

Language in Education

International Conference 2025

12 - 13 November 2025

Abuja Continental Hotel, Abuja



Theme:

***Language, Education and Inclusion:
Empowering Every Learner***

Programme Schedule



Day 1

WEDNESDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2025

Time	Event	Hall
07.00-09.00	REGISTRATION	Beside Main Hall Entrance
09.00-09.10	WELCOME - Introductions and Security Briefing delivered by MC Edemekong Uyoh, Global Head of Marketing for English and School Education	
09.10-10.00	OPENING CEREMONY Official opening by Hon. Federal Minister for Education, Dr Maruf Tunji Alausa, CON	Ballrooms 3 and 4
10.00-10.30	BREAK & PRESS POINT	
10.30-11.20	MINISTERIAL PANEL - The role of language in achieving inclusive and equitable quality education (SDG 4) Panellists: Hon. Minister Nigeria, Dr Maruf Tunji Alausa, CON Hon. Minister of State Uganda and senior education officials from Zimbabwe, Kenya, Ghana, South Africa & Tanzania Inclusive & equitable education in SSA: promises made, promises kept? A discussion of inclusive education & role of language in attaining this.	Ballrooms 3 and 4
11.20-12.10	PLENARY 1 - Language and foundational learning (FL): strategies for centring language in FL and managing language diversity in classrooms Dr Dhir Jhingran, Founder and Executive Director, Language and Learning Foundation (India)	Ballrooms 3 and 4
12.10-12.15	ROOM CHANGE	

Day 1

WEDNESDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2025

Time	Event	Hall
12.15-13.00	PARALLEL SESSIONS 1 - Themes: Language and inclusive education at foundational level in diverse contexts ... AND ... Supporting both early years' learning in local language and learning a less familiar language in a range of settings	
1A	Panel discussion: Panellists: Director Basic Education FMoE, UNICEF Nigeria, Language and Learning Foundation India, and FCDO PLANE Nigeria How language helps achieve inclusive education at foundational level: fostering a sense of belonging & wellbeing; promoting social & emotional learning; developing foundational skills in literacy & numeracy AND Supporting two languages at foundational level: approaches to learning to read & count in a local language and English; scoping & sequencing skills in the local language and English; effective strategies for transferring foundational learning skills gained in L1 (local language) to L2 (English).	Ballroom 3
1B	The Obolo bilingual education initiative – Dr Marianne Aaron (SIL Africa)	Ballroom 4
1C	Panel discussion: Challenges and opportunities in integrating special needs in primary education with a focus on sign language – Sightsavers Nigeria Panellists: Nehemiah Danjuma (NANDS), Timothy Tinat Gwazah (ASLIN), Haruna Muhammed Tsafe (NNAD), Fatima Abubakar Doki (APPDN) and Ayoade Beyioku-Alase (AAD) Panel Chair – Esther Bature (Sightsavers)	Acacia A & B
13.00-14.00	LUNCH	

Day 1

WEDNESDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2025

Time	Event	Hall
14.00-14.50	PLENARY 2 - Translanguaging and transknowledging: pedagogical pathways for equity and inclusion in language diverse classrooms Professor Leketi Makalela, Founding Director of Hub for Multilingual Education and Literacies, University of Witwatersrand, South Africa	Ballrooms 3 & 4
14.50-15.00	ROOM CHANGE	
15.00-16.00	PARALLEL SESSIONS 2 - Theme: Education in local language: what's working & what needs improvement? ... AND ... Language & learning transitions: strengthening change processes	
2A	Preparing and promoting indigenous languages for basic education in Nigeria – Professor Ogbonna Onuoha, Executive Director NINLAN	Ballroom 3
2B	Supporting the transition from a local language of learning and teaching (LoLT) to English medium education (EME) – Joseph Julius (PLAN International)	Ballroom 4
2C	WORKSHOP: Evidence-based planning for LoLT transition: techniques & tools for assessing language exposure - Ebru Weston (British Council)	Acacia A & B
16.00-16.30	TEA BREAK	
18.00-20.00	CONFERENCE RECEPTION at the residence of the British High Commissioner by invitation only	

Day 2

THURSDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2025

Time	Event	Hall
08.00	The Language and Education conference team is available at the registration desk from 08.00	
09.00-09.10	WELCOME - Introductions and Security Briefing delivered by MC Edemekong Uyoh, Global Head of Marketing for English and School Education	
09.10-09.50	PLENARY 3 - Achieving inclusive education in language diverse settings: opportunities and challenges Professor Adama Ouane (Former Minister of Education in Mali and Ex-Director of UNESCO's Institute for Lifelong Learning)	Ballrooms 3 and 4
09.50-10.00	ROOM CHANGE	
10.00-11.00	PARALLEL SESSIONS 3 - Theme: Education in English: What's working and what needs improvement	
3A	PANEL DISCUSSION: Girls' experiences of English medium education Panellists: Prof Adamu & Dr Umar (Bayero University), Tobi Ransomed (PLAN International) and Assoc. Prof. Kuchah-Kuchah (University of Birmingham) Panel Chair – Alice Wekesa (British Council)	Ballroom 3
3B	Language support for subjects studied in English: teachers' practices in Tanzania – Dr Eliakimu Sane (University of Dodoma)	Ballroom 4
11.00-11.30	BREAK	

Day 2

THURSDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2025

Time	Event	Hall
11.30-12.15	PARALLEL SESSIONS 4 - Language and assessment	
4A	Introducing the new GEEAP-endorsed paper on literacy, with a focus on the language comprehension domain Margaret 'Peggy' Dubeck	Ballroom 3
4B	Reimagining reading assessment in development contexts: developing English language reading tests in SSA Dr Isabel Tarling (Limina Education Services)	Ballroom 4
4C	Addressing language in Grade 6 and Grade 9 (BECE) examinations in Nigeria Prof. Dantani Ibrahim Wushishi (Registrar/Chief Executive NECO)	Obecha A & B
12.15-13.30	PARALLEL SESSIONS 5 - Themes: Language and inclusive education intersectionalities AND ... Language Responsive Education	
5A	English in education in low- and middle-income countries: opportunities and challenges Fwanshishak Daniel & Steve Copeland (British Council) AND Language responsive education: a holistic approach to meeting language needs at systems level Dr John Simpson (British Council)	Ballroom 3
5B	Language Education in Nigerian Colleges of Education Preservice Programme: opportunities & challenges Prof Gabriel Egbe (NCCE Lead Resource)	Ballroom 4
5C	Navigating Trilingual Transition: Lessons from Tanzania's 2023 Curriculum Reforms on Early English Teaching and Inclusion Dr Neema Matingo (Tanzania Institute of Education)	Obecha A & B
13.30-14.30	LUNCH	

Day 2

THURSDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2025

Time	Event	Hall
14.30-15.10	PLENARY 4 - Language across the curriculum: impact of LoLT on learning and achievement in mathematics Prof. Anjum Halai, Vice Provost, Aga Khan University Karachi	Ballrooms 3 & 4
15.10-15.50	PARALLEL SESSIONS 6 - Themes: Technology in language and education ... AND ... Language and education in challenging contexts	
	6A Technology as a Catalyst for Language Diversity and Inclusion for All Learners Yinka Olaito (Centre for Disability and Inclusion Africa)	Ballroom 3
	6B The Role of Language in Education Access, Learning Outcomes, Resilience and Social Cohesion among Refugee Communities in Kenya Dr Joyce Kinyanjui (Zizi Afrique)	Ballroom 4
	6C Experiences of English medium education in rural Ugandan schools - Dr Medadi Ssentanda (Makerere University, Uganda)	Obecha A & B
15.50-16.50	CLOSING PANEL (50 mins) and FINAL REMARKS (10 mins): Panel discussion: Language-in-education design, planning and implementation: opportunities and challenges Panellists: Hon. Minister of State Nigeria and Senior Education Leaders from Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Ghana, South Africa and Pakistan Panel Chair: Julian Parry (British Council) Final remarks from Deputy High Commissioner, British High Commission Nigeria, Gill Lever OBE & British Council Nigeria Country Director, Donna McGowan	Ballrooms 3 & 4
16.50-17.30	TEA BREAK	



