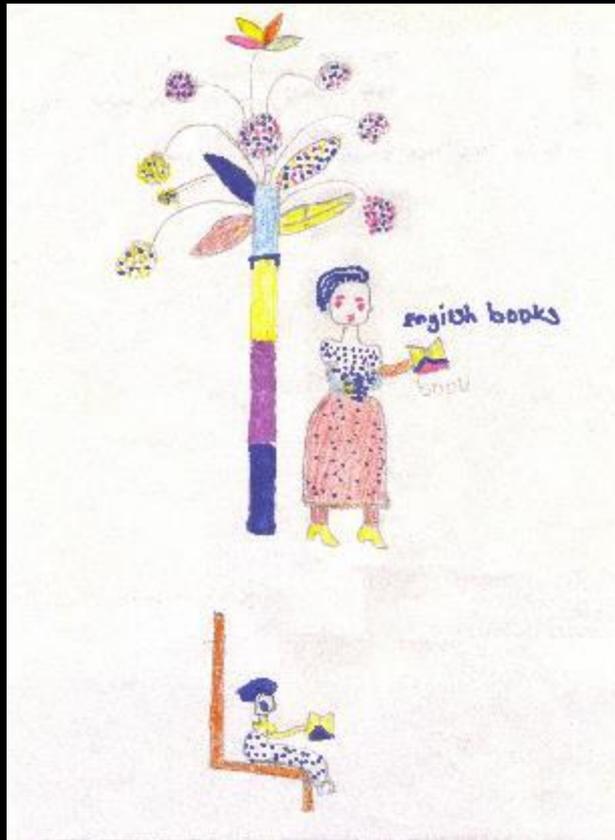by Ghanaian folktale, in English

Curious baby elephant
by Judith Baker and Lorato Trok, in English

MLJ Special Issue, 2017

TECH »

African Storybook Project brings digital books to kids

by Stephen Hui on June 24th, 2014 at 5:24 PM

SHARED 57   f   🐦   🦌   ✉   💬 0

What is Monica's investment in the African Storybook?

How does this investment provide insight into her language teacher identity?

Betty
Ugandan schoolteacher

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

(Andema, 2014)

Democratizing knowledge flows between the Global South and Global North:

The African Storybook and Storybooks Canada and Global Storybooks

Storybooks Canada
A digital innovation for multilingual children

Unique features of Storybooks Canada

- Targets specific needs of a given country

- Makes connection between sound and symbol, to promote early reading and self-directed learning

- Connects to educational policy and practice of a given country
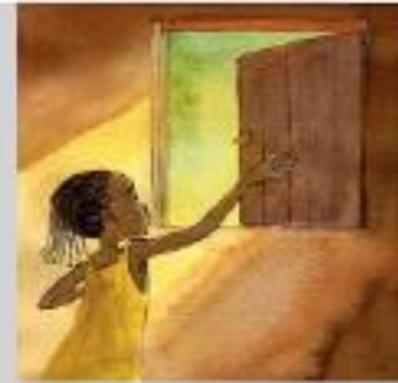
- Focuses on the particular languages of a given community

BILINGUAL TEXTS AND MULTILINGUAL LITERACY

मै पढ़ना चाहता हूँ

I like to read!

Letia Machoga
Bilingual edition: Hindi and English

87_मै-पढ़ना-चाहता-हूँ_bilingual_hi-en.pdf

ज़ामा बहुत अच्छी है

Zama is great!

Michael Oguttu
Bilingual edition: Hindi and English

0095_ज़ामा-बहुत-अच्छी-है_bilingual_hi-en.pdf

"The magic of Canada Storybook Project finding and building, translating, remixing the African Storybook project is the magic we hoped for but didn't know we could dream of. This is the power of open."

Kelsey Wiens, Creative Commons Public Lead, Canada, October 3, 2017

The Storybooks Canada team

- Bonny Norton, Research Lead
- Espen Stranger-Johannessen, Project Manager
- Liam Doherty, Technical Advisor
- Darshan Soni, Website Developer
- Sara Davidson, Indigenous Outreach
- Asma Afreen, Researcher
- Michelle Gilman, Researcher
- Rahat Zaidi, French Immersion
- Approx. 60 volunteers (see Acknowledgements)

- Funding
- UBC Language Sciences
- UBC Research Cluster Grants
- UBC Community University Engagement Support

Questions for Practice and Research

(i) How can community agencies best use Global Storybooks to support the language learning needs of immigrant and refugee families?

(ii) How can parents help their children maintain their mother tongue while learning additional languages?

(iii) How can elementary school teachers support the development of multilingual literacy in classes where many languages are spoken?

(iv) How can we promote home/school connections for immigrants and refugees?

(v) How can Indigenous communities share their own stories?

NIGERIA - *Beta*

https://global-asp.github.io/storybooks-nigeria/

KENYA - *Beta*

https://global-asp.github.io/storybooks-kenya/

BRAZIL - *Beta*

https://global-asp.github.io/storybooks-brasil/

BANGLADESH - *Beta*

https://global-asp.github.io/storybooks-bangladesh/

NORWAY - *Beta*

https://global-asp.github.io/storybooks-norge/

UK - *Beta*

https://global-asp.github.io/storybooks-uk/

37

Please spread the word!