Literacy and Multilingualism in Africa

Kasper Juffermans and Ashraf Abdelhay

Contents

Abstract

A sufficient review of literacy and multilingualism in their full complexity in a continent as immensely and densely diverse as Africa is simply unachievable within the scope of an encyclopedic article if it were not for the relative marginality of Africa in global scholarship. With the exception of South Africa, Africa is not at the forefront of discussions in socio- and educational linguistics. This marginality, however, is greatly undeserved: African sociolinguistic realities are among the world's most complex and there is much to gain if it could inform literacy and multilingualism research more generally. In fact, this peripherality has recently been a productive source for a radical revision of some of the metropolitan epistemologies about multilingualism and literacy.

Literacy and multilingualism in Africa does not form a unified field of research and is approached here rather as a field of practice. As such this field presents a

K. Juffermans (✉)
Faculté des Lettres, des Sciences Humaines, des Arts et des Sciences de l'Education, University of Luxembourg, Route de Diekirch, Walferdange, Luxembourg
e-mail: kasper.juffermans@uni.lu

A. Abdelhay (✉)
University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK
e-mail: aschraff200@gmail.com

24   crucial paradox. African contexts present some of the world's most diverse,
25   linguistically creative, and vital multilingual situations in the world (Vigouroux
26   and Mufwene, Globalization and language vitality: Perspectives from Africa,
27   Continuum, London, 2008) but also feature in the world's poorest literacy rates
28   and are routinely said to lack a literate tradition altogether. This chapter offers
29   counter-evidence for this deceptive view by reviewing Africa's literacy traditions
30   and script inventions but also points at problems and difficulties in African
31   multilingualism and literacies. It then outlines two relatively young fields of
32   practice and/or study that have begun to make major contributions to literacy
33   and multilingualism in Africa: digital literacy and linguistic landscape.

Early Developments

42   "Widespread assumptions on literacy (or its absence) in Africa," Lüpke and Storch
43   (2013, p. 65) argue, "turn out not to be true as soon as one looks beyond literacy in
44   the formal education sector dominated by the official languages." Indeed, some
45   literacies are more visible than others. The issue of (in)visibility should be kept in
46   mind since it directs us to inspect the metadiscursive practices in and through which
47   certain forms of literacy are made "visible" while others are "erased" altogether from
48   history.
49   The development of literacy in Africa certainly predates the histories of European
50   colonialism and Islamic conquest. Some of the world's oldest known scripts
51   emerged in the Nile Valley and are indeed African scripts. These include the
52   Egyptian hieroglyphs and the later Hieratic, Demotic, Coptic, Old Nubian, and
53   Meroitic scripts. In the Horn of Africa Ge'ez developed since 500 BCE as the
54   holy script of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and still is the common script for
55   Amharic and Tigrinya in Ethiopia and Eritrea today. In the Maghreb, (Neo-)Tifinagh,
56   revived from the ancient syllabic script of the Phoenician-Carthaginian Empire, is
57   currently one of the three official scripts in Morocco. We can further add forms of
58   proto-writing such as Nsibidi in southeast Nigeria and the Adinkra symbols of
59   Ashanti in Ghana (see Abdelhay et al. 2014 for details and citations).
60   Notwithstanding these ancient literacy traditions, it was mainly the Christian and
61   Islamic missions that developed vernacular literacies in the Roman and Arabic
62   scripts associated with Christianity and Islam, respectively. These missionary
63   views of literacy invested the Latin and Arabic script with specific cultural images

of "modernity," "clarity," and "reason," as opposed to pre-Christian and pre-Islamic belief and knowledge systems. Paradoxically, at the same time the Latin script was promoted in the West as a "modernist," nonideological tool of written communication. Christian missionaries systematically imbued it with deep cultural meanings in Africa. The same practice was exercised by its relationally constituted rival Arabic script. Colonialism has made an impact on Africa's language and literacy ecology, however also in the indigenous creative reactions it triggered. In the colonial encounter, a series of indigenous writing systems emerged in nineteenth and twentieth century colonial West Africa (Dalby 1967 and later publications).