Plenary Speakers



Professor Adama Ouane

Independent Consultant



Professor Adama Ouane is former Malian Minister of Education (2012), former Director of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL, Hamburg, 2000-2011) and Former Administrator (CEO) of the Francophonie (OIF, Paris, 2015-2019). Holding a PhD in Linguistics (1976) from the Moscow Academy of Sciences, he was Deputy National Director for Literacy and Applied Linguistics and Professor at Ecole Normale Supérieure in Bamako. He headed a comprehensive language building programme for all Malian languages (12) and in 1979 launched the first experiment of using four major languages in schools. He spearheaded

the transformation of the former UNESCO Institute for Education (UIE) into UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL). He gained wide recognition and international reputation through his policy advice, capacity building services and extensive publications in literacy, basic education, multilingualism and mother tongue education, adult and non-formal education and lifelong learning. In 2008 he became an inducted Member of the International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame (IACEHOF), University of Oklahoma, USA. Besides several African languages, he speaks English, French, German and Russian.

Dr Anjum Halai

Vice Provost, The Aga Khan University Karachi



Professor Anjum Halai brings extensive experience in higher education in low and middle income countries, including those in East Africa. She obtained her doctoral degree from Oxford University UK. She was a research fellow at the Centre for International Education and Development Sussex University UK and was an adjunct professor at the University of Alberta Canada (2011-2016).

She has a sustained interest in mathematics education. Based on her significant contribution to the field of mathematics education in low-income countries, she was elected as the Vice

President (2021-24) in the globally influential Executive Committee of the International Commission of Mathematical Instruction (ICMI). She is also an elected Fellow of the World Academy of Art and Sciences. She has led significant initiatives to promote mathematics education in Africa such as the Africa Regional Congress on Mathematical Education (AFRICME 2018). Dr. Halai has published widely in the area of language and education including the volume, 'Mathematics Education and Language Diversity. ICMI Study 21'.

Dr. Dhir Jhingran

Founder and Executive Director of Language and Learning Foundation



Dr. Dhir Jhingran is Founder and Executive Director of Language and Learning Foundation, a non-profit focused on improving students' foundational learning at scale in India. He has worked in the primary education sector for over 30 years, within and outside the Government. As a senior civil servant, Dhir has worked as Director in the Ministry of Education, Mission Director, Education for All programme and Principal Secretary, Education in the state of Assam.

He has also been Senior Advisor to UNICEF India and Advisor to the

Ministry of Education, Nepal. He has made significant contributions to the development and implementation of early grade reading programmes in several countries in Asia and Africa as well as first language-based multilingual education programmes in several states in India.

He is a member of the National Steering Committee for the development of National Curriculum Framework and has authored three books on primary education based on empirical research and has contributed to several books and journal.

Professor Leketi Makalela

University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa



Professor Leketi Makalela is a Full Professor, Founding Director of the Hub for Multilingual Education and Literacies (HuMEL), and Deputy Head of the Wits School of Education (leading Research and Innovation) at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. He is a National Research Foundation (NRF) SARChI Chair holder and rated researcher, internationally recognised for his groundbreaking theory of Ubuntu Translanguaging, which reframes language use as interconnected, relational, and inclusive. His pioneering work on Mother Tongue-Based Bilingual Education and morphology-centric reading literacy is influencing national and regional language reforms across sub-Saharan Africa.

Prof. Makalela serves as Technical Advisor to the Department of Basic Education (South Africa) on languages and literacy, and as Distinguished Visiting Professor at both the City University of New York and King's College London. His civic service includes Founding Chairperson of the Balang Foundation, and past roles as Trustee of the Old Mutual Foundation and Executive Committee Member of the Umalusi Council. His latest publication is *The Routledge Handbook of Translanguaging in the Global South* (with Kleber da Silva). He champions the philosophy of "living for change" at www.leketimakalela.com.

Sightsavers Panel Speakers

Ayoade Beyioku-Alase

Ayoade is a dedicated advocate for persons with disabilities, serving as the Chairman of the Abuja Association of the deaf, Assistant Secretary General of the Association of Special Education Teachers, Acting Chairman of JONAPWD FCT chapter, former

board of trustees member of Deaf Women Aloud Initiative (DWAI) and working as a sign language expert, deaf tutor and SEN teacher at FCT UBEB while also pursuing postgraduate studies at Federal University Lafia

Fatima Abubakar Doki

Fatima Abubakar Doki is a dedicated and result oriented professional currently working with the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD). In her capacity as Head, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit under the planning, research and statistics department. She plays an active role in advancing the Commission's mandate of promoting the rights, inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities and also part of the team that developed the five-year strategic plan for the NCPWD in Nigeria.

She holds a bachelor's degree in English Language and possesses valuable experience in disability advocacy, public policy implementation; she has certificates

in curriculum development for general studies in tertiary institutions on disability and inclusive development, and stakeholder engagement. Over the years, she has demonstrated strong commitment to fostering equal opportunities, accessibility and social inclusion for persons with disabilities.

Through her professionalism, integrity and passion for service, Fatima Abubakar Doki is the National Coordinator, Association of Parents of Persons with Disabilities in Nigeria and continues to contribute significantly to the commission's vision of creating an inclusive society where every person with disability can live with dignity and independence.

Haruna Muhammed Tsafe

Haruna Muhammad Tsafe is the National President of the Nigeria National Association of the Deaf (NNAD) and a prominent advocate for disability rights and inclusion in Nigeria. He previously served as the Technical Assistant to the pioneer Executive Secretary of the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD).

Mr. Tsafe's professional focus includes promoting the recognition and use of

Nigerian sign language, advancing inclusive education, and strengthening the political representation of persons with disabilities in governance and policymaking processes. He holds both a bachelor's and a master's degree in international relations and diplomacy. He is a professional member of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA), Lagos, and is affiliated with several national and international organisations dedicated to human rights and social inclusion.

Nehemiah Danjuma

Nehemiah Danjuma's academic journey is a testament to resilience and excellence. Despite being Deaf, he graduated with Upper Second Class Honours in Law from the University of Ilorin during its 39th Convocation ceremony. His path to legal advocacy began in 2015 when he participated in the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Program in the United States. While attending Rocky Mountain Deaf School in Colorado, he was inspired by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the presence of Deaf lawyers in the U.S., which sparked his ambition to

pursue Law and champion disability justice in Nigeria.

Throughout his six-year university journey, Nehemiah held several leadership roles:

- Senator representing students with disabilities in the Students' Union
- Secretary of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Committee
- National President of the National Association of Nigerian Deaf Students (NANDS)

Timothy Tinat Gwazah

He is the National President of the Association of Sign Language Interpreters of Nigeria (ASLIN), where he has played a vital role in professionalising sign language interpretation across the country. Timothy is deeply involved in the development of interpreting profession and has contributed to numerous training programmes, workshops, and international conferences, such as an alumnus of the prestigious International Visitors Program of the United States, which aimed at improving accessibility and inclusion for the Deaf community.

His election as Board Secretary of WASLI in 2023, during the Quadrennial Conference in Jeju, South Korea, marked a significant milestone for African representation in global sign language advocacy. With over two decades of experience, Timothy is

recognised for his strategic leadership, commitment to inclusive communication, and efforts to elevate the standards of interpretation services in Nigeria and beyond.

In addition to his advocacy work, he has carved out a meaningful career in law enforcement, serving as a Special Intelligence Officer with a focus on investigating cases involving Deaf women and young girls affected by human trafficking. His expertise is grounded in a Bachelor of Science in Criminology from the National Open University of Nigeria, complemented by specialised certifications in intelligence and investigative training. This unique intersection of criminology, disability rights, and intelligence work positions him as a vital contributor to both justice and inclusion.



