



29TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE
AFRICAN LANGUAGE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Reimagining African Language Pedagogy In the Digital Age

APRIL 9-11, 2026
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

29TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE
AFRICAN LANGUAGE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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PROFESSOR HARRISON RÓTÌMÍ ADÉNÍYÌ**
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& ALTA BOARD**

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Africa World Initiative

Department of Comparative Literature

National African Language Resources Center

Princeton Humanities Initiative

Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies

Program in African Studies



WELCOME FROM THE ALTA PRESIDENT

Distinguished scholars, educators, practitioners, students, and esteemed guests,

On behalf of the African Language Teachers Association, it is my great honor and privilege to welcome you to our 29th Annual Conference. I am truly delighted to see such a vibrant gathering of minds committed to the advancement, preservation, and global relevance of African languages.

This year's theme, "Reimagining African Language Pedagogy In The Digital Age," speaks powerfully to the evolving role of our languages in today's interconnected world. African languages are not confined to the classroom or to cultural expression alone; they are dynamic vehicles of knowledge, innovation, and identity that cut across fields such as education, technology, healthcare, law, media, and the arts.

As language professionals, we recognize that African languages are central to how knowledge is created, transmitted, and sustained. They shape worldviews, foster inclusion, and serve as bridges between generations and across communities. Our task, therefore, is not only to teach these languages but to ensure that they remain relevant and accessible in diverse spaces, from academic institutions to professional environments and everyday community life.

This conference offers us a unique opportunity to reflect, collaborate, and reimagine the future of African language teaching and learning. Over the next few days, we will engage in rich discussions, share innovative research, explore digital tools, and celebrate the cultural wealth embedded in our languages. I encourage each of us to participate actively, build meaningful connections, and leave here inspired with new ideas and renewed purpose.

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to our conference organizers, partners, presenters, and sponsors whose dedication has made this gathering possible. Your commitment continues to move our mission forward.

As we begin this conference, let us be reminded that the work we do is not only academic, but also transformational. By promoting African languages, we affirm identities, empower communities, and contribute to a more inclusive global knowledge system.

By promoting African languages, we affirm identities, empower communities, and contribute to a more inclusive global knowledge system.

Once again, welcome to the 29th Annual Conference of the African Language Teachers Association. I wish you all a productive, engaging, and memorable experience.

Thank you.

Gabriel Ayoola, PhD

President, African Language Teachers Association



2026 CONFERENCE THEME

Reimagining African Language Pedagogy In the Digital Age

The 29th Annual Conference of the African Language Teachers Association (ALTA) is hosted by Princeton University in New Jersey, USA. The conference is an annual gathering of African language educators, researchers, students, and community partners to build African language pedagogy by sharing their research, experiences, and best classroom practices.

In the current digital environment, language technologies have grown exponentially, yet African languages remain underrepresented. To address this disparity, the theme for the 2026 ALTA conference is “Reimagining African Language Pedagogy in the Digital Age.” We welcome teachers, researchers, technologists, and community educators to share their work pertaining to African language teaching in the digital environment and the connected classroom. Submissions may focus on research, classroom practices, tools, datasets, or community collaborations. We especially encourage work centering on underrepresented languages, historical languages, and learner accessibility.



2026 SUBTHEMES

African Language Research and Publication

Generating and disseminating knowledge on African languages, linguistics, and literature.

Classroom Practices and Curriculum Design

Pedagogical strategies, tools, and models that improve language learning and expand access.

Digital Learning Opportunities and Challenges

Technologies, tools, and ethics in the digital learning space; AI and the language classroom.

Community Engagement

Collaborations with heritage communities that foster language pedagogy.

Language and Culture Preservation

Principles, technologies, and advancements in the preservation of African languages and literary cultures.

PROGRAM AT-A-GLANCE

THURSDAY | APRIL 9

Thursday events take place at Princeton Theological Seminary's Erdman Center, 20 Library Place.

11:00 AM - 5:00 PM Conference Registration

1:00 - 5:00 PM Pre-Conference Workshop

5:30 PM Dinner

FRIDAY | APRIL 10

Friday and Saturday events take place on Princeton University campus.

Conference Registration

7:30 AM - 12:00 PM Louis A. Simpson (LAS) 144

12:00 - 5:00 PM PIIRS Suite
NALRC Outreach table

7:30 - 9:00 AM Breakfast
PIIRS Suite

9:00 - 10:00 AM Welcome to Princeton
Julius Romo Rabinowitz Building (JRR) 399

10:00 - 11:00 AM Keynote Address 1
JRR 399

11:00 - 11:15 AM Short Break
JRR 399

11:15 AM - 12:45 PM Plenary 1
Shaping the Future of African Languages:
The Role of Linguists, Instructors, and Technology
JRR 399

12:45 - 1:45 PM Lunch Break
PIIRS Suite

1:45 - 3:15 PM Parallel Session 1
3 Concurrent Sessions
LAS 144 / JRR 399 / JRR 101

3:15 - 4:15 PM Parallel Session 2
3 Concurrent Sessions
LAS 144 / PIIRS Suite 161 / JRR 399

4:15 - 4:30 PM Coffee Break
JRR 399

4:30 - 5:30 PM Plenary 2
ALTA Special Plenary
JRR 399

6:00 - 7:30 PM Dinner
PIIRS Suite

SATURDAY | APRIL 11

7:30 - 9:00 AM Breakfast & Registration
PIIRS Suite

9:00 - 10:30 AM Parallel Session 3
3 Concurrent Sessions
JRR 101 / JRR 198 / JRR 217

10:30 - 11:30 AM Keynote Address 2
LAS B60

11:30 AM - 1:00 PM Parallel Session 4
4 Concurrent Sessions
JRR 101 / JRR 198 / JRR 217 / LAS 271

1:00 - 2:00 PM Lunch Break
LAS B60

2:00 - 3:30 PM Parallel session 5
Language Specific Panels
5 Concurrent Sessions
LAS 161 / JRR 101 / JRR 198 / JRR 217 / JRR 201

3:30 - 4:30 PM Plenary 3
NALRC Special Plenary
LAS B60

**4:00 - 6:00 PM African Summit
at Princeton Booth**
JRR Perel Atrium

4:30 - 5:30 PM ALTA Business Meeting
LAS B60

7:00 - 10:00 PM Banquet
Award Ceremony and Vote of Thanks
JRR Perel Atrium



Scan for the online schedule.

PROGRAM

THURSDAY | APRIL 9

Thursday events take place at Princeton Theological Seminary's Erdman Center, 20 Library Place.

11:00 AM - 5:00 PM Conference Registration

1:00 - 5:00 PM Pre-Conference Workshop

Jack Cooper Conference Room

Sponsored by NARLC & Princeton University

Creating Immersive Language Classrooms Hands-On Workshop Training in Multimodal Language Pedagogy (Sound, Space, and Interaction)

FACILITATORS:

Dr. Nandipa Sipengane *Yale University*

Dr. Filipo Lubua *University of Pittsburgh*

COORDINATOR:

Dr. Hannah Essien *Princeton University*

This workshop introduces African language instructors to emerging AI tools and digital technologies that can support effective language pedagogy. The session combines a brief theoretical overview with hands-on training, allowing participants to experiment with selected AI platforms and collaboratively design language-learning activities tailored to their specific African language contexts.

BREAK-OUT ROOM: Dolores Bedford Clarke Lounge

WORKSHOP SCHEDULE:

1:00 - 1:55 PM Session 1

Workshop Theoretical Framework

2:00 - 3:15 PM Session 2

Hands-on Practice 1 - Group 1 (Filipo)

Hands-on Practice 2 - Group 2 (Nandi)

3:15 - 3:25 PM Coffee Break

3:25 - 4:40 PM Session 3

Hands-on Practice 1 - Group 1 (Filipo)

Hands-on Practice 2 - Group 2 (Nandi)

4:45 - 5:00 PM Closing and Final Review

5:30 PM Dinner

The Erdman Center

FRIDAY | APRIL 10

Friday and Saturday events take place on Princeton University campus.

Conference Registration

7:30 AM - 12:00 PM Louis A. Simpson (LAS) 144

12:00 - 5:00 PM PIIRS Suite

Registration and information table

NALRC Outreach/Information Table

7:30 - 9:00 AM Breakfast

PIIRS Suite

9:00 - 10:00 AM Welcome and Introductions

Julius Romo Rabinowitz Building (JRR) 399

Hamza Zafer *Chair Conference Committee*

Gabriel Ayoola *ALTA President + ALTA Secretariat*

Jacob Dlamini *Director, Program in African Studies, Princeton University*

Fiona Romaine *PAS Program Manager, Local Committee Admin*

10:00 - 11:00 AM Keynote Address 1

JRR 399

Professor Ebenezer Ayesu

Heritage Christian University, Amasaman-Accra, Ghana

The Digital Tongue: Reimagining African Languages Pedagogy in the Era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution

MODERATOR:

Francis Akutey Baffoe *Harvard University*

11:00 - 11:15 AM Coffee Break

11:15 AM - 12:45 PM Plenary 1

JRR 399

Shaping the Future of African Languages: The Role of Linguists, Instructors, and Technology

CHAIR: Happy Buzaaba *Princeton University*

DISCUSSANTS:

Christiane Fellbaum *Princeton University*

Srinivas Bangalore *Princeton University*

Lilian Wanzare *Maseno university*

Andiswa Bukula *Penn State University*

Prof Patrice Nganang *Stony Brook University*

Prof John Mugane *Harvard University*

PROGRAM

12:45 - 1:45 PM Lunch Break

PIIRS Suite

1:45 - 3:15 PM Parallel Sessions 1**PANEL 1** LAS 144**Classroom Practices and Curriculum Design****CHAIR:** Elias Magembe *American University*Oluwaseyi Fasunhan *Michigan State University***Perspectives on L2 Enrollment in Yoruba as a Less Commonly Taught Language: Identity, Investment, and Linguistics Entrepreneurship**

Ọdúnṣànmí Ajíbòdún Wáléọlá and Dámilólá

Adébòńọjọ Alámọjá Yorùbá

Curating Digital Listening Resources for Novice Yorùbá Learners without Immersive Environments (Alámọjá Yorùbá)Beatrice Ng'ũono Okelo *Indiana University***Using OPI as a Learning Tool to Improve Swahili Students' Speaking Proficiency**Kevin Chisaka *University of Notre Dame***The impact of Dyslexia on the Acquisition of Kiswahili among Second Language Learners****PANEL 2** JRR 399**Classroom Practices and Curriculum Design****CHAIR:** Grace Charles Mkomwa *Howard University*Dainess Maganda *University of Georgia***Swahili language and culture without borders: the case for "Siri ya mtungi"**Leonora Anyango *University of Pittsburgh***Interpretation, Translation and Mental Health: An Imperative Discussion**Abiodun Salawu *North-West University (South Africa)***Hybridization of the indigenous and the modern: The interplay of the digital and the African indigenous media**Nicholas Obeng Agyekum *Indiana University Bloomington***A Study of Language Ideologies and Language Practices in a Second Language Class****PANEL 3** JRR 101**Classroom Practices and Curriculum Design****CHAIR:** Zoliswa Mali *Boston University*Iyabode Akande *Awolowo University (Nigeria)***Leveraging Artificial Intelligence for Bilingual Language Instruction: A Comparative Study of English and Yoruba in Osun State**Emmanuel Nthuka *Ohio University* and Aidah Mutenyo *Kabale University (Uganda)***A Comparative Analysis of Artificial Intelligence and Human Translation: A Case Study of the Kiswahili Rendition of Animal Farm**Leonard Muaka and Esther Lisanza *Howard University***The Future of African Language Teaching in the U.S. in the Digital Age**Rendani Molubo *Rhodes University***Digitally Rooted Pedagogies: Reimagining South African Indigenous Language Teaching Through Culturally Intelligent Technologies****3:15 - 4:15 PM Parallel Sessions 2****PANEL 1** LAS 144**Language Preservation and Community Engagement****CHAIR:** Judith Mmari *Boston University*Sipho Sithole *Howard University***The crisis of language ownership, commodification, and who owns it?**Beatrice Mkenda *University of Iowa***Enhancing Cultural Understanding Through Museum Experience in Language Curriculum**Patrick Mose *Ohio University***Reimagining Evaluation: Exploring AI Tools for Meaningful Assessment and Evaluation in African Languages**Mariame Iyane Sy *Columbia University***Decolonial Pedagogy in African Language Teaching**