The oldest and most well-known of the West African invented/indigenous scripts, the Vai syllabary was invented around 1830 by Momolu Duwalu Bukele of Jondu in western Liberia. It is this script that features in Scribner and Cole's (1981) classic study on the psychology of literacy. They remark: "The Vai are extremely proud of their writing system, and they know it distinguishes them from other tribal people in Liberia. They also know that from time to time foreign scholars have come to study the Vai script, and this attention has helped to bring the Vai status in the eyes of their countrymen." Other writing systems in the same region (from present-day Côte d'Ivoire to Guinea) emerged in the 1920s–1950s and include syllabaries for Mende, Bambara Masaba, Loma, Kpelle, and Bété and alphabets for Bassa Vah and N'ko. N'ko is a special case as this alphabet, modelled after Arabic in 1949 by Souleyman Kanté in Kankan, northeastern Guinea, has been disseminated beyond the original Maninka speaking area in northeast Guinea, into Dyula and Bamanankan (Bambara) speaking communities in Côte d'Ivoire and southern Mali, respectively. The social movement of N'ko (meaning "I say") promotes N'ko as a script for the whole Manding cluster, as a harmonized literary koiné that unites Manding peoples across state borders and Anglo- and Francophone divides, and reconnects with their common, precolonial past (Oyler 2005; Wyrod 2008).

Elsewhere, in the Cameroonian Grassfields, the pictographic-syllabic scripts of Bamum and Bagam were devised around 1900. In the Horn of Africa, the Osmanya alphabet for Somali – one in a series of three – was devised around 1920. In the 1950s, the Summer Institute of Linguistics developed a script built around a sampling of the markings on livestock in western Sudan and eastern Chad, the so-called Zaghawa Beria or "camel" script. Several other scripts emerged around independence, including the Garay alphabet for Wolof, the Nwagu Aneke Igbo syllabary, and the Ba and Dita alphabets for Fula in Mali. More recently in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Mandombé script was invented by Wabeladio Payi of the Kimbanguist Church in 1978. Yet more recent are Nolence Mwangwego's alphabet for Malawian languages ("inaugurated" in 1997) and – both in Guinea – the Adlam script for Pular created by the Barry brothers of N'Zérékoré in 1987 and Yacouba Diakité's Miriden alphabet for Maninka created in 2011 (see Abdelhay et al. 2014 for details and citations).

These more recent African script inventions do not seem to have received much scholarly attention so far, and it remains to be seen if they will be able to acquire and maintain sustainable communities of users and generate diversified contexts for its use. With the exception of Vai and N'ko, the majority of these scripts have not

proven to be very viable alternatives for the great imperial script traditions transplanted to Africa as part of European colonization and the spread of Islam. Most of the (West) African invented scripts are indeed "failed scripts" Unseth (2011, p. 27). They were invented mostly not out of practical considerations given that other scripts were already available and locally rooted but out of ideological consider- ations, as "efforts to strengthen ethnic identities" (Unseth 2011, p. 23) or as proofs of dignity in the face of colonial humiliation. Scripts typically thrive through associa- tion with states and empires (consider Greek, Roman, Cyrillic, Chinese, or Devana- gari but also Tifinagh and Ge'ez). These associations with state power are generally lacking or weak in the case of Africa's modern script inventions. Even N'ko, one of the most successful modern African scripts, remains subjected "to a kind of mar- ginalization akin to that of a minority language" (Wyrod 2008, p. 31), i.e., unsupported by an infrastructure of formal education and broadcast media and left entirely in the informal sector.

Ajami is another case in point. Despite being (near to) invisible to educators, language planners, and development activists, a precolonial literacy tradition con- tinues to be practiced throughout those areas that are in the sphere of influence of Islam. This writing tradition uses Arabic-based scripts for the writing of African languages. The historical role of the most influential Ajami scripts – for Swahili, Kanuri/Kanembu, Hausa, Fula, Soninke, and Wolof – is well documented (e.g., Lüpke and Bao-Diop 2014). Their contemporary weight is less well understood, partly because of their survival in informal and religious contexts only and partly because of dominant ideologies of missionaries, language planners, and official bodies that insist on literacy in Roman scripts (Pasch 2008).