Guest Speakers



Professor Amina Adamu

English and Literary Studies at Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria



Amina Adamu is a Professor at the Department of English and Literary Studies at Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria. She has a Master's Degree and PhD in English Language obtained

at Bayero University in 2000 and 2009, respectively. She has a Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) in 2022. Amina has also undertaken a six-month training on Early Grade Reading at Florida State University in 1999. Her areas of specialisation are Phonetics and Phonology, Applied Linguistics and Sociolinguistics. Amina has experience

in teaching at different levels of education, including upper basic, secondary, higher institution and university. She has also participated in different research projects relating to the training of students in the early grade on how to read in Hausa at Sokoto, Bauchi and Kano organised by NEI+, USAID, RTI, and FCDO. Recently, Amina was part of the British Council funded research led by the Open University on Gender and EME. She is now Director of the Nigeria Centre for Reading Research and Development at Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria.



Abiola Sanusi

Country Lead, EdTech Hub, Nigeria

Abiola Sanusi is Country Lead Nigeria for EdTech Hub, where she drives innovation in education technology and evidence-based policy. She is an experienced education and development specialist with a strong track record in strategy, policy reform, research and programme planning. Her career has been rooted in teacher

development, system strengthening and improving learning outcomes, leading initiatives to enhance teacher readiness, professional practice and inclusive education. Abiola is widely recognised for bridging policy, practice and research, and for fostering partnerships that empower teachers, learners and communities.

Benjamin Piper

co-author of the GEEAP-endorsed Literacy paper and a member of the Global Education Evidence Advisory Panel (GEEAP)



Benjamin Piper is a co-author of the GEEAP-endorsed Literacy paper and a member of the Global Education Evidence Advisory Panel (GEEAP). Based in the Gates Foundation's Kenya office, Benjamin Piper leads the foundation's effort to improve foundational literacy and numeracy in low- and middle-income countries. Before joining the foundation, Benjamin was the senior director for Africa education for RTI International, where he provided support to large-scale education projects across sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Earlier, he was the chief of party for the Kenyan national literacy program

Tusome, a set of randomised controlled trials in Kenya called PRIMR, and Kenya's National Tablets Programme. He was the principal investigator for Learning at Scale, a multi-country study of highly effective large-scale education programs and for an external evaluation of programs aimed at increasing playful pedagogy at large scale funded by the Lego Foundation. He was also the principal investigator for Science of Teaching, an effort funded by the Gates Foundation to increase knowledge about the technical details of how to improve pedagogy at large scale.

Chris Lack

Chris Lack is a co-author for the GEEAP-endorsed Literacy Paper and International Education Consultant



Chris Lack is a co-author for the GEEAP-endorsed Literacy Paper. He is an International Education Consultant with extensive experience at the World Bank, the British Council and several refugee education NGOs. He has

expertise in early grade reading, teacher training, curricula, instructional materials, edtech, refugee education, donor relations, and using evidence to improve outcomes in education.

Ebru Weston

Regional Senior Adviser for English and School Education in Sub-Saharan Africa British Council



Ebru works as Regional Senior Adviser for English and School Education in Sub-Saharan Africa with the British Council, bringing over fourteen years of international experience in English language teaching, teacher training, EDI and education programme management across Tanzania, Sudan, Ghana, Ethiopia, Uganda, Spain and the UK. Ebru has been working in and supporting large-scale education projects and providing global technical expertise in inclusive education, English language policy and teacher professional development. As the

former Global ELT in Education and EDI Lead, Ebru played a key role in embedding equality, diversity and inclusion principles into global education programmes and supporting teams worldwide in delivering quality and inclusive teaching and learning. With a strong record in business development, stakeholder engagement and project design and delivery, Ebru combines pedagogical depth with strategic leadership to strengthen education systems and promote equitable access to learning opportunities across diverse contexts.

Eliakimu Sane

Lecturer at the University of Dodoma



Eliakimu Sane is a lecturer at the University of Dodoma. Sane's focus is on the field of language education, integrating language-supportive teaching methods into the language of instruction as well as teaching English as a second language. He has also studied communication in the Maasai community. Sane has worked on the

project: Evaluating language supportive approaches to transition at scale, funded by the British Council. He is currently working on the project: Understanding - Supporting understanding in the classroom through the understanding of curricula structures, funded by the Swedish Research Council.

Esther Bature

Sightsavers, Nigeria



Esther Bature is a development professional with 17 years' experience in programme management, advocacy and policy influencing. Passionate about disability inclusion, gender equality and social inclusion, she drives advocacy for Sightsavers Nigeria Country Office, pushing for the

implementation of the National Policy for Inclusive Education across states and embedding disability inclusion into the health training curriculum to address systemic barriers faced by persons with disabilities in accessing healthcare services and education.

Dr Folake Olatunji-David

Director, Basic Education, Federal Ministry of Education, Nigeria



Dr Folake has worked for over three decades in the Nigeria public education sector, as a classroom teacher, school administrator and planning, research, monitoring and evaluation capacity.

She has represented Nigeria in various national and international fora in these capacities and is currently the Director,

Basic Education, Federal Ministry of Education, Nigeria; coordinating and monitoring the activities of 36 States and National Basic Education sector, policies and programmes to promote inclusive education, enhance quality of basic education and create a platform for collaboration and networking towards achieving national and global education goals

Fwanshishak Daniel

Head of English and School
Education, British Council Nigeria



Fwanshishak Daniel is a seasoned education professional with over 20 years' experience in education, teacher development, project management and leadership, particularly within education contexts in Nigeria and SSA. In his current role as Head of English and School Education at the British Council, Abuja, Fwanshishak Daniel provides strategic leadership and oversight for major national and regional education initiatives. He leads the design and implementation of impactful programmes such as STEP (Strengthening Teachers' English Proficiency), STRIDE (Stimulate Teacher Resourcefulness in Digital Education), and SPRINT (Supporting Pedagogical Rigour in Networked Teaching), which

have gained governmental endorsement both in pre-service and in-service teacher capacity building. Daniel manages complex, multi-country projects and fosters partnerships with ministries, teacher associations and international development partners. His work supports Nigeria and Regional Teacher Associations where he coordinates the British Council Teach English Africa resources, webinars and teacher development workshops, expanding access to digital learning resources, providing a platform for teachers' continuous professional development, Community of Practice and networking, programme innovation and the professional growth of teachers across Sub-Saharan Africa.

Professor Gabriel Bassey Egbe

Lead Resource Person UNESCO



Gabriel Bassey Egbe is a Professor of Applied English Linguistics with over two decades of university teaching and research within the context of English as a second language in a multilingual context. With over 60 journal publications in teaching English across primary, secondary and higher education levels in Nigeria, he has focused on research and publications in the following areas: Englishisation and the language of education in Nigeria; literacy issues, challenges and

hopes in Nigeria; learning in English and the dilemma of Nigerian children; language preference among Nigerian undergraduates and the future of English. Professor Egbe is a fellow and former president of the Literacy Promotion Association, Nigeria (LiPAN), formerly Reading Association of Nigeria (RAN); member, International Literacy Association (ILA); member, English Language Teachers Association of Nigeria (ELTAN) as well as English Scholars Association of Nigeria (ESAN).

He is also a member of the African English Language Teachers Association (Africa ELTA), International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL), and the President, Network of Pan Africa Literacy Association (2025-2027) among others. A recipient of a number of prestigious awards and research grants, Professor Egbe was the consultant to the British Council on the project: “Strengthening Teachers’ English Proficiency (STEP)

and Digital Literacy for Pre-service Teacher Training in Nigeria” and the current UNESCO National Consultant on the review of the 2020 NCE minimum standards and Lead Resource Person for the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) on the review process. Professor Egbe is with the Department of English and Literary Studies, Veritas University, Abuja, Nigeria.