PROGRAM

PANEL 2 LAS 161

Language and Culture

CHAIR: Emmanuel Nthuka *Ohio University*

Matemane Lekganyane *University of Pretoria (RSA)*

The Unhealthy Relationship Between Tradition and Modernity in the Sepedi Drama Go Fetogile

Temitope Naomi Abike Oshinnaya *University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

Yoruba Language and Cultural Preservation Through Cinema: A Critical Analysis of Contemporary Yoruba Films

Damilola Adebajo *University of Georgia*

Feeling Yorùbá: Language, Identity, and Belonging through Yorùbá Day at UGA

David Kyeu *University of California, Berkeley*

Using WhatsApp Chat to Enhance Essay Writing in Swahili and Amharic

PANEL 3 JRR 399

Language Preservation and Community Engagement

CHAIR: Hamza Zafer *Princeton University*

Amal El Haimeur *University of Kansas*

Writing Our Stories: Enhancing Arabic Literacy through Student Narratives

Asmaa Benbaba *University of Kansas*

Crafting Stories to Enhance Vocabulary Learning through Digital Storytelling

Mounia Mnouer *Princeton University*

Amazigh Video Narratives: Language Policy, Rights, and Indigenous Representation

Judith Jai Jefwa *United States International University-Africa*

Birds, Words, and Worlds: Documenting Avian Lexicon in Maragoli Oral Literature Genres

4:15 - 4:30 PM Coffee Break

JRR 399

4:30 - 5:30 PM Plenary 2

JRR 399

ALTA SPECIAL PLENARY

State and Future of African Language Pedagogy in the Face of US Political Landscape

CHAIRS: Dr. Gabriel Ayoola *University of Michigan* and Dr. Esther Lisanza *Howard University*

DISCUSSANTS:

Prof Akinloye Ojo *University of Georgia, Athens*

Prof Leonard Muaka *Howard University*

Dr. Mariame Sy *Columbia University*

Dr. Galen Sibanda *Michigan State University*

Dr. Kazeem Sanuth *NARLC*

SATURDAY | APRIL 11

7:30 - 9:00 AM Breakfast

PIIRS Suite

7:30 - 9:00 AM Conference Registration

PIIRS Suite

9:00 - 10:30 AM Parallel Session 3

Digital Learning

PANEL 1 JRR 101

ROUND TABLE

Artificial Grammar, Real Lessons: Mapping AI Errors in African Languages for Pedagogy and Model Improvement

CHAIR: Matthew Ajibade *Indiana University Bloomington*

DISCUSSANTS:

Matthew Ajibade *Indiana University Bloomington*

Artificial Grammar, Real Lessons: Investigating AI-Generated Grammar in Yoruba

Beatrice Ng'uono Okelo *Indiana University Bloomington*

Artificial Grammar, Real Lessons: Evaluating AI Grammatical Competence in Swahili

Ugonna Ahumibe *Indiana University Bloomington*

Artificial Grammar, Real Lessons: Examining AI-Produced Grammatical Structures in Igbo

Isaac Muhando *Tulane University*

AI-mediated learning: Assessing student perception and attitudes towards the use of AI in a second language writing classroom

PROGRAM

PANEL 2 JRR 198**Digital Learning****CHAIR:** John Adebayo *Boston University*Everlyn Oluoch-Suleh *United States International University-Africa***Teaching Reading in Kiswahili in Kenyan Grades 1–3: Exploring Direct Instruction Strategies and Curriculum Support**Oluwafunke Ogunya *Howard University***Enhancing African Language Learning Through Digital Diaspora, Online Communities, and Social Media**Raphael Biryu *University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill***Social Media as a Tool for Contextualized Language Instruction****PANEL 3** JRR 217**Classroom Practices****CHAIR:** Abdul Nanji *Columbia University*Kaosarat Aina *Indiana University***A Resource for Pronunciation Feedback Systems: Creating a Phonemically Annotated Speech Corpus of Yoruba Language Learner Speech**Joshua Roberts, Zoliswa Mali and Judith Mmari
*Boston University***Computerization of Vocabulary and Effect on Swahili Pedagogy**Mohamed Mwamzandi *University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill***Presentations as Pedagogical Tools in Swahili Instruction**Victor Alabi *University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill***Music in the language class: Exploring the functional use of music and songs in language pedagogy****10:30 - 11:30 AM Keynote Address 2**

LAS B60

Dr Caroline Asimwe*Executive Secretary East African Kiswahili Commission***Linguistic Inclusion in the Digital Ecology as a Catalyst for National and Regional Development: Lessons from the East African Community****MODERATOR:** Dr. Kiarie wa Njogu *Yale University***11:30 AM - 1:00 PM Parallel Session 4****PANEL 1** JRR 101**Language Preservation and Community Engagement****CHAIR:** Vinold Mkenda *St. Lawrence University*Adebimpe Adegbite *University of Texas at Austin***Reimagining Heritage Language Pedagogy: Yoruba Proverbs in Immersion Education**Benard Odoyo Okal *Maseno University***The Impact of Study Abroad and Global Classroom: The Case of Princeton in Kenya Global Seminar Program**Ebenezer Ayesu *Christian Heritage University*
and Hannah Essien *Princeton University***Technologies, and Advancements in Preserving African Languages and Literary Cultures: Ghanaian Researcher's Perspective & Reflections**John Munyui Muchira *University of Florida*,
Peter Ojiambo *University of Kansas*,
and Brenda Wawire *Florida State University***Innovation, Research, and Publication in African Languages: The Case of the Hujambo Project****PANEL 2** JRR 198**Curriculum and Scholarship****CHAIR:** Esther Lisanza *Howard University*Jacob Mwita *Oklahoma State University***Swahili Popular Culture and Queer Politics: Analysis of Jike Dume (Tom Boy) Film**

PROGRAM

Carolyn Ulomy *University of Mississippi*
**Can I Be Honest? A Reflective Account
 of Learner-Curated Portfolios and Assessment
 in a Swahili Class**

Louisa Maria *Indiana University*
**Reimagining Kiswahili Learning under CBC:
 A Learner-Centered Approach**

Anne Jebet *University of Virginia*
**The Role of WhatsApp in Language Learning
 Beyond the Classroom**

PANEL 3 JRR 217

ROUND TABLE

**Creation of Instructional Modules for
 Yorùbá and Swahili Learning: Results from
 a Grant-Funded Project**

CHAIR: Gabriel Ayoola *University of Michigan*

DISCUSSANTS:

Magdalyn Akiding *University of Michigan*
 Gabriel Ayoola *University of Michigan*
 Marko Mwipopo *University of Michigan*
 Mawazo Silomba *University of Michigan*
 Motunrayo Adesiyani *University of Michigan*

PANEL 4 LAS 271

**Language Preservation and
 Community Engagement**

ROUND TABLE

**Research and Application of AI in Participatory
 Approaches to the Preservation and Development
 of African Languages and Dialects**

CHAIR: Professor Alwiya Omar *Indiana University*

DISCUSSANTS:

Professor Alwiya Omar *Indiana University*
 Dr. Beatrice Mkenda *University of Iowa*
 Professor Leonard Muaka *Howard University*
 Dr. Filipo Lubua *University of Pittsburgh*
 Dr. Patrick Mose *Ohio University*
 Dr. Peter Mwangi *Northwestern University*

1:00 - 2:00 PM Lunch Break

LAS B60

2:00 - 3:30 PM Language Specific Panels

PANEL 1 LAS 161

Yoruba

CHAIR: Gabriel Ayoola *University of Michigan*

Temitope Abike Oshinnaya *University of North Carolina at
 Chapel Hill*

Ìsàmúlò Orin Fún Èkọ̀ Edè

Matthew Ajibade *Indiana University Bloomington*

**Ìmúlò èdè Yorùbá l'Àmériká: Ìtúnṣe sílábòṣì àti
 idàgbàsókè àkórí tó bá àìní akẹ̀kọ̀ mu**

Foluke Akinyemi *Yale University*

**Dídáàbò bo Àṣà àti Ìṣe Yorùbá nínú Yàrà Ìkẹ̀kọ̀
 pèlú Lílo Ìtākùn Ayélujára ní Pàtàkì Jùlọ̀ Àwọ̀n Ìtàn
 Láti Inú Odù-Ifá**

PANEL 2 JRR 101

Swahili Session 1

CHAIR: Jane Mhina *Hot Spot Promotion, Tanzania*

Joash J. Gambarage *The University of British Columbia*

**Ufundishaji Kiswahili Kwa Njia Furahishi: Mbinu Ya
 Kuongeza Uelewa Na Idadi Ya Wanafunzi**

Sheila Pamela Wandera-Simwa *Laikipia University*

**Kutoka Ubaoni hadi Mtandao Kasi:
 Mitazamo ya Wanafunzi wa Kiswahili
 kuhusu Ujifunzaji wa Kidijitali**

Patrick Oyinda *Howard University*

**Nafasi ya Video Halisia katika Ufundishaji
 wa Kiswahili kwa Wageni**

PANEL 3 JRR 198

Swahili Session 2

CHAIR: Grace Charles Mkomwa *Howard University*

Beatrice Ng'uono Okelo *Indiana University*

**Nafasi na Umuhimu wa Mtihani wa OPI katika
 Darasa la Kiswahili kama Lugha ya Kigeni**

Asmaha Heddi *The University of Kansas*

**Matumizi ya Mchezo wa Jeopardy katika
 Kuimarisha Kumbukumbu ya Msamiati kwa
 Wanafunzi wanaojifunza Kiswahili**

PROGRAM

PANEL 4 JRR 201

Zulu/South African Languages

CHAIR: Bongeka Selepe *Indiana University*

Phumelele Zamangwane Ndlela *University of the Witwatersrand*

Ucwangingo Ngezimbangela *Zokuphaswa KwesiZulu*

Ulimi LwaseKhaya *Ngendlela Engagculisi Ebangeni Le-10*

Ezikoleni Eziselokishini *Lase-Ekurhuleni East Kubafundi*

Abafundiswa *Kusetshenziswa Ukuxuba Izilimi NgesiNgisi*

3:30 - 4:30 PM Plenary 3

LAS B60

NALRC SPECIAL PLENARY

Kazeem Kehinde Sanuth *NALRC*

and Kim Pole *Teaching Artist Institute*

Toward a Thriving Framework for African Language Programs in U.S. Higher Education

4:30 - 5:30 PM Business Meeting

LAS B60

4:00 - 6:00 PM African Summit at Princeton Booth

JRR Perel Atrium

7:00 - 10:00 PM Banquet and Award Ceremony

JRR Perel Atrium

Performances

Award Ceremony - ALTA Secretariat

Awardee speeches

AWARD RECIPIENTS

Eyamba Bokamba

Professor Emeritus, African Linguistics

University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign

Lioba Moshi

Professor Emeritus, Comparative Literature
& Intercultural Studies

University of Georgia, Athens

Charles Bwenge

Professor Emeritus, African Languages and Pedagogy

University of Florida, Gainesville

Vote of thanks and recognition of sponsors –

Happy Buzaaba



Scan for the online schedule.