We can only conclude that Africa's literacy inventions are in fact rich and diverse, even if they often lacked and still lack support from governments to compete with Latin- and Arabic-based literacies in the public domain. The above discussion has shown that writing scripts in Africa are always "social scripts" and ordered in a way that narrates how different ideological forces and conflicts were inscribed in them.

Problems and Difficulties

With the exception of North Africa and only very few sub-Saharan countries the overwhelming majority of African populations are highly multilingual. In urban and rural areas alike, people speaking (and identifying with) three or more languages as part of their everyday lives are much more likely to be encountered than monolingual or even bilingual people. Multilingualism is so self-evident in much of Africa that the word "bilingual" tends to be reserved for people in command of two former colonial languages irrespective of their repertoire in African languages. Metrolingualism or sociolinguistic superdiversity as a phenomenon is hardly spec- tacular when compared to African sociolinguistic realities. Large parts of rural Africa are characterized by similar patterns of intense diversity sometimes thought to be exclusive for metropolitan areas (cf. Wang et al. 2014). Yet, the same lack of state support for African scripts and literacies observed above also applies to

multilingualism. With some exceptions, African states do nothing substantial to support or promote multilingualism or the learning and teaching of African languages. Yet African multilingualism thrives as nowhere else, despite a nearly complete lack of infrastructure supporting it. This is in stark contrast with the everyday monolingualism that prevails in Europe despite all the efforts and investments, at supranational level mostly, to promote multilingualism.

Whereas African multilingualism may serve as a positive model (Lüpke and Storch 2013), African formal education certainly cannot. Critiques of African education are abundant (e.g., Dumestre 2000) and – ironically – not rarely seen in connection with linguistic diversity. What appears as highly successful in informal domains is seen as the very problem in the formal education system built on European ideas about language and society. Many sub-Saharan states therefore settle for a postcolonial status quo in their national education systems, endorsing former colonial languages (English, French, Portuguese) as only or dominant languages of instruction at the cost of unacceptably low learning outcomes and high dropout rates. Decades of international arguments in favour of mother tongue education are passionately ignored. Time and again literacy programs and multilingual education policies fail to move beyond the mere rhetoric of policy texts (Omoniyi 2003; Stroud 2001). The debate on African languages in education may be fuelled by *fallacies* as Obanya (1999) points out, but given their sustainability and purchase over time and across the continent, we should perhaps also suspect valid reasons for this structural resistance.

The following example is illustrative. Juffermans and Van Camp (2013) analyzed an English/Mandinka interpreted focus group discussion with parents, teachers, and community leaders on the question what local language should be used as medium of instruction once the new education policy would be implemented in their school in rural Gambia. The policy text prescribed that "during the first three years of basic education (grades 1–3), the medium of instruction will be in the predominant Gambian language of the area in which the child lives" (*Education Policy 2004–15*). Throughout the discussion the interviewees stated their support for the new education policy but collectively avoided choosing which language should be chosen, no matter how the interviewer phrased the question. The most obvious candidates would be Jola and Mandinka, two languages with a complex historical relationship. In not choosing the interviewees made a statement against compartmentalizing African multilingualism which they conceptualized in the singular as *moo fing kango* (black people's language, in Mandinka) as opposed to the researcher's plural conceptualization of *local languages* in English.

This example suggests that introducing local language(s) in Gambian schools should be done without determining what part of the local multilingual repertoire should be used as this would imply excluding other parts of that same local repertoire, formalizing existing inequalities in multilingual patterns, and essentializing relations between Gambian language communities. It further suggests that mother tongue education is a Eurocentric construct and that there are passionate reasons for keeping African multilingualism out of the formal education system. "The insistence on 'mother tongue education'," write Lüpke and Storch (2013,

196   p. 273), "is harmful, because it creates attitudes and expectations that are not in line
197   with the lived linguistic context, just as the insistence on the exclusive use of the
198   colonial languages in formal contexts has." Asking a community to choose which of
199   its languages should receive institutional support is like asking a mother to choose
200   which of her children should be given new clothes. Makoni and Mashiri (2007) have
201   argued in this respect that language planning in Africa best proceeds without a
202   construct of language, or if that is too radical, with an African, flexible construct of
203   language.