Harry Kuchah Kuchah

Associate Professor of Languages, Social Justice and Education and Director of the MSc. TESOL Programme at the University of Birmingham, UK



Dr Harry Kuchah Kuchah is Associate Professor of Languages, Social Justice and Education and Director of the MSc. TESOL Programme at the University of Birmingham, UK. He has also served as a consultant on different aspects of language policy and practice for the British Council, the Council of Europe and Windle Trust International in different national contexts. Harry is Past President of the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL) and currently Chair of the British Council English Language Advisory Group and

the Hornby Educational Trust. His research interests include multilingual Education, Language education and epistemic justice, Language Teacher education and context appropriate pedagogies, and he has published widely in these areas. He is co-editor of International Perspectives on Teaching English in Difficult Circumstances (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018) and Ethical and methodological issues in researching young language learners in school contexts (Multilingual Matters, 2021).

Dr. Iquo Okon Mkpá

Academic Programmes Department, NCCEK



Dr Iquo Mkpá bagged a doctorate degree in Adult Education, specialising in Community Development in 2014 from the University of Calabar. She is a professionally certified teacher by the Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN). She has taught through the levels of academics and has also served as a Administrator in reputable schools. Dr. Iquo is presently serving the National Commission for Colleges of Education, Abuja, as an Assistant Director. She is a curriculum expert duly certified by the UNESCO-International Bureau of Education and currently undertaking a Professional Diploma programme on Early Childhood Education.

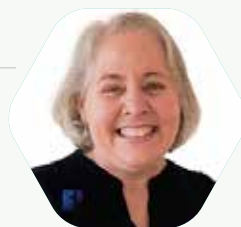
Her areas of research span through adult and non-education, community

development, curriculum design, teacher education, and early childhood care and education. She has served in several committees both at NCCE and at the national level. She has published over 35 articles and book chapters to her credit.

Dr. Iquo is a motivational and inspirational advocate for young Nigerians, grooming and encouraging them to build skills that will be beneficiary for nation building. She is a pioneer member of the Balance and Inclusive Education, housed in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. She is a member of the Governing Council of the Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsube, Anambra and ECWA College of Education, Jos, Plateau State.

Dr Isabel Tarling

CEO, Limina Education Services, South Africa



Dr Isabel Tarling is a learning science scholar and digital learning specialist. She holds a PhD in Education Technologies and Teacher Professional Development from UCT, and is CEO of Limina Education Services. Since 2015, she has led various projects working with various local and international development organisation like UNESCO, the GIZ, the FCDO and British Council, to develop different education solutions, strategies and policies, or conduct education related research. This has variously included developing web-based training courses,

conducting research and monitoring and evaluation projects. She also leads the team working with the Association of African Universities to empower Science Granting Councils across Africa and researchers in different countries with the skills to produce and evaluate excellence in research. In 2024/25 Dr Tarling led the team to develop a theoretical framework to guide the development of reading assessments in development project contexts for the British Council, and will lead the team to develop the first reading test from this framework.

Dr John Simpson

Senior Adviser on English and School Education
in sub-Saharan Africa British Council



John is the British Council's Senior Adviser on English and School Education in sub-Saharan Africa. He provides technical assistance to country teams on donor-funded projects involving English in education. His experience includes over 20 years in Africa and 15 years in UK higher education. John has provided long-term advice to the Governments of

Rwanda and Ethiopia. He recently supported the PLANE Accelerated Learning programme in Nigeria, which is helping to develop foundational literacy and numeracy skills in Hausa and English. He authored the British Council's position paper on English language and medium of instruction in basic education in low- and middle-income countries.

Joseph Julius

Development Strategist, Education Advocate &
Community Empowerment Leader



Joseph Julius is a development strategist with over seven years' experience driving inclusive, community-centered solutions across gender advocacy, education, livelihoods, governance and WaSH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene).

Currently serving as Project Coordinator with Plan International Nigeria, Joseph leads the EU-funded "Accelerating Basic Education and Livelihood Opportunities for Children and Youths in Northwest Nigeria" project in Sokoto State¹.

Joseph's career spans roles with Neem Foundation, RUWOYD, and other

development partners, such as USAID's Feed the Future Nigeria Livelihoods Project, ActionAid's Breaking Barrier Project and the Spotlight Initiative.

Joseph holds a Bachelor of Science in Information Technology, a Master's in International Affairs and Diplomacy, and a Postgraduate Diploma in Education. Fluent in English and Hausa, he brings a unique blend of technical acumen, policy insight and grassroots engagement to initiatives he leads. His work continues to shape inclusive development landscapes, empower vulnerable communities and inspire systemic change.

Dr. Joyce Kinyanjui

Managing Director, Ziziafrique



Joyce Kinyanjui (PhD) is the Managing Director of Ziziafrique, an organisation that carries out educational research to contribute to the body of knowledge and to inform policy and practice. She has over 30 years' experience in the education sector, specifically in developing Citizen Led Assessments to measure foundational learning in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Mozambique, Ghana, Nigeria, Eswatini, Senegal and Mali. She has experience implementing Mother Tongue Based Foundational Literacy programmes, developing teaching and learning materials using

local languages, using formative assessments for improved classroom instruction, teacher training and teacher mentorship and coaching.

She is currently the Lead Researcher for the British Council scoping study for Language for Resilience among refugees in Garissa, Kakuma and Kalobeyei in Kenya.

She holds a B.A., PGDE and M.Ed. from Kenyatta University and a PhD in Arts from University of Zululand, South Africa.

Margaret (Peggy) Dubeck

co-author for the GEEAP-endorsed Literacy Paper



Margaret (Peggy) Dubeck, Ph.D., is a co-author for the GEEAP-endorsed Literacy Paper. She is a literacy and assessment expert who aims to improve children's achievement through empirical research. Her interest began examining dyslexic readers learning in multilingual contexts. She has experience in the entire research cycle including multi-disciplinary randomised control trials, funding, sensitisation, piloting, implementation, evaluation, analysis, and dissemination. She has extensive experience with assessments that are

instructionally transparent and to inform evaluations. She has created, modified, and established the technical adequacy of literacy, math, attention, and affective instruments in multiple languages. Her literacy interventions, designed for schools, community programmes, and individualised settings include teacher and student materials, trainings, supportive technology and measures of fidelity. She has taught in diverse educational settings: clinical, private and public, from kindergarten through the graduate level.

Maria Brindlmayer

Leads the Secretariat for the Global Evidence in Education Advisory Panel (GEEAP)



Maria Brindlmayer leads the Secretariat for the Global Evidence in Education Advisory Panel (GEEAP), convened by the World Bank, UNICEF, and FCDO. Maria is also the team lead for the Secretariat for the Building Evidence in Education (BE2) working group of bilateral donors, and multilateral

agencies and foundations, including the World Bank, UNESCO, UNICEF – Innocenti, FCDO and foundations. She is recognised for designing and deploying high-impact knowledge management strategies, systems and processes for the public and private sectors.

Neema Matingo

Curriculum Developer at the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE) and a PhD candidate in Inclusive Education at the University of South Africa (UNISA)



Neema Bestone Matingo is a Curriculum Developer at the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE) and a PhD candidate in Inclusive Education at the University of South Africa (UNISA). With over 12 years of experience in curriculum design, teacher education and inclusive education, she has contributed to Tanzania's national curriculum reforms focusing on competency based and inclusive approaches. She coordinated the

harmonisation of Tanzania Sign Language (TSL) and led the pilot and initial roll out of the Jolly Phonics programme to strengthen early literacy skills. Her professional and research interests include curriculum accessibility for learners with disabilities, multilingual education and inclusive classroom practices. Neema continues to champion equitable, inclusive and evidence-based innovation in Tanzania.