ABSTRACTS



KEYNOTE 1

Professor Ebenezer Ayesu *Heritage Christian University, Amasaman-Accra, Ghana*

The Digital Tongue: Reimagining African Languages Pedagogy in the Era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution

A linguistic mapping that marginalizes African languages and treats them more like folklore than as vehicles for philosophy, science, and the future has moulded the world's literary landscape for centuries. As we gather at Princeton in 2026, we are not only living in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), a period of unparalleled technological disruption, but we are also at a pivotal point in the history of linguistic justice. This keynote speech will address a crucial paradox: although 4IR technologies—from augmented reality to machine learning—threaten to further homogenize global culture, they also present a significant and unparalleled chance to decolonize and revive African language instruction.

Beyond the dichotomy of “endangered” versus “digital,” this discussion will examine how we may use the revolution's basic instruments to transform the field of education. How can AI-powered language platforms foster true fluency in isiZulu, Wolof, or Amharic while overcoming the predominance of English, French, or Portuguese? How can new learners be fully immersed in the embodied, cultural environments from which these languages receive their deepest meaning, in addition to grammar? This talk will look at pilot projects that are already bridging the gap between the village square and the worldwide network, such as digital lexicography, interactive storytelling apps, and online communities.

Importantly, this is a story about technology as a tool to be used intentionally rather than as a saviour. The potential for colonial biases to be encoded into algorithms, the significance of community-led data sovereignty, and the necessity of ensuring that the “digital tongue” speaks with the accents and inflections of its speakers rather than its programmers are some of the ethical aspects of this digital turn that we shall address.

By rethinking pedagogy for the 4IR, we are curating the survival of innumerable worldviews, poetic traditions, and ways of knowing in addition to teaching languages. This keynote will make the case that ensuring African languages not only enter but also contribute to the definition of the digital age is the most radical act for translators, writers, and educators. It is an appeal to create a future in which the global canon is translated from African languages rather than into them.



KEYNOTE 2

Dr. Caroline Asiimwe *Executive Secretary, East African Kiswahili Commission*

Linguistic Inclusion in the Digital Ecology as a Catalyst for National and Regional Development: Lessons from the East African Community

African languages remain significantly underrepresented in the digital space, creating forms of exclusion. When languages are absent from digital platforms, people's cultures, and the knowledge systems they carry are also marginalized. As digital infrastructures increasingly act as bridges between local knowledge and global participation, a critical question arises: whose languages and knowledge systems will shape the digital future? This question has important implications for the development of artificial intelligence within the linguistic ecology

ABSTRACTS

of the East African Community (EAC), particularly regarding policies, legal frameworks, and digital infrastructure that support linguistic diversity. In the region, the East African Kiswahili Commission (EAKC), working with other stakeholders, has initiated efforts to strengthen the digital presence of Kiswahili, including the development of digital dictionaries, language corpora, and online learning platforms. Consequently, Kiswahili is increasingly being considered as a critical enabler for AI-supported education, digital research, e-commerce, and cross-border communication. While Kiswahili benefits from its position as an official and widely spoken regional language, the limited digital inclusion of other indigenous African languages continues to challenge the full realization of regional integration within the East African Community. This presentation examines the challenges and emerging regional strategies aimed at integrating underrepresented African languages into the digital ecology to support regional development. Using the EAC and the EAKC as entry points, it argues that the digital future will not be determined solely by technological advancement but also by whose languages and knowledge systems are allowed to participate. Decolonizing AI in African languages will enable communities to share their knowledge globally while integrating diverse cultural values into development agendas at national, regional, and continental levels.

PLENARY 1

CHAIR: Dr. Happy Buzaaba *Princeton University*

Shaping the Future of African Languages: The Role of Linguists, Instructors, and Technology

This panel brings together scholars in AI and language technology, linguists, and African language instructors to reflect on the current state and future of African languages in a rapidly changing technological landscape. The conversation will explore how teaching, linguistic expertise, and language technology can work together to support preservation, research, and innovation for African languages.

PLENARY 2

ALTA SPECIAL PLENARY

Dr. Gabriel Ayoola *University of Michigan* and Dr. Esther Lisanza *Howard University*

The State and Future of African Language Pedagogy in the Face of US Political Landscape

To be sponsored by ALTA secretariat

This panel examines the current state and future direction of African language pedagogy within the evolving political landscape of the United States. As national conversations around immigration, diversity, equity, and global engagement continue to shift, African language programs face both emerging opportunities and significant challenges. In particular, changing federal and state policies, along with uncertainties surrounding funding for Title VI and other less commonly taught languages, pose serious threats to the sustainability and growth of these programs. Despite these constraints, the panel also highlights potential pathways and emerging opportunities for African language pedagogy as the future continues to unfold.

PLENARY 3

NALRC

Kazeem Kehinde Sanuth *National African Language Resource Center*Kim Pole *Teaching Artist Institute***Teaching Artist Institute. Toward a Thriving Framework for African Language Programs in U.S. Higher Education**

African language programs in U.S. higher education have historically cycled through marginalization, expansion, and renewed precarity. Despite their vital role in advancing scholarship, fostering cultural understanding, and supporting engagement with the African continent and its diasporas, these programs often rest on fragile institutional foundations. Many operate with limited resources, contingent instructional appointments, and uneven integration into broader university priorities. These recurring patterns reflect broader structural dynamics in U.S. higher education, including shifting funding, the marginalization of less commonly taught languages, and inconsistent commitment to global and area studies. The Thriving Framework Project seeks to reframe this condition by shifting the conversation from program survival to long-term sustainability and institutional leadership. Developed through collaboration among the Teaching Artist Institute, the National African Language Resource Center, and the African Academy of Languages, the project articulates the institutional, pedagogical, and community conditions necessary for African language programs to flourish in U.S. universities. Drawing on African and Indigenous pedagogical traditions, language education research, and continental language policy perspectives, the framework identifies key dimensions that support thriving programs, including cultural integration, community engagement, institutional commitment, academic sustainability, pedagogical innovation, and global partnerships. Together, these elements provide universities with a strategic model for strengthening African language instruction as a vital component of global engagement and equitable knowledge production.

PRESENTATIONS AND ROUNDTABLES*Alphabetical by presenter name.*Damilola Adebonojo *University of Georgia***Feeling Yorùbá: Language, Identity, and Belonging through Yorùbá Day at UGA**

This paper examines Yorùbá Day at the University of Georgia as an innovative model of Yoruba language pedagogy that merges language instruction with community-based cultural practice. Designed to complement Yorùbá language instruction, the event invited students to immerse themselves in the culture through lived experiences. Post-event surveys from participants across elementary and intermediate levels indicate that the celebration fostered a profound sense of identity and belonging. Over 90% of respondents described the atmosphere as fun, welcoming, and inclusive, with others reporting that this was the first time they had “felt truly and fully Yorùbá.” These reflections illustrate the affective dimensions of culturally sustaining pedagogy and the role of embodiment in reinforcing a sense of belonging. Activities such as the speaking challenge, food sharing, and fashion showcase transformed the classroom into a “living curriculum,” where learning became a communal participation. This paper situates Yorùbá Day within broader discourses on Yoruba language pedagogy, community engagement, identity, and cultural belonging. It argues that events like the Yorùbá Day reveal how African language courses can serve as a site of identity restoration and communal affirmation, where learning the language becomes an act of remembering, belonging, and cultural continuity.

Adebimpe Adegbite *University of Texas at Austin*

Reimagining Heritage Language Pedagogy: Yoruba Proverbs in Immersion Education

Heritage language education involves more than achieving linguistic accuracy; it encompasses the development of social, cultural, and pragmatic competence. True fluency requires navigating language encoded communicative norms and worldview. While children readily acquire majority languages through exposure, the transmission of minority or heritage languages, such as Yoruba, remains challenging, particularly in multilingual societies where dominant languages shape education and public life. Yet, effective language policy and revitalization begin within the home, where parents serve as the first and most influential educators. For Yoruba-speaking families in the diaspora, sustaining linguistic and cultural continuity across generations is both urgent and pedagogically significant. This research adopts a qualitative text-analytical approach, using approximately 200 proverbs selected through purposive and random sampling. The proverbs are analyzed across functional categories to illustrate how proverbial knowledge reflects and reproduces social values and structures. The study demonstrates that immersion in Yoruba proverbs provides an innovative pedagogical approach to heritage language instruction, bridging linguistic competence with cultural literacy. Proverbs, as rich linguistic artifacts, encapsulate the ethics, philosophy, and worldview of the Yoruba people. Engaging children in proverb-based learning enables parents and educators to transmit cultural knowledge while fostering bilingual competence that is communicative, culturally grounded, and sustainable across generations.

Kaosarat Aina *Indiana University*

A Resource for Pronunciation Feedback Systems: Creating a Phonemically Annotated Speech Corpus of Yoruba Language Learner Speech

An important theme in Second Language Acquisition is that learners face challenges when acquiring phonological and prosodic features. Accurate pronunciation is essential for effective communication and confidence in learners (Phan et al., 2023), underscoring the importance of effective pronunciation feedback. This project is developing the first phonemically and tonally annotated Yoruba learners' speech corpus to serve as a foundational resource for developing Computer-Assisted Pronunciation Training (CAPT) tools and supporting linguistic research on speaking proficiency. This corpus enables systems to address common learner errors such as phonemic substitutions and tonal misassignments, enhancing feedback precision and learning outcomes. Data collection is ongoing with Yoruba learners across proficiency levels at Indiana University. Howard University, the University of Georgia, and the University of Wisconsin will follow. Each participant records 60 Yoruba sentences from Yorùbá Yé Mi (Mosadomi, 2013) and Jé K'Á Sọ Yorùbá (Schleicher, 1993) producing a 6,000-sentence corpus. Recordings are being annotated by three trained Yoruba phoneticians for phoneme accuracy, tonal realization, and sound insertions using a multi-tiered system. Inter-annotator agreement was evaluated using Krippendorff's Alpha (Krippendorff, 2011). Building on O'Neil et al. (2023), mispronunciations are deliberately retained and annotated, allowing pronunciation feedback systems to diagnose learner errors more effectively and advance data-driven Yoruba language pedagogy.

Matthew Ajibade, Beatrice Okelo and Ugonna Ahumibe *Indiana University Bloomington*

Artificial Grammar, Real Lessons: Mapping AI Errors in African Languages for Pedagogy and Model Improvement

This presentation examines the grammatical error patterns found in AI-generated texts in order to improve both language pedagogy and the development of more linguistically accurate artificial intelligence models for African languages. As large language models increasingly produce texts in Yorùbá, Swahili, Akan,

and Igbo, their outputs reveal systematic grammatical deviations that shed light on how these systems process tone, agreement, plural, pronominals, reduplication, and aspect. Through a qualitative analysis of AI-generated samples, this study identifies recurring issues such as tonal misassignments, inaccurate orthography representation, noun-class mismatches, misordered verb constructions, pronominal misrepresentation and misplacement, and inconsistent use of aspectual markers. These errors are not treated merely as flaws but as diagnostic data that highlight where computational understanding of African morphosyntax remains limited. The study argues that documenting and categorizing such errors can guide developers in refining AI models trained on underrepresented languages. At the same time, these outputs can be integrated into language classrooms as pedagogical tools, helping students identify, explain, and correct real-world examples of grammatical inaccuracies.