Major Contribution 1: African Digital Literacy

205   In October 2014 several news media headlined that there are now more mobile
206   phones than people in the world. Figures from the UN's International Telecommu-
207   nications Union (ITU) show that while access to fixed-line telephony has remained
208   stable or even moderately declined (at 1.5–1.3 %), access to mobile phones in Africa
209   has risen spectacularly in the last decade: at the turn of the Millennium, only one in
210   fifty Africans had access to a mobile phone (de Bruijn et al. 2009, p. 11), in 2005 this
211   was one in eight, in 2008 one in three, in 2011 one in two, and in 2013 two in three.
212   Several countries that ITU collects data for show figures of over 100 % indicating
213   that on average people maintain more than one mobile phone line. Whereas many
214   African countries (Eritrea, Burundi, Ethiopia, Madagascar) do rank low, third on this
215   list, after Macau and Hong Kong, is Gabon with 214 mobile-cellular telephone
216   subscriptions per 100 inhabitants. Several other African countries (e.g., Botswana,
217   South Africa, Egypt, Ghana) are also above the 100 mark (www.ntu.int).
218   Mobile phones and smartphones with Internet connections introduce a broad
219   range of possibilities for communication and social relations that bring about social
220   changes and development. De Bruijn et al. (2009, p. 14) note that the mobile phone
221   is "an instrument of power, capable of positive and negative outcomes like a double-
222   edged sword. Even if evil, the mobile phone is perceived as a necessary evil –
223   something that has become and should stay as part and parcel of the communication
224   landscape of Africa and Africans rural and urban, at home and in the diaspora." They
225   refer to mobile phones as "the new talking drums of Africa." Digital technologies are
226   appropriated into local contexts and integrated into everyday life and make it easier
227   to relate over distances and across towns, countries and continents, redefining centre-
228   periphery relations in the process. Africanist scholarship, however, warns us to see
229   this new connectivity as a naïve global village utopia counteracting all inequality and
230   poverty (McIntosh 2010) or as an alternative for physical mobility and migration.
231   Quite in contrary, Burrell (2009, p. 153) emphasizes, "the Internet has not
232   transformed young Ghanaians' migratory impulses into the kinds of information
233   practices often promoted by governments and development institutions. Instead, the
234   Internet has provided new resources for seeking migration opportunities and increas-
235   ing one's mobility."
236   Turning to literacy and multilingualism now, it has been noted that through
237   texting and instant messaging mobile phones open up a niched domain of written

238 communication that challenges and changes conventional spelling practices. In
239 Europe, this has been cause for some consternation over falling standards and loss
240 of verbal hygiene in writing. In Africa, in contrary, language scholars recognize
241 mobile phones' potential to promote African language literacy from below, i.e.,
242 away from formal education and top-down language policy and planning.

243   Drawing on a corpus of text messages from Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria,
244 Senegal, and South Africa, Deumert and Lexander (2013) note that writers draw
245 on local as well as global linguistic resources within their multilingual repertoires to
246 perform a range of emotional and romantic meanings. The examples they show
247 clearly go beyond monolithic orthodoxies and the authors resisted the temptation to
248 quantify their corpus in simplistic counts of codes. Instead, their analysis builds on
249 the assumption that English and French are integrated into local ecologies of
250 language as much as Nouchi, Wolof, and isiXhosa are and that contrasts are
251 exploited to negotiate subtle differences in meaning as strategically relevant in,
252 e.g., courtship discourse. Their quantitative analysis shows that in the Anglophone
253 African countries (Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa) nonstandard spellings are more
254 ubiquitous when compared to British and American text message corpora, both for
255 globally attested texting abbreviations and for eye-dialect spellings. These nonstan-
256 dard spelling features are creative word-play invested into impression management
257 through "textual linguistic dexterity" – nimble-fingeredness and translanguaging
258 virtuosity on a small keyboard. In her study of ideologies surrounding text messag-
259 ing among Giriama in urban Kenya, McIntosh argues that rapid code-switching and
260 condensed, abbreviated English "does not emerge simply from hurry" but are
261 "means of 'showing off' that one is 'modern' (*ya kisasa*), 'developed,' 'fashionable,'
262 'Western,' 'dot com,' or a 'town boy.'" Interestingly, both Deumert and Lexander
263 (2013) and McIntosh (2010) indicate that nonstandard or condensed orthography
264 applies to the former colonial languages only: "African languages, on the other hand,
265 are usually spelt out in full and the texts are appreciated by readers as being 'special'
266 [indexing] sincerity and seriousness as well as respect" (Deumert and Lexander
267 2013, p. 541).