Maria J. (Marianne) Aaron (PhD)

Consultant of the Obolo Language and Bible Translation Organisation, Obolo Bilingual Education Centre (OBEC)



Marianne, from the Netherlands, is the consultant of the Obolo Language and Bible Translation Organisation for the Obolo Bilingual Education Centre (OBEC), a model school for bilingual education in Nigeria. She is also since 2019 a language and education consultant with SIL Africa, liaising with other NGOs and Government for the promotion of the use of African languages in education. In this capacity, she is a consultant to the Plateau State Bilingual Education Project (in six languages), and has

taught graduate and post-graduate courses in bilingual literacy and education at the Translation and Linguistics Department of TCNN in Jos. She has lived for many years in Obolo, a minority group in Rivers and Akwa Ibom States of Nigeria, working together with the Obolo community on their language for education. Earlier, with the Nigeria Bible Translation Trust, she also had experience and contacts in most of the geo-political zones of Nigeria.

Dr. Medadi E. Ssentanda

Senior Lecturer at Makerere University's Department of African Languages and a Research Associate at Stellenbosch University



Dr. Medadi E. Ssentanda is a Senior Lecturer at Makerere University's Department of African Languages and a Research Associate at Stellenbosch University, South Africa, where he earned his PhD in General Linguistics. His research focuses on early literacy development, multilingual education, language policy in schools and Uganda's linguistic landscape. He has published extensively on mother tongue education in rural Ugandan schools, examining the gap between teachers' practices and national language policy.

His widely cited work addresses the challenges of teaching reading in Uganda, particularly the policy-driven shift from mother tongue to English instruction. He also investigates how language ideologies shape signage choices in schools and shops in Kampala, analysing these within Uganda's official language framework of English and Swahili. Dr. Ssentanda's scholarship contributes to understanding the complexities of language use in education and public spaces in multilingual contexts.

Neema Matingo

Curriculum Developer at the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE) and a PhD candidate in Inclusive Education at the University of South Africa (UNISA)



Neema Bestone Matingo is a Curriculum Developer at the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE) and a PhD candidate in Inclusive Education at the University of South Africa (UNISA). With over 12 years of experience in curriculum design, teacher education and inclusive education, she has contributed to Tanzania's national curriculum reforms focusing on competency based and inclusive approaches. She coordinated the

harmonisation of Tanzania Sign Language (TSL) and led the pilot and initial roll out of the Jolly Phonics programme to strengthen early literacy skills. Her professional and research interests include curriculum accessibility for learners with disabilities, multilingual education and inclusive classroom practices. Neema continues to champion equitable, inclusive and evidence-based innovation in Tanzania.

Professor Ogbonna Onuoha

Executive Director, National Institute for Nigerian Languages (NINLAN)



Professor Ogbonna Onuoha is currently the 5th Executive Director of the National Institute for Nigerian Languages (NINLAN), Aba. He is a recognised authority in Nigerian languages, literature and cultural studies, who served as two-term Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Abia State University, Nigeria.

Professor Onuoha has significantly contributed to the growth and success of Nigerian languages both locally and internationally, with several books and journal publications to his credit. He has received numerous accolades for his academic excellence and is also a recipient of the Nigeria Selfless Service Gold Award (NISSGA).

Besides his academic achievements, Professor Onuoha is a Fellow of the Institute of Management Consultants (FIMC), a Certified Management Consultant (CMC), and a Fellow of the Institute of Policy Management Development (FIPMD). He has been honoured with the Nigeria National Leadership Award for Integrity, Transparency, and Accountability, and is recognised as an Ambassador of Peace.

Professor Onuoha is also an alumnus of the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON).

His biographical sketches feature in many international "who's who" entries.

Razaq Adeyemi Badmus

Director, Education Support Services and International Partnerships (ESSIP), National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), Abuja, Nigeria



Mr. Razaq Adeyemi Badmus is the Director, Education Support Services and International Partnerships (ESSIP) at the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), Abuja, Nigeria

Badmus obtained his NCE at Oyo State College of Education (Now Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo and later obtained B. A. & M. A. in French Studies from the University of Ibadan. Badmus also attended in 2002 the Centre Béninois des Langues Etrangères, Université d'Abomey Calavi for

specialised training in language teaching and obtained in 2013 the Cambridge Certificate in College Accreditation under a Professional Development Programme sponsored by NCCE and Cambridge University.

*Badmus taught at primary and secondary schools and College of Education (Special), Oyo before joining NCCE in 2006 as Principal Programme Officer where he rose through the ranks to the position of director,

Professor Salisu Shehu

Executive Secretary, Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC)



Professor Salisu Shehu is the Executive Secretary of the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) and a Professor of Educational Psychology with the Department of Education, Bayero University, Kano (BUK). He holds a Bachelor of Arts (Ed) and M. Ed. (Educational Psychology) from BUK and PhD (Educational Psychology) from Usman Danfodio University, Sokoto.

Salisu Shehu has authored a number of books, presented papers at local,

national and international conferences and published in reputable local and International Journals. His areas of research interest include Educational Psychology, Islamic Psychology, Islamic Education, Critical Issues in Education, Teacher Education, Open and Distance Learning, Critical Social Theory, Peace Education and Conflict Resolution, Social Justice, Good Governance and Fighting Corruption in Public Responsibility and the Private Sector.

He is a member of various professional associations including International Society for Teacher Education (ISTE), International Council on Distance Education (ICDE), Nigerian Society for Educational Psychologists (NISEP), Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON), Nigerian Academy of Education (NAE) and Association of Child

Learning Psychologists (ACLP)

Professor Salisu Shehu also currently serves as the Deputy Secretary General, Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, Executive Secretary, Islamic Forum of Nigeria, Special Adviser to the President and Founder of Al-Ansar Foundation.

Steve Copeland

Research and Insight Lead, English and School Education, British Council.



Steve Copeland is Research and Insight Lead for the English and School Education team at the British Council. He was previously the British Council's Global Examiner Manager and Head of Examiner Standards for IELTS, prior to which he spent twenty years as a teacher, examiner, teacher educator, materials writer and academic director

in South-East Asia, South America, North Africa and the UK. Steve has presented at conferences around the world and is a co-author of *The Future of English: Global Perspectives*. He has an MA in TESOL from the Institute of Education in London and the RSA DipTEFLA.



Vanessa Lee

Chief of Education, UNICEF, Nigeria



Vanessa Lee is the Chief of Education in Nigeria. She has worked in educational leadership roles, led large scale Education reform projects and supported governments to reform education systems in Nigeria, Libya, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore and Brunei

Darussalam. Her teaching career began in Bhutan in 1986 when she taught English and maths in a technical and vocational school. She is passionate about all children learning to give them an opportunity to thrive in life.

Yinka Olaito

Executive Director of the Centre for Disability and Inclusion Africa



Yinka Olaito is a media, communication and inclusion expert with a focus on their implications for sustainable development. He consistently advocates for underrepresented voices with intentional efforts toward narrative change that promotes a society that works for all.

Yinka is the Executive Director of the Centre for Disability and Inclusion Africa (registered as Sage Initiatives for

Disability and Inclusion). He has collaborated extensively with governments, NGOs and international partners to bridge the media and communications, as well as inclusion, divides. Under his leadership, CDIA has become a thought leader in driving human rights, policy, research and partnerships that make access, equity and inclusion central to Africa's disability inclusion.

Kevin Wolaka Wilima

Project Manager, UNESCO, Nigeria



Kevin Wolaka Wilima is a Project Manager (acting) at the UNESCO Abuja Office with over six years of experience. He has expertise in programme coordination, technical cooperation and stakeholder engagement across diverse thematic areas. Kevin began his UN career as a United Nations Volunteer, through which he gained comprehensive knowledge of UN systems and operational procedures.

Kevin plays a key role in the implementation of the Better Education for Africa's Rise (BEAR III) project in Nigeria, funded by the Republic of Korea, which aims to enhance the relevance, quality, and attractiveness of TVET systems across Sub-Saharan

Africa. Over the years, he has contributed to several flagship initiatives, including projects that provided accelerated second-chance education opportunities for out-of-school girls and young women facing intersecting marginalisation in target states, helping to expand access to quality, inclusive and gender-responsive learning pathways.