Matthew Ajibade *Indiana University Bloomington*

Ìmúlò èdè Yorùbá l'Àmèríkà: Ìtúnṣe sílábòṣì àti idàgbàsókè àkòrí tó bá ànì akékòṣù mu

Ìṣẹ̀ iwádíí yíí yẹ̀ ọ̀nà tí a lè gbà láti fi kún àwọn sílábòṣì Yorùbá ní orílẹ̀-èdè Amèríkà láti jẹ́ kí ibáṣepọ̀ wà láàárín ohun tí a ní kọ̀ àti ohun tí akékòṣù nílò. Kò sí ànìàní pé kíkọ̀ èdè Yorùbá ní orílẹ̀-èdè Amèríkà yàtò sí àwọn èdè Ilẹ̀-Adúláwò tó kù. Ìdí rẹ̀ kò jìnà rárá: ọ̀pọ̀lopọ̀ àwọn akékòṣù tó wà ní kilààsì Yorùbá ló jẹ́ pé àwọn ọmọ̀ tí a bí sí ẹbí tí wọ̀n tí n sọ Yorùbá ló pọ̀ jù nínú wọ̀n. Àmọ̀, gégé bíi àwọn èdè yòókù, a ní kọ̀ èdè Yorùbá lónìí gégé bíi èdè àjòjì. Sùgbọ̀n, bí a bá wò ó dáadàá, èdè Yorùbá kíí fi bẹ̀ẹ̀ ṣe èdè àjòjì nítorí ànfaàní wà láti sọ èdè náà ní orílẹ̀-èdè Amèríkà dáadàá. Nítórí ìdí èyí, ìṣẹ̀-ìwádíí yíí yẹ̀ ọ̀nà tí a lè gbà láti ríi wípé àwọn akékòṣù ní ànfaàní láti lo èdè yíí ní agbègbè wọ̀n. Ọ̀nà méjì ní a pín ìṣẹ̀ yíí sí. Àkókọ̀, a yẹ̀ àwọn àkòrí (topics) tí a lè fi kún sílábòṣì wa. Ìkejì, a wo ọ̀nà tí a lè fi kún àwọn scenarios wá láti rí wípé àwọn ohun tí àwọn akékòṣù lè múlò ní àwùjọ̀ wọ̀n wà lára ohun tí wọ̀n ní kọ̀.

Ọ̀dúnṣànmí Ajíbòdún Wáléọ́lá and Dámilólá Adébòṣòjò *Alámòjá Yorùbá*

Curating Digital Listening Resources for Novice Yorùbá Learners without Immersive Environments

Sourcing for aids for Yorùbá learners without immersive environments could be challenging. While there are many resources online, most were not designed for learners. This abstract explains how listening materials were sourced and integrated into an online classroom of a novice high learner residing abroad. Before joining, the learner had strong vocabulary for daily life but struggled to understand when spoken to. The abode of the learner and online nature of class made traditional immersion impossible, resources from online platforms proved overwhelming due to their pacing and lack of scaffolding for beginners. To “bring Yorùbá” to the learner, we created digital materials by recording phone calls with people, movie snippets, and topic-specific audio from native speakers. We also divided class sessions into speaking, listening, and reading with pre-exposure to situation-specific vocabulary, sayings, and practices. In addition, the learner had unscripted conversations with native speakers for 15 minutes every month. In six months, all these yielded gains: the learner could understand a ten-minute video compared to a minute clip in an hour with frequent pauses. By year-end, the student achieved intermediate mid proficiency, evidenced by how they were able to comprehend materials and have dialogues with native speakers.

Magdalayne Akiding, Gabriel Ayoola, Marko Mwipopo, Mawazo Silomba
and Motunrayo Adesiyon *University of Michigan*

Creation of Instructional Modules for Yorùbá and Swahili Learning: Results from a Grant-Funded Project

We, African language instructors in a Mid-Western university, recently received grant funding to develop robust online instructional materials for elementary Yorùbá and Swahili. The project has been ongoing since summer 2025 and these pedagogical materials are meant to adequately address all language skills, including listening, speaking, reading, writing, and intercultural competence. The materials contain a substantial amount of authentically sourced audio and video content besides text, hence being all-round in addressing learners' needs. The intended goals for these materials are two-fold: (1) to benefit Swahili and Yoruba learners in our university, and (2) to be made available to the public as Open Educational Resources (OERs) in an effort to boost availability of quality instructional materials to many others. While creating these instructional materials, we documented the entire process, including the successes and the challenges we encountered. We wish to present these details of the project alongside the modules we created at the ALTA conference as it would be a great opportunity to share our work and insights with our fellow instructors and receive feedback from them as specialists. Such feedback would be tremendously useful as we hope to implement the second phase of the project.

Foluke Akinyemi *Yale University*

Dídáàbò bo Àṣà àti Ìṣe Yorùbá nínú Yàrá Ìkẹkòò pèlú Lílò Ìtākùn Ayélujára ní Pàtàkì Jùlọ Àwọn Ìtàn Látí Inú Odù-Ifá

Bébà yìí ṣe àgbéyèwò bí a ṣe lè ṣàmúlò àwọn àkójopò ìtàn tó sodo sínu Odù-Ifá nínú ètò ìkòni nípasè ìtākùn ayélujára fún idáàbò bo àti igbéláruge èdè àti àṣa Yorùbá ní pàtàkì jùlọ láàrin àwọn akẹkọọ ọlódún kẹta nílẹ̀ Amẹ́ríkà. Látàrí bí Odù-Ifá ti jẹ ọkan lára ọrọ̀ àtẹnudẹnu Yorùbá ló mú kí ọpọ̀ nínú rẹ̀ ṣẹ̀gbé àti bí ó ti jẹ pé ọpọ̀lọpọ̀ àwọn àgbà Babaláwo ti ku tó sì pagidínà àkòsílẹ̀ ọpọ̀ nínú àwọn Odù-Ifá wọnyí; bẹ̀e sì rée látí ibèrè ní Ifá ti jẹ igi léyìn ọgbà kíkọ̀ ẹkọ̀ èdè àti àṣa Yorùbá. Ìdí rée ti ìṣe iwádíí yìí fi ṣe pàtàkì ti a ó sì ṣe àmúlò igbésẹ̀ ifọ̀rọ̀wánílúwò lẹnu àwọn ọgbóntarigi Babaláwo ní ilú Ìbàdàn nípasè lílò ọrọ̀ ibánisòrọ̀ láàrin àwọn babaláwo mēwàá lórí ifidímúlẹ̀ àwọn ìtàn tó sodo sínu Odù-Ifá. Ojú iwòye àti aláyé wọn ní a máa ṣe àtúpalẹ̀ rẹ̀ nínú ìṣe yìí tí yóò sì di àwọn ohun èlò amẹ̀kọ̀ọ̀rọ̀rùn fún àwa olùkọ̀ nípa kíkọ̀ ìtàn látí inú Odù-Ifá.

Victor Alabi *University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill*

Music in the language class: Exploring the functional use of music and songs in language pedagogy

The study explores strategies for incorporating music into functional contexts to enhance African language learning. Several studies have explored ways to integrate music into the classroom from various linguistic perspectives (Khaghaninejad & Fahandejsaadi, 2016; Sweeney, 2021; Pino, M. C., Giancola, M., & D'Amico, S., 2023; Sun, B., Yang, J., & Liang, Z., 2024; and Kieu, 2025) as well as from an ESL perspective. Whether in FL or SL language and culture classrooms, songs have proven to enhance learning. I explore strategies of using songs in what I term “functional topical contexts” in the language classroom. I draw examples from languages such as Yoruba, Swahili, Wolof, and IsiZulu. This strategy can be adopted in various African language classrooms at different levels of language learning. The import of this strategy is to foster lasting interest in the topics taught in the language classroom.

Leonora Anyango *University of Pittsburgh*

Interpretation, Translation and Mental Health: An Imperative Discussion

Interpreters and translators between any language take in all there is that they have to translate or interpret. Seldom are there any discussions of self-care, or even just how they can ameliorate the effects of what they go through while interpreting or translating. On a personal level, it is also difficult for them to think through whether they might want to take the job or not, especially because income earning takes precedence over overall health and mental wellbeing. For the most part, interpretation and translation are, or can be, lonely journeys where the expert is the only one who knows both languages and has to abide by a certain set of rules and/or code of conduct or ethics. This session is intended to be a space where interpreters and translators may discuss some of the most difficult challenges they face every day in their work. Here, they can also discuss the topics that they mostly find bearing a burden on them emotionally, mentally and psychologically. Suggestions on how to cope will be given, and ways to support one another will also be discussed. Resources will also be suggested, and their practicality and utilization be discussed. The need and ways of expansion for research in the area will be discussed.

Nicholas Obeng Agyekum *Indiana University Bloomington*

A Study of Language Ideologies and Language Practices in a Second Language Class

The current study examines language ideologies and linguistic practices of students in the African Language Program at IUB. Contemporarily, studies in language and linguistics have affirmed the discomfort and challenges that beset language students and stakeholders. Juyoung Song, (2011) posited that “Educating multilingual students is a great challenge for both teachers and parents in a society in which English is the medium of schooling and of wider communication.” The purpose of the study is to explore how the linguistic practices of students might be shaped or influenced by the language ideologies of instructors. The study adopts a case study design that implements classroom observations and interviews. Three language teachers and nine students: three each from the Advanced, Intermediate, and Elementary levels at the African Language program at Indiana University Bloomington were selected for the study. A pilot survey for the study reveals that most instructors tend to exhibit high degrees of prescriptivism, linguistic purism, monolingualism, and adherence to normative standards. These ideologies contribute to decreased student contributions, slower speech, more frequent self-correction, negative judgments of the acceptability of nonstandard forms, and commitment to a pure standard. The study proposes a need to incorporate more descriptive pedagogy, which has been proven to be successful (Kickham 2015).

Ebenezer Ayesu *Christian Heritage University, Ghana* and Hannah Essien *Princeton University*

Principles, Technologies, and Advancements in Preserving African Languages and Literary Cultures: Ghanaian Researcher’s Perspective & Reflections

This article offers a comprehensive and interdisciplinary examination of the preservation of African languages and literary cultures, underscoring the pressing necessity to protect these ancient linguistic and literary traditions that encapsulate intricate ecological knowledge, oral histories, ritual practices, and aesthetic expressions. The study emphasizes ethical preservation principles centered on community leadership, consent, reciprocity, and capacity building, highlighting the significance of holistic documentation that encompasses diverse genres and performance contexts. It critically evaluates contemporary and emerging technological tools, such as field documentation equipment, digital archives, optical character recognition (OCR), automatic speech recognition (ASR), text-to-speech

(TTS), neural machine translation (NMT), and multimodal generative AI, which collectively provide innovative avenues to enhance preservation efforts. The article further elucidates key advancements and initiatives, particularly within Ghana, emphasizing the roles of grassroots networks like Masakhane, academic institutions, non-governmental organizations, and large technology providers in fostering collaborative and sustainable language preservation projects. It also candidly reflects on the challenges faced by Ghanaian researchers, including resource constraints, negotiating orthographies, and ethical considerations related to data sovereignty and synthetic voice technologies. The conclusion advocates for an ethically grounded, community-empowered, and technologically informed approach that balances enthusiasm for digital innovation with respect for cultural protocols and long-term sustainability.

Asmaa Benbaba *University of Kansas*

Crafting Stories to Enhance Vocabulary Learning through Digital Storytelling

Higher education is undergoing a significant transformation through advancements in communication technology, which is reshaping the teaching of Arabic. Vocabulary acquisition is essential for learners to develop communicative competence in Arabic. Digital storytelling (DST), which integrates text, audio, and visual elements, offers a powerful tool to support vocabulary development by fostering active listening and contextual learning. This paper examines strategies for teaching Arabic vocabulary across various proficiency levels, highlighting the integration of DST within communicative, task-based, blended, and experiential learning frameworks.