268   Using a reflexive ethnographic perspective in a study of mobile phone literacies
269 in a post-apartheid township in South Africa, Velghe (2014) comments than many
270 nonstandard features in text messaging are nonetheless norm-governed orthographic
271 forms that requires an (informal) learning trajectory. The textspeak she analyses is
272 predominantly done in "global medialect" (McIntosh 2010) based on English but
273 with localizing accents in Afrikaans and isiXhosa. Despite its hybrid and seemingly
274 chaotic appearance, it is possible to make mistakes against the (unwritten) rules of
275 Cape Town textspeak just as it is possible to make mistakes against the grammar of
276 Standard English or Afrikaans: "one has to be as literate to read or write textspeak as
277 to read or write standard English and one entering this new communicative envi-
278 ronment has to become 'literate' in this new repertoire if one wants to be regarded as
279 a participant" (p. 83).

280   The examples Velghe discusses are messages sent to her and represent a mix of
281 English and Afrikaans but exclude instances of isiXhosa. This may be seen as
282 evidence for the flexibility of the digital multilingual repertoire in function of the

283 addressee. Exploring the digital repertoires of Senegalese on a diaspora web portal,
284 Mc Laughlin (2014) similarly finds that Senegalese circumscribe their broader
285 individual repertoires by limiting themselves to those linguistic resources in their
286 repertoires that are shared by the community, i.e., French and urban Wolof. Linguis-
287 tic resources not shared in the diverse community break through only minimally and
288 are restricted to emblematic functions.
289   These varied studies on digital literacy practices suggest that mobile phones and
290 the Internet carve out a new domain for multilingual writing in which African
291 languages feature more prominently than ever before in predigital genres such as
292 letter writing. In this digital space, a new register seems to be in formation. Their
293 findings also suggest that this digital register of African multilingualism is quite
294 pragmatic, making use not primarily of the ethnic languages but a flexible repertoire
295 of the most widely shared linguistic resources circulating in the given context.

Major Contribution 2: African Linguistic Landscapes

297 A second field of practice holds similar opportunities for African multilingualism
298 and literacy and the study of it – linguistic landscapes. Whereas digital literacy is
299 new both as a phenomenon and as a field of study, linguistic landscaping is only new
300 as a scientific methodology or field of study, the phenomenon being as old as writing
301 itself. Linguistic landscape refers to visible language or meaningful objects that mark
302 the public space, comprising public notices, road signs, advertising billboards, shop
303 signboards, graffiti, and any inscription or text in the built environment. Linguistic
304 landscape studies opened up a new approach to multilingualism, enabled by the
305 availability and affordability of digital cameras with practically limitless storage
306 capacity. Early days linguistic landscape studies tended to be rather positivistic in the
307 sense that it was primarily concerned with counting occurrences of different lan-
308 guages in a given multilingual space in order to measure linguistic diversity or assess
309 the vitality of minority languages. However, the field quickly expanded to include
310 broader semiotic, critical, and ethnographic concerns and methodologies.
311   Several studies of African linguistic landscapes have appeared and contributed to
312 linguistic landscape research; at the same time linguistic landscapes have become
313 typical ingredients of monographs on language and literacy in Africa (e.g., Higgins
314 2009). Lanza and Woldemariam (2014), for instance, analyze phenomena of lan-
315 guage contact in the linguistic landscape and in educational materials against the
316 background of the new policy of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia. This policy, with
317 Eritrea and South Africa one of the most progressive policies for multilingualism in
318 Africa, consists of decentralizing administrative powers to ethnically based regions
319 and is meant to emancipate ethnic and linguistic minorities through changes in the
320 medium of instruction at primary school, in the media, and the linguistic landscape.
321 In these domains, Amharic makes place for the respective regional languages. These
322 planned changes in the status of Ethiopian languages are accompanied by rapid
323 corpus planning for the hitherto practically unwritten regional languages, including

script and orthography development (graphization) and the preparation of teaching materials.