Kevin also serves as the UNESCO Youth Focal Point within the UN Nigeria Inter-Agency Group on Youth, and as UNESCO's Focal Point for the UN Peacebuilding Coordination Forum under the UN Country Team in Nigeria. He is also an active member of the Disability Inclusion Technical Working Group.

Session Abstracts





Professor Adama Ouane

The Importance of Mother Tongue Education in Multilingual Settings In Sub Saharan Africa: A Critical Review of Policies, Approches and How to Address Related Issues

Plenary Address Abstract

This note is a reflection on the interwoven themes of language, education and inclusion. Drawing on his longstanding experience in research, capacity building and high-level decision making, both at country and international levels, the speaker presents an analytical review of experiences and practices in mother tongue education (MTE) in SSA focusing on achievements, practices and lessons learnt. The dominant monolingual canon, influenced by the weight and high value of the international languages and used to impose language models in education, is the root cause of the exclusion or neglect of MT in education and national development. Many myths and arguments are coined, sometimes by the speech communities themselves, to blame their own languages in order to prevent or delay any shift or change. The specific features, endemic nature and inherent advantages of the multilingual ethos prevailing in most SSA provide an appropriate lens for another renewed language

policy and practice in education. There are countless research outputs and empirical proofs demonstrating with convincing evidence the advantages and benefits of MTE. There are also calls and policy proclamations in favour of MTE. Paradoxically, the current education systems remain largely built on the use of international languages from the very early stages and throughout schooling.

The main objective is to deconstruct the entrenched myths, prejudices and discriminations. The way out is not the replacement or exclusion of the international languages nor a competition with the MT but a late exit bi-or trilingual model featuring one or two international languages. New opportunities offered by AI and the serious risks it poses

to the acquisition and use of human languages is also mentioned.

Dr Anjum Halai

Language across the curriculum: Impact of LoLT on learning and achievement in mathematics.

Plenary Address Abstract

This paper looks at issues related to language in education and its impact on learning and achievement in language diverse mathematics classrooms. The language(s) in education policy plays a significant role in decisions about language of learning and teaching (LoLT) as an organizing framework for education processes. Policies on LoLT can play a facilitative or a hindering role in enabling access to learning of quality.

In post-colonial contexts such as those in Sub Saharan Africa, policymakers often introduce a global, post-colonial language such as English with perceived or real power and privilege, as the language of learning and teaching, ostensibly for distributive justice for all learners. There is a popular perception that learning in English will lead to learning the English language and the subject content encoded in that language.

However, in classrooms with language diversity, English (or

other global language) is not the first or second, often not even the third language for a majority of students and teachers. Consequently, students and in many cases, teachers also lack the basic competency in English, and such policies create a paradoxical effect as students, often from low socio-economic background, face the twin challenge of learning a language and the subject knowledge presented in that language (mathematics). Drawing on in-depth classroom-based studies from a range of contexts, this paper illustrates the issues in teaching, learning and assessment in classrooms of language diversity.

It draws on significant experience and insights from low-income and middle-income contexts to recommend suitable language-supportive education approaches including the development of a 'language ladder', aligned with UNESCO's mother-tongue based multilingual education.

Prof Dantani Ibrahim Wushishi - Registrar/Chief Executive, National Examinations Council (NECO)

Language, Assessment and the Pursuit of Liberating Education in Nigeria

Abstract

In a nation grappling with the profound paradox of its education system, this scholarly paper confronts the central challenge of aligning language policy with the practical realities of learning. It diagnoses the persistent crisis of academic underperformance and the validity of high-stakes assessments, such as the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE), as symptomatic of a deeper institutional and philosophical misalignment. Against this backdrop, the paper proposes a transformative framework for educational reform, anchored in Professor Dantani

Ibrahim Wushishi's vision of a "liberating education." This paradigm calls for a systemic overhaul that transcends traditional pedagogical models, advocating for language-responsive curricula and the adoption of equitable assessment technologies. Ultimately, this paper argues that true reform must move beyond the mere pursuit of credentials to build an educational system that empowers every learner with the critical skills and confidence to engage with and shape their world.

Dr Dhir Jhingran

Language and Learning Foundation

The central role of language in foundational learning and addressing language diversity in classrooms

Talk Abstract

Language is the medium of all learning. It is not just another subject to be taught. A strong foundation in early language and literacy enables children to navigate the entire curriculum and the world around them. However, early language learning has been narrowly interpreted in the implemented curriculum in the foundational years. Dominant teaching and learning practices like choral repetition, copying and rote memorisation do not help in the development of strong oral expression, higher-order comprehension of texts, or writing composition. This talk advocates greater salience for language learning and suggests strategies to make language classrooms more interactive in the early school years.

There is overwhelming evidence that using a familiar language for teaching and learning in early childhood education and the early school years helps children feel more emotionally adjusted and self-confident and promotes better learning. It also helps children learn additional languages well. An unfamiliar language should not be used as the language of instruction (LoI) until children develop a good understanding of that language.

Governments face a variety of challenges in introducing children's primary languages as LoIs for foundational learning. This talk will suggest multilingual approaches for foundational learning that can address some of these constraints and have been successfully implemented at scale in varied language situations.



Ebru Weston

Evidence-based planning for LoLT transition: techniques & tools for assessing language exposure

Workshop Abstract

Effective transitions in the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) require robust data

on learners' language exposure and proficiency. This interactive workshop introduces participants to the Child Language Experience and Proficiency Questionnaire (CLEP-Q),

a practical tool designed to assess language use across home, school and community settings. Participants will explore how the

CLEP-Q has been adapted for different countries, age groups and educational contexts, and engage in hands-on group work to tailor the tool to their own national or regional needs. The session supports evidence-based planning for language diverse education systems and offers actionable strategies for improving LoLT transition outcomes.

Eliakimu Sane

Language support for subjects studied in English: teachers' practices in Tanzania

Talk Abstract

The education and training policy in Tanzania creates a sharp transition where learners shift from Kiswahili medium to English medium of instruction only after a six weeks' orientation period. The policy does not consider learners' multilingual reality where a majority of them speak Kiswahili and/or one of more than 150 ethnic community languages. Teachers are pressured to use English only even though learners struggle to comprehend and engage in the classroom. Research shows that the policy alienates students and hinders learning. This presentation explores the language supportive pedagogies (LSP) that teachers employ to promote inclusive learning in transition. It draws on research conducted by the ELSATS project (2022 - 2024, funded by the British Council). Data were collected through classroom observations and interviews in 16 schools

across four regions. The research revealed that teachers employ flexible multilingual strategies such as code-switching between Kiswahili, English, and local languages, and realia or multimedia to scaffold understanding and lessen the burden of the LoLT. Students reported feeling alienated by English-only instruction. However, some teachers lacked preparation to use multilingual approaches, resulting in teacher-dominated classrooms. They controlled language use, giving students limited freedom to switch languages. Generally, rigid monolingual policies do not match the reality in the classroom. This presentation highlights key lessons and policy implications: targeted teacher training, resource development and policy reforms to enhance inclusive and high-quality learning in SSA.

Professor Gabriel Egbe

Language Education in Nigerian Colleges of Education Preservice: Opportunities and Challenges

Talk Abstract

Several factors account for the concern raised about learning poverty, especially in Nigeria's basic education level. While some scholars claim that relying on English as the language of instruction compounds the crisis, others feel that implementing the language of instruction in favour of the mother tongue or the language of the immediate environment in a multilingual context like Nigeria is the magic wand. A few others argue that the solution is as complex as the problem and that a balanced and cautious look at the language(s) of learning offers more feasible, practical, and realistic responses to the crisis of language in education against the geo-

ethnic plurality and sociolinguistic complexity of Nigeria. Following from the above, this paper examines the strengths and weaknesses of the NCE curriculum and trainees who are largely trained in English-only medium in Nigerian colleges of education; shares insights of actual classroom practices; and draws lessons which accommodate both Mother Tongue and English-medium-based instruction as specific Nigerian contexts dictate, bearing in mind the obvious challenges in faithfully implementing the provisions of the 2022 national language policy in education.