Kevin Chisaka *University of Notre Dame*

The impact of Dyslexia on the Acquisition of Kiswahili among Second Language Learners

Research on the acquisition of the first language has shown that students learn more effectively and acquire their first language through social interaction and communicative language teaching. Through their first language acquisition, children learn a handful of common phrases, which creates a snowball effect. However, this is not always the case when it comes to the acquisition of Kiswahili among learners with dyslexia. Since the Kiswahili language presents a considerable challenge for students with dyslexia, the language's specificity is discussed, followed by an exploration of the impact of language difficulties on multilingual language development. The study employed multiple approaches, including classroom observations, assessment tests, and interviews with teachers and learners to examine the relationship between dyslexia and Kiswahili acquisition. The findings revealed that learners with dyslexia face significant challenges in reading fluency and comprehension due to Kiswahili's lexical complexity, but when detected early, multisensory teaching methodologies that cater to visual, kinesthetic, and auditory learners greatly enhance learning outcomes. The paper will also discuss aggravating factors that worsen this matter. Finally, the paper offers recommendations to help educators and policymakers develop more strategies that better support learners with dyslexia in Kiswahili acquisition.

Amal El Haimeur *University of Kansas*

Writing Our Stories: Enhancing Arabic Literacy through Student Narratives

This presentation introduces Qissas Attulab: A Path to Writing in Arabic, an innovative e-book that addresses the lack of specialized writing resources for Arabic learners at Novice-High to Intermediate-High levels. Adopting a student-centered approach, the e-book features stories inspired by student writings from the University of Kansas and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Its thematic progression—from self-introductions and family to daily routines and travel—supports linguistic growth and cultural

awareness. Rooted in Kramsch's (1985) theory of the "joint construction of social reality," the e-book connects learners' perspectives with different cultural contexts, promoting intercultural understanding. Based on Gulla and Sherman's (2020) insights into shared narratives, this method encourages belonging and community among learners. Unlike complex authentic texts (Berardo, 2006), it offers accessible content that improves reading comprehension and writing skills. Each chapter includes pre-, during-, and post-reading activities that promote inquiry-based learning and critical thinking. Key vocabulary, guided writing prompts, and visual aids improve comprehension and engagement. Suitable for elementary and intermediate levels, the e-book is fully computer-friendly and available through KU Open Resource. By combining reading and writing, *Qissas Attulab* enhances Arabic proficiency, promotes cultural diversity, and empowers students to develop their voices as writers while extending learning beyond the classroom.

Oluwaseyi Fasunhan *Michigan State University*

Teachers' Perspectives on L2 Enrollment in Yoruba as a Less Commonly Taught Language: Identity, Investment, and Linguistics Entrepreneurship

This study investigates the perspectives of Yoruba language teachers on the enrollment patterns in the Yoruba language program as a less commonly taught language (LCTL) in relation to identity, investment, and linguistic entrepreneurship. Two Yoruba language teachers were interviewed in this qualitative study. The results revealed that identity is the primary factor influencing students' enrollment in the Yoruba language program, while investment serves as a progression or a barrier to enrollment. Furthermore, linguistic entrepreneurship is tied to the efforts, emotions, and all the activities that teachers invest in to get students enrolled in the Yoruba language program. These factors play significant roles in shaping learners' interest, their decision to enroll, and their motivation to remain in the Yoruba language program. The findings imply that LCTLs' administrators, particularly Yoruba teachers, material developers, and administrators, should continually develop syllabi/curricula that are targeted to students' future needs and helpful to students beyond cultural connection to attract students and sustain their motivation in the language programs.

Joash J. Gambarage *The University of British Columbia*

Ufundishaji Kiswahili Kwa Njia Furahishi: Mbinu Ya Kuongeza Uelewa Na Idadi Ya Wanafunzi

Ujifinzaji wa L2 mara nyingi hukumbana na changamoto katika kuiwasilisha lugha na uasili wake. Makala hii inanuia kuangazia ufanisi wa ufundishaji Kiswahili kama lugha ya pili unaotokana na kuingiza usimulizi wa hadithi katika mafunzo haya, kwa kurejelea nadharia ya Stephen Krashen (1982). Usimulizi wa hadithi utashughulikia changamoto hii kwa kuwazamisha wanafunzi katika mazingira yaliyosheheni masimulizi ambayo yanaunganisha lugha na hisia, ploti, na utamaduni. Mbinu hii ya kufundishia inayopendekezwa inafuata mkabala unaojulikana kama "Mafunzo yanayoendeshwa na Simulizi" (NDI). Kazi hii itazingatia malengo matatu yanayohusu matumizi ya hadithi katika ufundishaji wa Kiswahili; i) Kukuza kwa kiasi kikubwa ufahamu wa kusikiliza na kudumisha upataji wa msamiati wa kimuktadha kwa kuwaweka wanafunzi kwenye mazungumzo ya mambo inayorudiwa ndani ya mfumo wa masimulizi, ii) Kuimarisha ufasaha wa uzungumzi wa wanafunzi na kuboresha matamshi yao, na iii) Kudumisha umahiri na uelewa wa tamaduni uliofumwa ndani ya hadithi. Malengo haya yataelekeza utafiti ili kudhihirisha kwamba usimulizi wa hadithi hutoa njia mwafaka ya kukuza uwezo wa wanafunzi wa upataji wa lugha ya pili, kuwasiliana na kuzama ndani ya utamaduni wa jamii ya lugha lengwa.

Asmaha Heddi *The University of Kansas*

Matumizi ya Mchezo wa Jeopardy katika Kuimarisha Kumbukumbu ya Msamiati kwa Wanafunzi wanaojifunza Kiswahili

Mchezo wa Jeopardy ni mbinu bunifu inayoweza kutumiwa na walimu wa Kiswahili kuwasaidia wanafunzi kukumbuka msamiati wa mada mbalimbali walizojifunza. Kupitia mchezo huu, wanafunzi huulizwa maswali ya msamiati kwa mtindo wa ushindani, ambapo kila swali lina thamani ya alama na linahusiana na mada maalum kama vile chakula, familia, mazingira, nk. Mchezo huu huamsha ari ya kujifunza kwa njia ya burudani, huku ukihimiza ushirikiano na ushindani chanya miongoni mwa wanafunzi. Wasilisho hili limelenga kuonyesha namna walimu wanaweza kuandaa mchezo huu kwa urahisi na kuubadilisha kulingana na kiwango cha wanafunzi.

Anne Jebet *University of Virginia*

The Role of WhatsApp in Language Learning Beyond the Classroom

This paper presentation explores the use of social media, specifically WhatsApp as a telecollaborative tool to enhance second language (L2) learning and intercultural communication beyond the classroom. It investigates how undergraduate students from two universities, one in the United States and the other in Kenya, engaged in Kiswahili language exchange through structured online discussions. Drawing on classroom observations, teaching experiences, and student feedback, the study highlights how social media apps can foster communicative competence, promote cultural understanding, and increase student motivation. The findings demonstrate challenges and possibilities of WhatsApp's accessibility and informal nature to support L2 fluency, peer collaboration, and confidence in language learning.

Judith Jai Jefwa *United States International University-Africa*

Birds, Words, and Worlds: Documenting Avian Lexicon in Maragoli Oral Literature Genres

This paper examines the documentation of bird-related vocabulary in select Maragoli oral literature genres, emphasizing the relationship between language, culture, and ecological knowledge. Among the Maragoli of Western Kenya, birds serve as storytellers, messengers, and moral symbols in folktales, proverbs, and songs. Expressions such as Linyonyi liaseka munyu gwalilunga (“a bird laughed at the condiment that would be used to cook it”) illustrate how avian imagery conveys social values and worldview. These oral traditions preserve a rich Lulogooli lexicon linking bird species to ecological and cultural contexts. Yet this vocabulary is endangered as younger generations shift to dominant languages and abandon indigenous storytelling. The study underscores the urgency of documenting and revitalizing bird-related words as vital elements of linguistic and cultural heritage. It advocates a community-driven approach—storytelling with elders, participatory workshops with youth, and the creation of digital archives of avian terms and oral texts. Through oral literature analysis and collaborative fieldwork, the study shows that recording bird-related vocabulary transcends linguistic preservation by strengthening intergenerational ties, affirming cultural identity, and sustaining the Maragoli worldview that connects birds, people, and nature.

David Kyeu *University of California, Berkeley*

Using WhatsApp Chat to Enhance Essay Writing in Swahili and Amharic

This project explores the pedagogical potential of using WhatsApp synchronous group chats to enhance essay writing skills in Swahili and Amharic across face-to-face, hybrid, and online modalities at UC

Berkeley. By leveraging WhatsApp as a low-barrier, real-time communication tool, the initiative supports pre-writing activities such as brainstorming, vocabulary building, informal writing, and peer feedback — all essential for developing stronger academic writing in African languages. Students participate in weekly thematic discussions in Swahili or Amharic, where chat transcripts later serve as scaffolding for short essays written in more formal registers. The project responds to a key challenge in African language pedagogy: helping students transition from oral fluency to structured academic composition. Traditional platforms such as Google Docs and forums offer limited spontaneity, whereas WhatsApp provides immediacy, cultural authenticity, and accessibility familiar to African communication practices. The study aims to create a replicable framework for less commonly taught languages (LCTLs) that integrates everyday technology with structured writing instruction. Beyond improving student writing outcomes, this project contributes to broader conversations on decolonizing language pedagogy, bridging oral and written traditions, and leveraging mobile communication to strengthen African language literacy in higher education.

Matemane Lekganyane *University of Pennsylvania*

The Unhealthy Relationship Between Tradition and Modernity in the Sepedi Drama Go Fetogile

South Africa's diversity encompasses social, cultural, economic, and religious differences, further complicated by racial and tribal divisions. The country's turbulent past stems partly from failing to embrace cultural diversity appropriately. During colonialism and apartheid, South Africans endured systematic oppression by dominant groups. The Sepedi drama Go Fetogile portrays an unhealthy relationship between tradition and modernity. Modernization, driven by globalization, aggressively attacks and disrupts African indigenous systems. Modern culture subverts African people's belief in their traditions and customs, resulting in impaired or abandoned indigenous practices. This cultural loss diminishes South Africa's diversity. Cultural oppression occurs as modernity thrives while African indigenous cultures decline. The issue becomes controversial when considering the South African Constitution's role in mediating between these cultural forces. Understanding these historical influences is crucial for South Africans navigating their complex heritage. This study employs qualitative research methodology, focusing on literary text analysis to examine how Go Fetogile depicts this cultural tension.

Dainess Maganda *University of Georgia*

Swahili language & culture without borders: the case for “Siri ya mtungi”

Language learning and culture is greatly enhanced through audiovisual cues such as films, TV drama etc. For language teaching, different semiotic codes contribute to the construction of meaning, particularly within the multimodal analysis framework (Jewitt, 2014). This presentation demonstrates how a Tanzanian TV Swahili drama namely, “Siri ya mtungi” is used to enhance Swahili language teaching for vocabulary analysis and listening skills, while giving students access to the Swahili culture in contexts with limited access to Swahili native speakers. Pedagogical challenges and implications of using TV dramas are discussed.