Lanza and Woldemariam focus on two important regions – Tigray in the north and Oromia in the centre and south of the country. They find that signs with a regional focus are in Tigrinya/Oromo and those with a national focus are in Amharic, both often accompanied by English, "the de facto official second language." Trilingual signs or combinations of Amharic and Tigrinya/Oromo are rarer. They also find that the dominance of Amharic goes beyond the surface level of the signs but is also attested at a deeper, grammatical level: signs in Tigrinya/Oromo often follow an Amharic word order. Where noun phrases in spoken Tigrinya/Oromo are normally "left-headed" in the LL they are often "right-headed" as in Amharic or in English (compare *writing instrument* vs. *instrument writing*). Similar patterns were found in Tigrinya/Oromo school books. The researchers suggest that these contact phenomena point at the covert prestige of Amharic which for centuries was the language of literacy through Ge'ez (see above). Sign writers and authors/translators of the educational materials not only draw on their spoken language competence in the respective regional languages but also on their written language competence in Amharic (and English) in creating a new register for the regional languages. Such processes of enregisterment rescale regional languages and redefine their relation to the center. This process needs to be seen not only as straightforward emancipatory change from unwritten/private/informal into written/public/formal domains but also as change in the structure of the language itself and as change in their relation to Amharic on the one hand and the smaller unsponsored minority languages on the other hand.

Not focusing on official policy but on "spontaneous" development, Kasanga (2010) presents us evidence of the increasing visibility of little bits and pieces of "streetwise" English in public advertisements in "Francophone" Africa. Although marginal in the overall linguistic ecology of the Democratic Republic of Congo, English becomes increasingly salient in public display of creative local language practices. These intimations of English such as in cloned brand name "Katanga Fried Chicken" of a Lubumbashi fast-food restaurant serve as "attention-getters" as well as perform imagined global identities of sophistication and modernity rather than fill lexical gaps in the local multilingual ecology. Such performative branding is not only an act of self-styling identity display of the producers of these signs and services but equally implicates the users of these signs and services – thus representing a powerful marketing strategy to appeal to all those who desire sophisticated, modern, and upwardly mobile identities. Targeted largely at a non-English-knowing audience, these streetwise indexes of English are more about the idea of English in Congo than they are basic communicative signifiers.

In their study of commercial signage in Khayelitsha township in post-apartheid Cape Town, Stroud and Mpendukana (2009) argue for a material ethnographic and semiotic approach to linguistic landscaping and propose a theorization of space as constructed by local economies of literacy production. Drawing on Bourdieu's theory of distinction and his notions of taste of necessity and taste of luxury, they refer to public signage in sites of necessity and sites of luxury. Sites of luxury are

economically advantaged spaces that are appropriated (with official authorisation) by well-resourced companies to advertise expensive products and services by means of professionally outsourced high-tech modes of literacy production. Sites of necessity on the other hand are lower in the economic hierarchy and predisposed towards inexpensive and more strictly local products and services for everyday needs by means of low-tech, locally available ("grassroots," in Blommaert 2008 sense) literacy materials. This distinction replaces the idea of top-down and bottom-up flows in the linguistic landscape by foregrounding social class rather than a flat public/private distinction. The different technological affordances of (top-down) luxury signage and (bottom-up) signage of necessity are consequential for the organization of multilingual and other semiotic resources in a sign and the construction of public sites themselves. When taken as "a resource for the study of social circulations of meaning in society" (Stroud and Mpendukana 2009, p. 380), African linguistic landscapes are powerful tools to interrogate discourses of social stratification and power, to read articulations of precarity and hope, and for African language literacies to enregister in the collapse of tastes of necessity and luxury in streetwise multilingual practices.