Dr Isabel Tarling

Reimagining reading assessment in development contexts: designing English language reading tests in SS

Talk Abstract

In many development contexts, children learn to read in multilingual environments where English is introduced as an additional language. However, many reading assessments still reflect monolingual assumptions, prioritise oral fluency over comprehension and often ignore the linguistic resources that learners bring to school. This creates persistent gaps between learners' actual abilities, what assessments measure and what education systems report.

To address this challenge, the British Council commissioned our research team to investigate the issue and develop a theoretical framework to inform more context-appropriate practices.

Drawing on extensive international and African scholarship, this talk explores how long-established principles of reading development can be re-interpreted for

multilingual classrooms across Sub-Saharan Africa. Grounded in a review of reading assessments currently used across the region, the research developed a hybrid sociocognitive model

that integrates cognitive, linguistic and sociocultural dimensions of reading. The model foregrounds comprehension, oral language, background knowledge and translanguaging pathways, alongside decoding and fluency.

The research distilled key design principles and developed a validity decision guide to support education stakeholders across Africa. Together, these elements aim to strengthen equitable, context-relevant reading assessment systems that produce actionable insights, reinforce foundational literacy and reflect the lived realities of learners.

Joyce Kinyanjui

The Role of Language in Education Access, Learning Outcomes, Resilience, and Social Cohesion among Refugee Communities in Kenya

Talk Abstract

The Kenyan Constitution and the Refugee Act (2021) grants every child in Kenya education, including non-citizens, refugees and asylum seekers. However, only 47% of school going children are in school. Language has long been recognised as a barrier to refugee pupils accessing schools in Kenya.

Refugee camps have significant linguistic diversity with more than 16 different languages spoken there. The Language in Education Policy states that learners from Pre-primary up to Grade 3, should use the language of the catchment area as the primary language of learning and teaching (LoLT). From Grade 4, the LoLT changes to English and Kiswahili is taught as a subject. However, in camp settings, refugee children start learning both Kiswahili and English upon enrolment, regardless of the grade and country of origin.

70% of refugee learners faced difficulties understanding school content due to language barriers. 36% struggled with socialising with their peers as well as lacking motivation to attend school, while 49% were unable to participate in classroom activities. Only 14% of children / participants did not experience any challenges in school. This has contributed significantly to low learning outcomes resulting to low retention and transition

rates and poor economic attainment due to inability to get employment or take advantage of economic opportunities.

Due to cultural stereotypes and limited proficiency in the language of communication, the refugee community does not establish strong social cohesion, networks, and social inclusion into the host community. Consequently, they are unable to integrate into social groups, access all social amenities, livelihoods, life-long learning education and training opportunities and employability in the competitive labour market. The role of language in social cohesion and resilience building therefore becomes extremely important.

In 2024, Ziziafrique in partnership with the British Council undertook a field-based survey in Kakuma, Kalobeyei and Dadaab camps using a mixed method approach to understand the role of language in education access, learning outcomes, resilience, and social cohesion among refugee communities in Kenya. A total of 495 participants participated in the survey, 9 lessons were observed.

The study recommends provision of adequate language resources and comprehensive teacher training programmes that support multilingual teaching strategies.

Professor Leketi Makalela

Translanguaging and Transknowledging: Pedagogical Pathways for Equity and Inclusion in Multilingual Classrooms

Plenary Address Abstract

In many sub-Saharan African classrooms, linguistic diversity is often treated as a barrier to learning rather than a resource for inclusion. This plenary reframes this view through translanguaging—the fluid use of multiple linguistic repertoires—and transknowledging—the integration of diverse epistemologies for knowledge construction. Drawing on classroom evidence from the Mother Tongue-Based Bilingual Education (MTBBE) and Mother Tongue-Based Reading Literacy (MTBRL) initiatives in South Africa, the presentation demonstrates how these practices promote both equity and epistemic justice in education.

The session will unpack key concepts in accessible terms,

showing how translanguaging is not mere code-switching but a deeper pedagogy of inclusion grounded in Ubuntu philosophy—the interconnectedness of languages, identities, and knowledge systems. Practical illustrations will show how teachers in linguistically diverse classrooms can use learners' home languages alongside English to improve reading for meaning, participation, and confidence.

Ultimately, the address invites policymakers, teachers, and education partners to move beyond monolingual ideologies and to institutionalise translanguaging pedagogies as a foundation for inclusive, contextually responsive, and socially just education across the region.

Dr Marianne Aaron

African language for Instruction?

Talk Abstract

In Nigeria, the majority of rural and urban children are failing in their education, and are unable to get credit in English. Unlike most children in more developed countries, who are taught through their mother tongues, Nigerian students are disadvantaged by the foreign language of instruction, while their own African language is regarded unsuitable, and falls into disuse. In this presentation, we will hear what one language community is doing to 'stem the tide'.

In the 1980s, the Obolo Language Committee, composed of teachers, introduced Obolo reading as a subject in primary education in the area. This didn't only improve the students' Obolo, but had surprisingly positive results on the rate of literacy in English in the area. Building on this experience, and informed by research, in 2014

the Obolo Bilingual Education Centre was started with the aim of making Obolo the main language of instruction all through primary school. Textbooks in all the core subjects were translated. Subject-specific Obolo terminology was developed pooling University lecturers, teachers and language specialists together. The OBEC primary school presently shows how properly resourced Mother Tongue-Based Bilingual Education is. Teachers recommend the school as the best in the area. Graduates of OBEC's primary section now in secondary schools are as a group outperforming those of other schools, especially in English. OBEC also provides impetus for the up-scaling of the programme to all schools in the two local government areas, and is an encouraging model for emulation in other language areas.

Dr Medadi Ssentanda

On the Experiences of English Medium Education (EME) in rural Ugandan schools

Talk Abstract

The use of English as a language of learning and teaching (LoLT) in multilingual African contexts remains a complex issue, with limited research addressing its practical challenges. This study explores the experiences of English Medium Education (EME) in four rural primary schools in Kyotera District, Uganda. These schools follow a transitional language policy: the mother tongue is used as LoLT for the first three years, EME is initiated in the fourth year, and becomes the sole LoLT from the fifth year onward. Fieldwork was conducted in two private and two public schools, with use of questionnaires, classroom observations and interviews to examine how English is used in classroom interactions. A triangulation approach was applied to compare teachers' reported practices with curriculum expectations and policy guidelines. Findings reveal significant challenges in the use of English for

teaching and learning. Both teachers and learners struggle to communicate effectively in English, which hampers classroom engagement and comprehension. Learners frequently respond to English questions in their mother tongue, indicating limited proficiency in English. Teachers often rely on cues or single-word prompts in English to involve learners, reflecting minimal linguistic interaction and learners' constrained language abilities. These practices suggest a disconnect between policy intentions and classroom realities. The paper highlights the implications of these findings for language policy, teacher training, and curriculum development, emphasising the need for more context-sensitive approaches to EME in rural multilingual settings. It calls for further research and policy adjustments to support effective language transitions in early education.

Neema Matingo

Navigating Trilingual Transition: Lessons from Tanzania's 2023 Curriculum Reforms on Early English Teaching and Inclusion

Talk Abstract

In 2023, Tanzania introduced a curriculum reform that made English a compulsory competency form Standard One rather than Standard Three. The aim was to strengthen learners' early exposure to English and reduce the challenges they face when transitioning to English-medium instruction in secondary and tertiary education. This reform takes place within a multilingual context where more than 120 languages are spoken, with Kiswahili serving as the national lingua franca and main medium of instruction in primary schools.