Louisa Maria *Indiana University*

Reimagining Kiswahili Learning under CBC: A Learner-Centered Approach

Effective language instruction requires strategies that engage learners, promote comprehension, and expand access to meaningful language input. These strategies apply to Kiswahili and other African languages. In many Kenyan primary school classrooms, however, learners still face challenges such as

limited oral participation, varying proficiency levels in Kiswahili, especially where it is not the language spoken at home, and limited access to authentic Kiswahili materials. This abstract proposes strategies specifically tailored for Kiswahili learning within the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), while also embracing the opportunities of the digital age. The strategies include, but are not limited to, interactive storytelling using Kiswahili folktales, collaborative group activities that build everyday Kiswahili vocabulary, culturally relevant curriculum adaptations drawn from Kenyan social contexts, and the integration of simple digital tools such as audio recordings of native speakers, short Kiswahili videos, picture slides, and child-friendly educational apps. This forward-looking perspective offers practical guidance for educators, curriculum designers, and technologists seeking to strengthen the teaching and learning of Kiswahili and other African languages in both traditional and connected classrooms.

Beatrice Mkenda *University of Iowa*

Enhancing Cultural Understanding Through Museum Experience in Language Curriculum

Museums serve as dynamic spaces for cultural education, offering immersive experiences that foster understanding of various traditions, histories, and identities. This paper explores how museum visits can enhance cultural awareness and intercultural comprehension among language learners through direct engagement with artifacts, exhibitions, and interpretive storytelling. Drawing on experiential learning theory and constructivist pedagogy, the paper examines the educational impact of museum environments in promoting empathy, critical thinking, and cross-cultural dialogue. A case study from an institution that has a museum of art illustrates how curated experiences can bridge cultural gaps, support inclusive narratives, and stimulate reflective learning. This paper shows that museums are not only sources of heritage but also as active agents in cross-cultural understanding, history, and education, particularly in multicultural and globalized societies.

Mounia Mnouer *Princeton University*

Amazigh Video Narratives: Language Policy, Rights, and Indigenous Representation

In the current digital landscape, storytelling has become a crucial site for reclaiming Indigenous knowledge and identity. This presentation explores how Amazigh archiving functions as both an Indigenous methodology and a pedagogical tool in the digital age. Drawing from a community-based video archive featuring conversations I had with Indigenous Amazigh individuals in Morocco, the Canary Islands, and the diaspora in France, this work examines how the Amazigh articulate their lived experiences, express linguistic identities, and produce knowledge. The project situates Amazigh video archiving as a relational practice that restores ownership of Indigenous voices and challenges colonial frameworks of knowledge production. These archives serve as important educational resources. In my content course at Princeton University, I integrate these video narratives to engage students in critical discussions about language policy, linguistic rights, and the politics of representation. Through these classroom practices, students encounter Amazigh perspectives firsthand and reflect on the intersections of language, identity, and policy. By connecting digital storytelling with classroom practice, Indigenous-led video archiving can enrich African language education. These archives not only provide students with direct access to Amazigh voices and experiences but also support teaching approaches that prioritize community engagement, digital accessibility, and the continuation of Indigenous narratives.

Rendani Molubo *Rhodes University*

Digitally Rooted Pedagogies: Reimagining South African Indigenous Language Teaching Through Culturally Intelligent Technologies

South Africa's multilingual landscape offers a powerful foundation for educational transformation, yet indigenous language instruction continues to be constrained by Eurocentric models and limited digital resources. This paper proposes a new paradigm, the Digital Empowered Teaching Framework, which integrates culturally intelligent technologies with community-informed teaching approaches to strengthen the teaching and preservation of isiXhosa, isiZulu, and other official languages. Grounded in ethnographic observations and pilot interventions in rural and peri-urban classrooms, the study examines how digital tools can be aligned with indigenous storytelling practices, oral histories, and local communicative norms. Rather than treating technology as an external add-on, the approach embeds digital innovation within South African cultural epistemologies, ensuring that learning remains authentic and identity affirming. The research highlights three key outcomes: (1) digital platforms expand access to culturally relevant learning materials, (2) multimodal tools enhance learners' expressive range, and (3) community co-creation of digital content strengthens cultural continuity across generations. By involving teachers, elders, and youth in co-designing digital learning resources, the model resists homogenizing technological narratives and centers South African cultural agency. Ultimately, the study argues that future-oriented language pedagogy must intertwine technology with localized cultural logics to sustain linguistic heritage in a rapidly changing educational environment.

Patrick Mose *Ohio University*

Reimagining Evaluation: Exploring AI Tools for Meaningful Assessment and Evaluation in African Languages

Assessment and evaluation are vital components of effective language teaching and learning. In the digital age, artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming how African languages are assessed, evaluated, and understood. Moving beyond traditional testing, educators now have opportunities to harness AI to generate deeper insights into learner performance, progress, and engagement. This hands-on session will introduce participants to a range of AI-driven tools that support meaningful and culturally responsive assessment practices. Through guided demonstrations and collaborative exploration, attendees will learn how AI can enhance feedback, streamline evaluation processes, and reveal patterns of learner growth in technology-rich environments. The session invites participants to reflect on how AI can serve not only as a measurement instrument but also as a catalyst for informed, learner-centered decision-making in African language education.

Leonard Muaka and Esther Lisanza *Howard University*

The Future of African Language Teaching in the U.S. in the Digital Age

African language education in the United States and across the diaspora has long faced persistent and significant challenges. The field remains marginalized and often overlooked, characterized by limited resources, low visibility, and insufficient institutional support (Sennah & Omar, 2002). For decades, African language programs have struggled with instability—frequent program terminations, reductions in teaching positions, and fluctuating administrative commitments. These conditions have contributed to low enrollments, which have triggered additional program closures, creating a cycle of vulnerability. Recent changes in national and institutional policies have further intensified these challenges, placing African language instruction at a critical crossroads. This presentation examines the current state of the field, drawing on recent research and developments, particularly within Title VI centers and individual

institutions. The emerging picture is not optimistic; it reveals continued barriers that impede growth and sustainability. Nevertheless, the digital age offers meaningful opportunities. African language educators can leverage technological innovations to create more effective pedagogical resources, enhance access to high-quality materials, and design adaptable curricula that support the survival and expansion of these languages globally. Through current data and institutional analysis, this presentation aims to make sense of the present landscape and provide informed predictions and strategic recommendations for the future of African language teaching.

John Munyui Muchira *University of Florida*, **Peter Ojiambo** *University of Kansas*
and **Brenda Wawire** *Florida State University*

Innovation, Research, and Publication in African Languages: The Case of the Hujambo Project

This presentation highlights a step-by-step development of standards-based curriculum that chronicles adventures of two American students studying abroad in Tanzania for an academic year. We present two Open Educational Resources (OER), Hujambo! A Standards-Based Approach to Introductory Kiswahili, Volume 1 and Volume 2, which offer a comprehensive curriculum for elementary Kiswahili, integrating 5Cs of the world-readiness standards, backward curriculum design, and task-based framework. Each chapter of Hujambo textbook is thoughtfully designed to integrate the 5Cs of the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages—Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities—providing a structured roadmap to language proficiency and intercultural competence. The design approach provides insights into the students' encounters with a new culture and how it (re)shapes their view of the larger world. Each unit is centered around essential questions, with clear learning goals, learning activities that reflect meaningful and real-life experiences while drawing from authentic materials that are cognitively engaging. Units begin with dialogues or monologues that model the language and target grammatical constructions, then move on to carefully scaffolded activities that target core standards and encourage interaction and cultural exploration. The OER resource offers a model that can be adapted to design a curriculum for other LCTLs, especially African languages.

Isaac Muhando *Tulane University*

AI-mediated learning: Assessing student perception and attitudes towards the use of AI in a second language writing classroom

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) is reshaping language learning pedagogy in higher education while simultaneously challenging established norms. Its capacity to process large language model (LLM) datasets and generate human-like text enables dynamic, real-time interaction that can enhance language acquisition. A growing body of research indicates that integrating AI-powered technologies into language curricula fosters dialogic learning, personalized feedback, learner autonomy, and motivation (Mouliwaran & Kumar, 2023; Jian et al., 2022; Kohnke et al., 2023; Crompton et al., 2024). However, scholars have also cautioned that GenAI may diminish learners' critical consciousness, reinforce bias, and confine knowledge to algorithmic parameters (Seker et al., 2025; Baskara, 2025; Dobrin, 2023; Walter, 2024). This study investigates second language (L2) learners' attitudes and perceptions toward GenAI use in an academic writing course at a mid-level college in Louisiana. Data were collected through an online survey of thirty undergraduate L2 students (M=11, F=19). Employing a mixed-methods design, the data were analyzed both statistically and thematically. Findings indicate that while students recognize GenAI's potential impact on their problem-solving and critical thinking skills, they value its capacity to extend learning beyond the classroom—particularly through content scaffolding, immediate feedback, and its perceived nonjudgmental support for diverse learner abilities.

Mohamed Mwamzandi *University of North Carolina Chapel Hill*

Oral Presentations as Pedagogical Tools in Swahili Instruction

Oral presentations are widely used in African language instruction, yet their specific contributions to language development remain underexamined. This study explores how oral presentation pedagogy supports language acquisition in elementary Swahili classrooms by analyzing three assignments completed by six beginning-level learners. Two presentations were delivered in person and one via video recording. Collectively, these tasks demonstrate the value of incorporating digital platforms such as Zoom, Panopto, and PowerPoint to foster innovative multimodal communication, creativity, and learner engagement.

Grounded in socioconstructivist theory, which emphasizes active, student-centered learning (Naudé, 2006), the study prioritizes communicative competence over narrow grammatical accuracy (Barrett & Liu, 2016). Preliminary survey findings indicate that both live and pre-recorded monologues enhance fluency, pronunciation, confidence, and mastery of course content. Peer review and instructor feedback further support reflective practice, collaborative learning, and individualized pronunciation guidance. Students expressed a preference for in-person presentations due to the immediacy of interaction and feedback. The assignments incorporate culturally authentic themes such as family, weather and seasons, and travel, enabling learners to engage meaningfully with cultural contexts central to Swahili language use. Overall, the study highlights oral presentations as effective, technology-enhanced tools for promoting engagement, cultural awareness, and sustained language development in African language programs.

Jacob Mwita *Oklahoma State University*

Swahili Popular Culture and Queer Politics: Analysis of Jike Dume (Tom Boy) Film

Stuart Hall conceptualized Black Popular Culture as occupying a contested terrain. In other words, Black popular culture is shaped by ongoing struggles over meaning, identity, and representation. Black expressive forms such as music, fashion, language, dance, film, and visual culture provide rich sites where questions of identity and representation are debated, negotiated, and reimagined, often in response to dominant and oppressive cultural, social, economic, and political systems. While Hall's characterization is mainly useful for understanding Black cultural productions in the Black Diaspora, his reading offers an important theoretical lens for analyzing the role of popular culture in marginalized communities. This paper follows a 2014 Tanzanian popular film titled Jike Dume (Tom Boy). I argue that while the film challenges normative gender and sexual ideologies in East Africa, it nevertheless reinforces broader conservative ideals regulating local gender and sexual norms. This dual positioning raises critical questions at the intersection of local culture and global neoliberal politics with serious implications on the teaching of Swahili language and culture at home and in the Diaspora.

Phumelele Zamangwane Ndlela *University of the Witwatersrand*

Ucwaningo Ngezimbangela Zokuphaswa KwesiZulu Ulimi LwaseKhaya Ngendlela Engagculisi Ebangeni Le-10 Ezikoleni Eziselokishini Lase-Ekurhuleni East Kubafundi Abafundiswa Kusetshenziswa Ukuxuba Izilimi NgesiNgisi.