Future Directions

There are, to conclude, several parallels between these two otherwise disparate fields of study. For one, mobile phone companies in Africa are often among the most creative and resourced players in the linguistic landscape, and in their advertising often draw on streetwise multilingual practices in which local and global literacy resources alike creatively break through and break with the hegemony of the colonial languages (compare Kasanga's creeping of English in Congo with the creeping of local languages in The Gambia described in Juffermans 2012). The fields of linguistic landscape and digital literacy share a common interest in at least:

• The materiality of real language as opposed to idealized images of language
• Multilingualism and the broader semiotics of linguistic and cultural diversity
• Local agency and creativity in language practices
• Language as a "site of struggle" (Stroud 2001) for justice, inclusion, upward mobility, and to have one's voice heard
• Globalization, technology, and social and linguistic change

Illustrative for all these points, Jørgensen's concluding words in a paper on the subversive linguistic landscapes of graffiti still makes sense if graffiti is replaced by texting: "Currently graffiti presents us with a window to future linguistic norms [. . .]. The most noteworthy aspect of that is the dissolution of boundaries between languages in the practical linguistic behaviour of graffiti writers" (2008, pp. 251–2). Like digital language practices, linguistic landscapes constitute a domain for African written multilingualism that is not generally monitored by or dependent on the support of African states, which may explain their success, a cynic might add.

409 Nor do either domain present simple continuities from colonially inherited language
410 policies or ideologies, in the way that classrooms do. With some exceptions, African
411 states seemingly admit to being paralyzed or in a state of immovability with regards
412 to issues of language education and multilingual citizenship. If formal schooling is
413 judged to be foreign to Africa, linguistic landscapes and mobile phones are locally
414 appropriated or appropriately relocalized in African contexts. And as spaces for
415 semi-public/private texts and writing *par excellence*, linguistic landscapes and text
416 messaging are likely to contribute to the development of African language literacies
417 (whether this be standardization or something else). Finally, both digital writing and
418 linguistic landscapes are shaping what Higgins (2009) refers to as a "new wor(l)d
419 order," an order characterized by a simultaneity of reference points – local and global
420 – and multivoiced meanings in multilingual practices. With her we may ask how
421 long it will take for language in education to follow suit and open up to these more
422 dynamic and more African language practices.

Cross-References

424 ► Language, Literacy, and Knowledge Production in Africa
425 ► Literacies In and Out of School in South Africa
426 ► The Teaching of Reading in African Classrooms

References

428 Abdelhay, A. K., Asfaha, Y. M., & Juffermans, K. (2014). African literacy ideologies, scripts and
429   education. In K. Juffermans, Y. M. Asfaha, & A. K. Abdelhay (Eds.), *African literacies:*
430   *Ideologies, scripts, education* (pp. 1–62). Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars.
431 Blommaert, J. (2008). *Grassroots literacy: Writing, identity and voice in Central Africa*. London:
432   Routledge.
433 Burrell, J. (2009). Could connectivity replace mobility? An analysis of Internet café use patterns in
434   Accra, Ghana. In M. de Bruijn, F. B. Nyamnjoh, & I. Brinkman (Eds.), *Mobile phones: The new*
435   *talking drums of everyday Africa* (pp. 151–169). Bamenda: Langaa.
436 Dalby, D. (1967). A survey of the indigenous scripts of Liberia and Sierra Leone: Vai, Mende,
437   Kpelle, and Bassa. *African Language Studies, 8*, 1–51.
438 de Bruijn, M., Nyamnjoh, F. B., & Brinkman, I. (2009). Introduction: Mobile communication and
439   new social spaces in Africa. In M. de Bruijn, F. B. Nyamnjoh, & I. Brinkman (Eds.), *Mobile*
440   *phones: The new talking drums of everyday Africa* (pp. 11–22). Bamenda: Langaa.
441 Deumert, A., & Lexander, K. V. (2013). Texting Africa: Writing as performance. *Journal of*
442   *Sociolinguistics, 17*(4), 522–546.
443 Dumestre, G. (2000). De la scolarité souffrante (compléments à "De l'école au Mali"). *Nordic*
444   *Journal of African Studies, 9*(3), 172–186.
445 Higgins, C. (2009). *English as a local language: Post-colonial identities and multilingual prac-*
446   *tices*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
447 Jørgensen, J. N. (2008). Urban wall languaging. *International Journal of Multilingualism, 5*(3),
448   237–252.
449 Juffermans, K. (2012). Multimodality and audiences: Local languaging in the Gambian linguistic
450   landscape. *Sociolinguistic Studies, 6*(2), 81–106.