English holds an important but complex role in Tanzania's education system. It is the language of international communication, higher learning and socio-economic advancement. However, the effectiveness of English teaching and learning is still influenced by the need to further enhance teacher preparation, teacher professional development, expand bilingual materials and ensure fair access to resources across context. The

2023 curriculum reform seeks to address these challenges by introducing English competencies at the foundational level while maintaining Kiswahili literacy as the base for lifelong learning.

The early introduction of English is also an inclusive strategy. By helping all pupils, regardless of background, to develop early English communication skills, the reform aims to reduce language barriers that disadvantage learners from less privileged or rural settings. However, challenges remain in providing continuous teacher professional development, adequate bilingual resources and reinforcement of Kiswahili literacy. It is therefore expected that early teaching of English can enhance both learning outcomes and inclusion when supported by teacher professional development, adequate bilingual resources and reinforcement in Kiswahili literacy. Tanzania's experience shows that language of instruction reforms should be part of a broader system that links curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and inclusion.

Professor Ogbonna Onuoha

Preparing and promoting indigenous languages for basic education in Nigeria

Talk Abstract

This paper focuses on the imperative of preparing and promoting indigenous languages for basic education, as a pillar for enhancing functional and inclusive education, preserving linguistic heritage and cultural identity, and fostering science and technology education.

The benefits of using indigenous languages in early schooling include improved academic achievement, higher cognitive development, stronger manual dexterity, creative attainments, sustainable community engagement and intergenerational transfer. However, due to globalisation and the dominance of English, many indigenous languages have become underdeveloped, undeveloped, unknown and/or endangered.

In preparing these languages for Basic Education, three stages of language development - codification, standardisation and modernisation - must be intentionally undertaken. To promote indigenous languages for Basic Education, intentional sociolinguistic advocacy is required.

This will promote the use of languages in the different contexts and domains of local and global communication. Integrating these

languages into basic education emerges as a vital strategy for revitalisation and empowerment of African languages for national development.

Key challenges militating against the integration of indigenous languages in Basic Education are paucity of indigenous languages teachers, dearth of textbooks and publishing in the languages,

lack of implementation and monitoring of the language provisions of the NPE and NLP, underfunding and non-implementation of informed solutions by stakeholders, including LAN, NERDC, UNESCO, BC, NPE etc, as well as an evasive approach to the NINLAN mandate.

Solutions to these challenges, include language documentation, sufficient teachers and available textbooks in the indigenous languages and implementation and monitoring of national education and language policies. The paper concludes with a call for national and state governments to team up with the Institute for Nigerian Languages, Aba and other Nigerian languages training sub-centres in preparing and promoting Nigerian Languages for basic education.

Yinka Olaito

Technology as a Catalyst for Language Diversity and Inclusion for All Learners

Talk Abstract

In an ever-evolving technological world, language learning has the potential to either bridge

or widen the digital divide, leading to inclusion or exclusion. Many voices remain unheard, a situation that should not persist, as its disadvantages may outweigh the benefits. Technology, particularly Artificial Intelligence (AI), can serve as a powerful catalyst for promoting language diversity and inclusion for all learners. However, certain fundamentals must be addressed to ensure equitable outcomes.

This presentation, which draws from the work of the Centre for Disability and Inclusion Africa (CDIA) and other sources, will help

participants understand how technology can break barriers in diverse classrooms, promote multilingualism within inclusive education, and highlight the role of policy in creating environments where every learner's voice counts. It will also explore how technology can dismantle multilanguage learning barriers and foster classrooms where inclusion truly thrives.

CDIA as a pan Africa NPO has been named Global Disability Support NPO of the year 2025

as well as Disability Inclusion NPO of the year 2025 in Africa. Yinka is a regular speaker at the annual continental Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Conference.

Our Partners

Unicef



Plan International



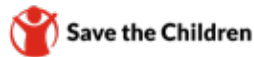
Plane - Partnership
for Learning for All
in Nigeria



Sightsavers

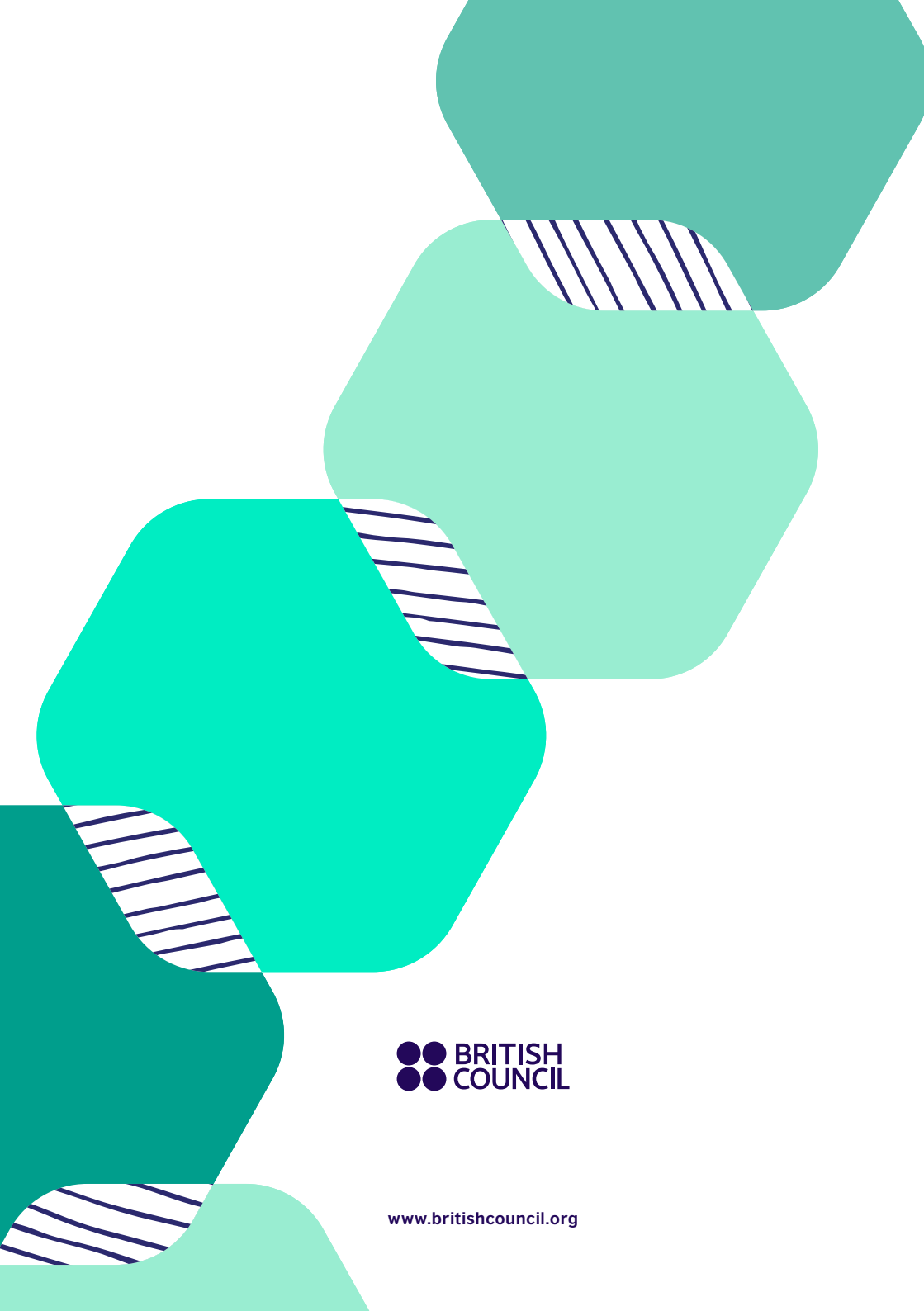


Save the Children



Sterling One
Foundation





www.britishcouncil.org