Lolu cwano luhlose ukuhlaziya amasu nezindlela zokuxuba izilimi ezisetshenziswa othisha abafundisa isiZulu njengolimi lwaseKhaya. Luphenya iqhaza elibanjwa wukudidiyela ulimi lwesiNgisi ekufundiseni isiZulu ulimi lwaseKhaya. Luphinde luhlale umthelela wokuxuba ngesiNgisi ekufundiseni isiZulu ulimi lwaseKhaya kubafundi bebanga le-10. Loluhlo lwesibini lusebenzisa injulawazi yokukutholwa kolimi lwesiBili ne-symbolic interactionism ukuhlola ukuthi othisha baliqonda kanjani iqhaza elibanjwa

wukuxuba izilimi emagumbini okufundela anabafundi bezilimi ezahlukene. Ngakolunye uhlangothi, ukuphenya izimvo zothisha ngokusetshenziswa kokuxuba izilimi ngenhloso yokuchazela abafundi ngokucacile kokufundwayo esifundweni sesiZulu ulimi lwaseKhaya. Lolu cwaningo lusekelwe yindlelakubuka yokuhumusha, ebheka ulwazi njengolwakhiwe ngokusebenzisa ukuxhumana komphakathi kanye nokusetshenziswa kolimi. Lolu cwaningo lusebenzisa indlela eyikhwalithethivu kanye nendlelende yocwaningonto, egxile ezikoleni ezi-3 zebanga le-10 zaselokishini lase-Ekurhuleni East. Izindlela nezinqubo zocwaningo zihlanganisa imininingo eqoqwe ngenhloso esakuhleleka ngenhloso yokuqoqa imibono yothisha nolwazi ngokuxuba izilimi njengesu lokufundisa emagumbini abuliminingi. Luphinde lubheke indlela othisha abaxuba izilimi ngayo phakathi nesifundo. Ukuhlolwa kwemibhalo efana nezinhlelo zesifundo nezinqubomgomo zolimi zesikole, kuqoqwe ngenhloso yokuqonda ukuthi izindlela zokufundisa zihambisana kanjani nemigomo yolimi ebekiwe. Okutholakele kocwaningo kuveza ukuthi; okokuqala, abafundi abanabo ubungcweti bokufunda isiZulu nesiNgisi ngoba banokuqonda namakhono aphantsi ezilimi zabo kanye nasolimini lokwEngeza. Okwesibili, othisha baxuba izilimi ngokweqile. Okokugcina, awukho umthetho noma inqubomgomo eqondisa ukuxuba kwezilimi ezikoleni zaselokishini. Lokhu kushiya othisha bangenaso isiqondiso namasu afanelekile okuxuba izilimi asebenzayo kunzikandaweni obuliminingi.

Emmanuel Ntuka *Ohio University* and Aidah Mutenyo *Kabale University, Uganda*

A Comparative Analysis of Artificial Intelligence and Human Translation: A Case Study of the Kiswahili Rendition of Animal Farm

Translation is a complex activity influenced by differences in language, context, culture, theory, and even stylistic approaches. This complexity is further heightened by the use of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, which at times distorts meaning in ways that differ from the nuanced attention a human translator might apply. Earlier, Kiswahili students would just read a translated hard copy as part of their literary texts. However, with Artificial Intelligence, readers find it easier to read the translated version with Artificial Intelligence. This study aims to examine the challenges of translating literary texts (specifically novels) from English to Kiswahili using artificial intelligence, with a focus on George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. The novel has previously been translated by a human as *Shamba la Wanyama*, providing a benchmark for comparison. The research will analyze both the human and AI-generated translations to identify key issues and offer recommendations. Particular attention will be given to linguistic challenges and synonym selection. The human translation will serve as a reference point for evaluating accuracy, while the AI translation will be assessed against the study's objectives.

Oluwafunke Ogunya *Howard University*

Enhancing African Language Learning Through Digital Diaspora, Online Communities, and Social Media

Stuart Hall conceptualized Black Popular Culture as occupying a contested terrain. In other words, Black popular culture is shaped by ongoing struggles over meaning, identity, and representation. Black expressive forms such as music, fashion, language, dance, film, and visual culture provide rich sites where questions of identity and representation are debated, negotiated, and reimagined, often in response to dominant and oppressive cultural, social, economic, and political systems. While Hall's characterization is mainly useful for understanding Black cultural productions in the Black Diaspora, his reading offers an important theoretical lens for analyzing the role of popular culture in marginalized communities. This paper follows a 2014 Tanzanian popular film titled *Jike Dume (Tom Boy)*. I argue that while the film challenges normative gender and sexual ideologies in East Africa, it nevertheless reinforces broader conservative ideals regulating local gender and sexual norms. This dual positioning raises critical

questions at the intersection of local culture and global neoliberal politics with serious implications on the teaching of Swahili language and culture at home and in the Diaspora.

Benard Odoyo Okal *Maseno University*

The Impact of Study Abroad and Global Classroom: The Case Of Princeton in Kenya Global Seminar Program

Study abroad and global classroom programs have been debated for more than a century in industrialised countries (Bourn, 2014) and are a trending topic in higher learning institutions worldwide (Alghamdi & Otte, 2016). These programs enhance interpersonal and communication skills, critical thinking, academic and professional knowledge, cultural immersion and also global competence among others (Alghamdi & Otte, 2016; Sisavath, 2021; Gan & Kang, 2022; Zhou, 2022). They are collaborative roundtable discourses designed to address complex phenomena (Landorf, Doscher & Simons-Lane, 2018) through multidisciplinary and trans-disciplinary sun-glasses (Steger, 2018; Zhou, 2022), and conducted for about eight weeks (Donnelly-Smith, 2009). This paper intends to provide an impact of studying abroad and the global classroom, focusing on the Princeton in Kenya Global Seminar program. Objectives of the paper will be to discuss general historical development, approaches or designs, and benefits and challenges of study abroad and global classroom programs; and reflect on the Princeton in Kenya global seminar in the context of scholarly debates on study abroad and global classroom programs.

Beatrice Ng'uno Okelo *Indiana University*

Using OPI as a Learning Tool to Improve Swahili Students' Speaking Proficiency

The Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI), which is an American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages' (ACTFL's) flagship assessment, assesses how well and appropriately an examinee uses language in non-rehearsed, spontaneous, and real-life situations. Its purpose is to find out what the examinee can do and what they cannot do in the target language. Besides using the OPI for assessment, can the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) be used as a learning tool, to improve the speaking proficiency of foreign language students? To what extent can the use of OPI as a learning tool improve Swahili students' speaking proficiency? This is the question that this study seeks to answer.

Beatrice Ng'uno Okelo *Indiana University*

Nafasi na Umuhimu wa Mtihani wa OPI katika Darasa la Kiswahili kama Lugha ya Kigeni

Mtihani wa kupima uwezo wa kuzungumza lugha, yaani, Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI), ambao ni mtihani wa Baraza la Marekani la Ufundishaji wa Lugha za Kigeni, kwa Kimombo, American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), unatathmini jinsi mtahiniwa anavyoweza kutumia lugha katika miktadha yoyote ile ya kihalisia na katika mawasiliano ya kila siku. Madhumuni ya mtihani huu ni kutathmini shughuli ambazo mtahiniwa anaweza na asizoweza kuzifanya kwa kutumia lugha lengwa kimapokeo. Kuwa na uelewa, walau wa kimsingi, wa mtihani wa OPI ni muhimu, kwa sababu, kunampa mwalimu wa lugha ya kigeni maarifa na ujuzi wa kuwa na darasa linalotilia maanani uwezo wa lugha wa wanafunzi. Kwa kurejelea muundo wa kijumla na vipengele vya kimsingi vya mtihani wa OPI, pamoja na mifano mbalimbali ya matumizi yake, wasilisho hili litajadili jinsi ya kushirikisha mtihani wa OPI katika ufundishaji na ujifunzaji wa Kiswahili kwa wageni na kama lugha ya kigeni. Isitoshe, wasilisho hili litajadili mbinu mbalimbali za kuandalia mtihani huu, yakiwemo matumizi ya nyenzo za Akili Unde na nyenzo nyinginezo za kiteknolojia.

Adeola Olaleye *Shanghai University*

From Once a Week to Thrice: A Digital Yoruba “Tencent Reading” Model for Building Fluency, Community, and Cultural Identity in the Oloburo Readers’ Club

This study presents the Oloburo Readers Club, a digital community initiative established in 2020 on the Tencent platform. The club was created to address the major challenges in sustaining Yoruba language and cultural engagement among speakers living in China, particularly during the isolation imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The program fosters language learning and cultural engagement by enabling interactive, communal reading of Yoruba prose and plays, thereby cultivating oral proficiency and cultural literacy. Through structured segments featuring thematic music, shared reading, reflective questioning, culturally themed games, and storytelling, the club amplifies participant confidence, facilitates peer correction, and bolsters linguistic competence across varying proficiency levels. Amid the pandemic, this initiative spurred vital social connection and improved mental well-being, stimulating a renewed interest in indigenous literary traditions. By creating a culturally grounded digital space, the club supports heritage language preservation, accelerates community building, and reinforces cultural identity. This study significantly contributes to the discourse on African language pedagogy by advancing knowledge of digital community engagement as an effective and scalable mechanism for sustaining heritage language and culture in a rapidly evolving digital and global landscape.

Everlyn Oluoch-Suleh *United States International University – Africa*

Teaching Reading in Kiswahili in Kenyan Grades 1–3: Exploring Direct Instruction Strategies and Curriculum Support

This action research investigates the effectiveness of direct instructional strategies in teaching reading in Kiswahili for early grade learners in Kenya, focusing on the gradual release of responsibility model (“I do, We do, You do”). Situated within national literacy interventions such as the Tusome programme and the Kenya Primary Literacy Programme (KPLP), the study examines how structured pedagogy, teacher training, and curriculum design contribute to literacy acquisition in Grades 1–3. Data were drawn from classroom observations and teacher reflections to assess the extent to which direct instruction strategies enhance decoding, fluency, and comprehension skills among young readers. The findings demonstrate that explicit, scaffolded teaching methods improve learners’ ability to recognize words, read accurately, and construct meaning from text. Curriculum materials aligned with teacher professional development foster consistency in instructional delivery, while ongoing coaching and feedback strengthen classroom practice. Challenges like limited resources, large class sizes, and varying learner readiness highlight the need for differentiated approaches and additional instructional support. The study recommends intensifying teacher mentoring and expanding curriculum resources tailored to learners’ diverse needs. The research underscores the centrality of direct instruction in Kenya’s literacy reforms and its potential to accelerate reading proficiency in Kiswahili during critical foundational years of schooling.

Temitope Naomi Abike Oshinnaya *University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

Yoruba Language and Cultural Preservation Through Cinema: A Critical Analysis of Contemporary Yoruba Films

Film is a mimetic art form that mirrors society. Introduced to Nigeria in 1903, the country has since developed one of the world’s largest film industries, Nollywood, which reflects and influences the society. This paper examines the role of Yoruba films in preserving and promoting Yoruba language and culture in the digital age. Through a critical analysis of selected Nollywood films, the study argues that Yoruba cinema is a vital platform for protecting, preserving, and promoting Yoruba language, customs, and

traditions. The use of Yoruba language, indigenous materials, and cultural rituals in film narratives helps preserve the cultural identity of the people. The paper also discusses the challenges of preserving Yoruba language and culture amidst globalization and digitalization, highlighting the significance of Yoruba films in promoting the language and culture, particularly among younger generations. This study concludes that Yoruba filmmakers have significantly contributed to preserving and promoting Yoruba language and culture globally through their films. It recommends strategies for stakeholders to harness this potential in preserving African languages and culture in the digital age.