451 Juffermans, K., & Van Camp, K. (2013). Engaging with voices: Ethnographic encounters with the
452   Gambian language-in-education policy. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 44*(2),
453   142–160.
454 Kasanga, L. A. (2010). Streetwise English and French advertising in multilingual DR Congo:
455   Symbolism, modernity, and cosmopolitan identity. *International Journal of the Sociology of
456   Language, 206*, 181–205.
457 Lanza, E., & Woldemariam, H. (2014). Multilingualism and local literacy practices in Ethiopia:
458   Language contact in regulated and unregulated spaces. *Multilingual Margins, 1*(1), 55–74.
459 Lüpke, F., & Bao-Diop, S. (2014). Beneath the surface? Contemporary Ajami writing in West
460   Africa, exemplified through Wolofal. In J. Kasper, Y. M. Asfaha, & A. K. Abdelhay (Eds.),
461   *African literacies: Ideologies, scripts, education* (pp. 88–117). Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cam-
462   bridge Scholars.
463 Lüpke, F., & Storch, A. (2013). *Repertoires and choices in African languages*. Berlin: Mouton de
464   Gruyter.
465 Makoni, S., & Mashiri, P. (2007). Critical historiography: Does language planning in Africa need a
466   construct of language as part of its theoretical apparatus? In S. Makoni & A. Pennycook (Eds.),
467   *Disinventing and reconstituting languages* (pp. 215–232). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
468 Mc Laughlin, F. (2014). Senegalese digital repertoires in superdiversity: A case study from
469   Seneweb. *Discourse Context and Media, 3*(4–5), 29–37.
470 McIntosh, J. (2010). Mobile phones and Mipoho's prophecy: The powers and dangers of flying
471   language. *American Ethnologist, 37*(2), 337–353.
472 Obanya, P. (1999). Popular fallacies on the use of African languages in education. *Social Dynamics,
473   25*(1), 81–100.
474 Omoniyi, T. (2003). Local policies and global forces: Multiliteracy and Africa's indigenous
475   languages. *Language Policy, 2*(2), 133–152.
476 Oyler, D. (2005). *The history of the N'ko alphabet and its role in Mande transnational identity:
477   Words as weapons*. Cherry Hill: Africana Homestead Legacy Press.
478 Pasch, H. (2008). Competing scripts: The introduction of the Roman alphabet in Africa. *Interna-
479   tional Journal of the Sociology of Language, 191*, 65–109.
480 Scribner, S., & Cole, M. (1981). *The psychology of literacy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
481 Stroud, C. (2001). African mother-tongue programmes and the politics of language: Linguistic
482   citizenship versus linguistic human rights. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Develop-
483   ment, 22*(4), 339–355.
484 Stroud, C., & Mpendukana, S. (2009). Towards a material ethnography of linguistic landscape:
485   Multilingualism, mobility and space in a South African township. *Journal of Sociolinguistics,
486   13*(3), 363–386.
487 Unseth, P. (2011). Invention of scripts in West Africa for ethnic revilatization. In J. A. Fishman &
488   O. García (Eds.), *Handbook of language and ethnic identity: The success–failure continuum in
489   language and ethnic identity efforts* (Vol. 2, pp. 23–32). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
      Velghe, F. (2014). Lessons in textspeak from Sexy Chick: Supervernacular literacy in South African
          instant and text messaging. In K. Juffermans, Y. M. Asfaha, & A. K. Abdelhay (Eds.), *African
          literacies: Ideologies, scripts, education* (pp. 63–87). Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge
          Scholars.
      Wang, X., et al. (2014). Globalization in the margins: Toward a re-evalution of language and
          mobility. *Applied Linguistics Review, 5*(1), 23–44.
      Wyrod, C. (2008). A social orthography of identity: The N'ko literacy movement in West Africa.
          International Journal of the Sociology of Language, 192, 27–44.