Temitope Abike Oshinnaya *University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

Ìsàmúlò Orin Fún Èkó Edè

Èdè Yorùbá je òkan pàtàkì lára èdè adúláwò tí ó gbajúmò ní orílẹ̀-èdè Amérikà. Gégé bí olùkó èdè Yorùbá tí ó ní ojùse láti rí i pé àwon akékòò ní ojúlówó ìmò nínú èdè tí wòn n kọ. Ònà kan pàtàkì láti se èyi ni, síse àkíyèsì ohun iwúrí tàbí ìmóríyá fún àwon akékòò náà tí yòò ràn wón lówó nínú èkó èdè won. Òkan pàtàkì lára ohun ìmóríyá yí ni orin. Orín je òkan pàtàkì lára ewì alohùn Yorùbá àwon méjì tó kù ni àràngbó àti isàré. Ìwéhùn bí a se n gbé won jáde ni àbùdá kan pàtàkì tí ó se ipínsísòrì àwon ewì alohùn Yorùbá yí. Ìwéhùn bí a se n sọrọ ni ojojumọ ni a fi maa n gbe àràngbọ kale, ohùn rírán ni ti isàré, Orin nikan ni o ni iwéhùn ti o se e patẹ, lu ilu si, ki a si jo si, ti gbogbo re yoo si se weku. Orin je ona kan pataki ti pupo ninu awon akekoo maa n gba dara won laraya. Ninu ise iwadii yii, a samulo orin mewaa. Iwadii yii fihan pe iranlọwọ nla gbàà ni isàmúlò orin n se fún àwọn akẹkọọ ède Yorùbá.

Patrick Oyinda *Howard University*

Nafasi ya Video Halisia katika Ufundishaji wa Kiswahili kwa Wageni

Ufundishaji wa Kiswahili kwa wageni ni mchakato ambao unastahili kutekelezwa kwa uangalifu na kwa njia inayojenga motisha kando na kuteka umakini wa wanafunzi husika. Wanafunzi ambao wanajifunza Kiswahili kama lugha ngeni katika kiwango cha Novice huwa na misukumo mbalimbali ambayo huathiri safari yao ya ujifunzaji wa lugha hii. Kwa hivyo, mikakati faafu huwa muhimu katika shughuli hii ya ufundishaji wa Kiswahili ili kuboresha ujuzi wa wanafunzi, kujenga motisha mapema na mitazamo chanya miongoni mwao. Katika mchakato wa ufundishaji wa Kiswahili kwa wageni ambao wako mbali na mazingira halisia ya lugha hii, matumizi ya video halisia na zilizoteuliwa kwa umakini hukumbatiwa. Kazi hii inalenga kubainisha nafasi ya video halisia na sahili katika ufundishaji wa Kiswahili na utamaduni wake kwa wageni hasa katika kiwango cha Novice. Data lengwa itapatikana kwa njia ya uchunguzi shiriki na mahojiano. Watafitiwa ishirini watachaguliwa kwa njia ya kimaksudi kutokana na maoni ya Yin (2002) kwamba si lazima idadi ya wahojiwa katika kazi ya utafiti kuwa ukubwa ili kutoa matokeo ya kuaminika. Watafitiwa lengwa ni wanafunzi wa kigeni wa Kiswahili katika kiwango cha Novice. Uchanganuzi wa data utafanywa kwa njia ya maelezo ya kina na kihatua kulingana na malengo ya utafiti huu. Nadharia ya Jamii na Tamaduni ya Vygotsky itatumika katika uchanganuzi wa data.

Joshua Roberts, Zoliswa Mali and Judith Mmari *Boston University*

Computerization of Vocabulary and Effect on Swahili Pedagogy

Tokenization, or parsing, of vocabulary words in any language is a challenge, and in an agglutinative language like Swahili, no such automated process exists. This complicates the task of dictionary writing, as well as the pedagogy of vocabulary teaching in second-language educational settings. As it is, it is difficult for a word processor to recognize the dozens of forms any given Swahili word could take. There exists no program for the process of scanning a corpus for new vocabulary words. We aim, in this project, to create a tool where teachers of all levels can keep track of which words their students have already

learned, and cross-check this vocabulary with the documents to be provided, allowing for easy and more reliable vocabulary-level teaching. To keep the scope manageable, we are limiting this use to Swahili, though the process may be generalizable for isiZulu and isiXhosa. This program will be created and tested over the course of a Spring semester to see what impact it has, both in teaching and learning. Solving this challenge allows for vocabulary creation from any corpus of any size, and could prove useful for many more applications than pedagogy.

Abiodun Salawu *NWU, South Africa*

Hybridization of the indigenous and the modern: The interplay of the digital and the African indigenous media

Every medium, including the Internet, has provided an opportunity to amplify indigenous cultures. Digital platforms, including social media, have transformed the production, storage, dissemination and consumption of indigenous media. To this end, scholars of African folklore have been charged to shift the attention to the increased connection between traditional oral art forms and modern digital technology. It is this connection that this paper is interested in. The preoccupation of the paper also extends to the connection between digitality, automation (otherwise called artificial intelligence) and the mass media (print and broadcast) in (indigenous) African languages. The study adopts literature and primary research method, using interviews and observation as instruments to gather data. The data gathered were correspondingly presented qualitatively while inferences were made thereof. The paper notes that digital technologies have the capacity to preserve Indigenous cultures, transmit knowledge, and assert cultural sovereignty, while also facing challenges like the digital divide and potential erosion of traditional values. It further notes the varying adoption of digital technologies by the African language mass media as well as the uncertainty and the cautious or lack of adoption of automated journalism by them.

Sipho Sithole *Howard University*

The crisis of language ownership, commodification, and who owns it?

Contrary to the notion that language can be bought or sold as a commodity, this paper argues that there is more to language than its economic value. While it may be true that language can serve as a tool for market penetration and access to economic resources, language as a medium cannot be treated as a physical object that can be sold. To argue that a language can be bought or sold implies that it is a transactional instrument akin to a raw material or basic good available in an open market. This reductionist approach to understanding the importance of language suggests that it can be fragmented into smaller components, weighed to determine its value, and assigned a market price. The fundamental questions to be addressed are: Who benefits from the commodification of language, and what forms does language ownership take? By arguing against language commodification, this paper applies ownership theory to hypothesize that no proprietary rights exist over a language that would allow control for commodification purposes. Instead, it posits that language is an intangible cultural asset with no tangible transactional value.

Carolyne Ulomy *University of Mississippi*

Can I Be Honest? A Reflective Account of Learner-Curated Portfolios and Assessment in a Swahili Class

This paper presents an autobiographical reflection of a Swahili instructor on the integration of learner-curated portfolios and reflective assessments into the language curriculum. Drawing on chapter evaluations, learner-curated resource reports, and photographs of learner-curated materials from a Swahili course, the study explores how self-curation influenced motivation, engagement, and learner

autonomy. It also considers the challenges encountered and the pedagogical lessons learned in guiding students toward more meaningful self-directed learning. Ultimately, the paper offers practical insights for African language instructors seeking to design reflective, learner-centered assessments that cultivate independence, self-awareness, and shared empowerment in the language classroom.

Sheila Pamela Wandera-Simwa *Laikipia University*

Kutoka Ubaoni hadi Mtandao Kasi: Mitazamo ya Wanafunzi wa Kiswahili kuhusu Ujifunzaji wa Kidijitali

Makala hii inalenga kuchunguza kwa kina mitazamo, uzoefu, na athari za ujifunzaji wa kidijitali miongoni mwa wanafunzi wa Kiswahili katika vyuo vikuu. Sampuli teule ni Chuo Kikuu cha Laikipia, nchini Kenya. Lengo kuu ni kuelewa jinsi wanafunzi wa Kiswahili wanavyopokea na kuhusiana na mabadiliko ya kiteknolojia katika mchakato wa kujifunza, hasa katika muktadha wa mpito kutoka mbinu za jadi za kufundishia zinazotegemea ubaoni hadi mifumo ya kisasa ya mtandaoni na ujifunzaji wa njia nyingi (multimodal learning). Utafiti huu utaongozwa na Nadharia ya Ujifunzaji wa Kijamii ya Albert Bandura, inayosisitiza ujifunzaji kupitia mwingiliano wa kijamii, uchunguzi, na uigaji wa mifano ya kidijitali, pamoja na Nadharia ya Ujifunzaji wa Njia Nyingi ambayo inaeleza umuhimu wa kuchanganya njia mbalimbali za mawasiliano. Utafiti utatumia mbinu shirikishi za kimaelezo na takwimu mseto, ukijumuisha hojaji, mahojiano, na uchambuzi wa maudhui ya kidijitali ili kupata data halisi kuhusu namna mitandao mbalimbali inavyotumika katika kufundisha na kujifunza Kiswahili. Matokeo yanatarajiwa kufichua kiwango cha ushiriki wa wanafunzi, changamoto za upatikanaji wa teknolojia, na nafasi ya ubunifu wa kidijitali katika kukuza umahiri wa lugha. Kwa jumla, makala hii itachangia mjadala wa kitaaluma kuhusu mageuzi ya pedagogia ya Kiswahili katika enzi ya teknolojia ya kidijitali, na kutoa mapendekezo ya mbinu bora za kufundishia zinazojibu mahitaji ya karne ya ishirini na moja.

Mariame Iyane Sy *Columbia University*

Decolonial Pedagogy in African Language Teaching

The teaching of African languages is a crucial yet often marginalized aspect of African Studies. This paper argues that the teaching of African languages in an academic context should be a decolonial practice, actively challenging hegemonic linguistic structures and reclaiming indigenous knowledge systems. By embedding critical thinking within language instruction, educators can enable students to engage deeply with language, culture, and history. The proposed paper focuses on curriculum design as a decolonial practice; it describes and critiques (neo)colonial approaches to teaching and promotes culturally embedded pedagogy informed by interdisciplinary approaches, and assessment methods that promote critical consciousness. It also examines the role of translation in fostering deeper linguistic and conceptual engagement. The study specifically draws on supervised readings in Wolof. The case study shows how decolonial approaches to language teaching can help students acquire culturally rooted language skills but also a deeper knowledge of the world.

IN MEMORIAM



Professor Harrison Rótímí Adéníyì

Professor Harrison Rótímí Adéníyì was a distinguished African linguist, an accomplished scholar of Yorùbá and Nigerian languages, and a nationally and internationally respected leader in language policy, education, and research. His passing marks the loss of one of the most influential voices in African linguistics and pedagogy, as well as indigenous language advocacy in Nigeria and beyond.

Professor Adéníyì served for over three decades at Lagos State University (LASU), where he rose through the academic ranks to become Professor of Linguistics and African Languages in the Department of African Languages, Literatures, and Communication Arts. He also served as Chair of the Department (2010-2012) and previously held key administrative roles as Program Officer and Assistant Program Officer for the B.A. Yorùbá and Communication Arts programs. His commitment to institutional service was exceptional, reflected in his long-standing membership and leadership on the Lagos State University Governing Council, Faculty and Staff Committees, Finance and General Purpose Committees, Examination Malpractice Committees, Senate Committees, and multiple ad hoc panels on staff promotion, infrastructure development, and university governance.

Nationally, Professor Adéníyì played an important role in shaping language education and policy in Nigeria. He served as National President of the Linguistic Association of Nigeria and was a tireless ambassador for African languages. He held visiting appointments at the University of Vermont (USA) and Osaka University (Japan), delivered keynote addresses at major international conferences, and served as an external evaluator for U.S. Department of Education–funded Fulbright-Hays Yoruba Group Projects Abroad. He was deeply engaged in promoting African language instruction in the diaspora through organizations such as the National African Language Resource Center (NALRC), the American Association of Teachers of Yoruba (AATY), the African Language Teachers Association (ALTA), and the National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages (NCOLCTL). He also served as Secretary-Treasurer of ALTA.



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