

Institution: SOAS University of London		
Unit of Assessment: 26 – Modern Languages and Linguistics		
Title of case study: LILIEMA: Inclusive multilingual education for civic participation in Senegal and access to vital health information during the COVID-19 pandemic		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2013–2018		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Friederike Lüpke	Professor of Language Documentation and Description	2003–July 2019
Miriam Weidl	Research Associate (PhD Researcher)	2018–July 2019 (2014–2018)
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2018–31 December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Research conducted at SOAS on inclusive education and multilingualism in West Africa benefited the population of rural areas of Southern Senegal, including teachers and learners, through the development of literacy and the dissemination of lifesaving health information. Inspired by grassroots practices, local activists of the Senegalese LILIEMA association and linguists were able to develop literacy classes that enabled participants to read and write their entire linguistic repertoire. The method was then harnessed to successfully run a multilingual COVID-19 information campaign, delivering crucial advice and guidance to speakers of languages not covered by official communications.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Inclusive education is a challenge for multilingual Africa's school systems. Ex-colonial official languages dominate, but are not taught as subjects nor used in daily life, creating linguistic barriers to education, civic participation and access to information. The insertion of African languages into education is not systematic and based on, for example, selecting one language per locality, excluding many mobile inhabitants of multilingual places. In Senegal, formal education relies nearly exclusively on the use of the official language, French, as the medium of instruction. Senegalese children who do not learn French before starting school are obliged to learn it by immersion at school and do not use it outside the classroom. As a result, drop-out rates are high, and fluency and literacy skills in French are only achieved by a minority, belonging mainly to the socioeconomic elites. The introduction of indigenous languages into education is based on selecting one, typically regional or national, language to be used for some years of primary education and/or adult literacy classes. This so-called mother-tongue-based education is hampered by lack of resources but also excludes many learners. Linguistic barriers thus remain a huge obstacle to accessing high-quality education and information, the basis for sustainable and inclusive development in all sectors of life.</p> <p>The Crossroads project, led by Professor Friederike Lüpke (SOAS 2003–2019), was a five-year project, funded by the Leverhulme Trust (GBP999,610) that ran from January 2014 to December 2018 at SOAS, University of London. The project team, comprising researchers in London (Miriam Weidl, SOAS 2014–2019) and researcher-activists and trainers in Senegal (including Aimé C. Biagui, Landing Biai, Juliette Diatta, Alpha N. Mane, Gérard Preira, Jérémie F. Sagna), investigated multilingualism and language contact between three languages spoken at the 'crossroads' – a group of neighbouring villages in the Lower Casamance area of Senegal in West Africa. The languages associated with these villages are Baïnouk Gubëeher, Joola</p>		

Kujireray and Joola Banjal. Researchers also investigated a setting in which a fourth language, Bainouk Gujaker, is spoken, as a basis for comparison in capturing the linguistic and social dynamics shaping imaginations and use of language in this area of the Upper Guinea Coast of West Africa. Observation of and participation in informal grassroots writing practices – a core part of the research methodology – enabled the research team to examine the steps that speakers took to transfer the spelling conventions of their first language of literacy (often a colonial language or Arabic, the language of Islamic education) to their entire repertoire in writing. Such practices essentially create a language-independent way of writing.

Previous underpinning research found that the prevailing image of linguistically homogeneous rural areas is largely untrue. In a book [3.6] co-authored with Anne Storch (University of Cologne), Lüpke's contributions of detailed case studies in Senegal revealed the social dynamics that drive small-scale multilingualism in a shared cultural space in Southern Senegal. The inhabitants of these spaces are highly multilingual, due to social exchanges and long-distance mobility requiring the use of several languages – for example: exogenous marriages; child fostering; joking relationships; and ritual, educational and economic mobility. The shared findings call into question dominant, 'First-World' approaches to language recognition, which have rendered such languages and language use invisible [3.6].

Specifically, research has shown that ethnic and linguistic identities are extremely malleable, relational and place-dependent [3.1]. Rural multilingualism is not always a symptom of a former monolingual polity in decline, but an outcome of prolonged multilingualism in societies in which co-habitation is not – or only very recently – based on the creation or imagination of a monolingual speech and language community [3.2, 3.3]. In collaboration with Sokhna Bao-Diop (Gaston Berger University, Saint-Louis, Senegal) who co-researched and co-analysed the data, underpinning research found that writers in these settings use 'lead-language literacy', where they transfer the sound-letter conventions of their main or only language of literacy to all other languages they write. This type of literacy is widely practised in contexts where no resources are available for literacy in most languages. It characterises Ajami writing and contemporary grassroots writing all over Africa. For Ajami writing, the Arabic script and Arabic provide the lead language; for contemporary grassroots literacies, the official – ex-colonial – languages (French, English, Portuguese) provide the same function. In spite of the dominant ideologies of missionaries, language planners and official bodies, these literacies are existing and perpetuating literacy traditions that deserve to inform educational policy and practice [3.4].

Action research has been led by community researcher-activists and local trainers. The researchers adopted the language-independent grassroots writing practices in which one set of conventions can be used for writing all languages as a design principle to transcribing multilingual research data. These transcriptions were based on the official alphabet for languages of Senegal, and eschewed French spelling conventions, thus creating a corpus of language data containing multilingual speech featuring over 100 speakers and 20 languages. This experience was described as deeply empowering by transcribers, since it transformed people without any recognised literacy in a language other than French into versatile multilingual writers. This practice provided the foundation for the development of the repertoire-based literacy programme LILIEMA [3.5].

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

3.1. Lüpke, F. (2016). 'Pure Fiction – the Interplay of Indexical and Essentialist Ideologies and Heterogeneous Practices: A View from Agnack'. In: M. Seyfeddinipur, ed., *African Language Documentation: New Data, Methods and Approaches (Language Documentation and Conservation Special Publication 10)*, pp. 8–39. ISBN: 9780985621162
<http://hdl.handle.net/10125/24650> Peer-reviewed

3.2. Lüpke, F. (2016). 'Uncovering Small-Scale Multilingualism'. *Critical Multilingualism Studies* 4(2), pp. 35–74. ISSN 2325-2871. <https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/23312/>

3.3. Lüpke, F. (2018). 'Escaping the Tyranny of Writing: West African Regimes of Writing as a Model for Multilingual Literacy'. In: K. Juffermans and C. Weth, eds, *The Tyranny of Writing*

Revisited: Ideologies of the Written Word. London: Bloomsbury, pp. 129–148. Available on request. **Peer-reviewed**

3.4. Lüpke, F. and Bao-Diop, S. (2014). 'Beneath the Surface? Contemporary Ajami Writing in West Africa Exemplified through Wolofal'. In: Y.M. Asfaha and K. Juffermans, eds, *African Literacies*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, pp. 86–114. ISBN: 9781443858335. Available on request. **Peer-reviewed**

3.5. Lüpke, F., Biagui, A.C., Biai, L., Diatta, J., Mane, A.N., Preira, G., Sagna, J.F. and Weidl, M. (2021). 'LILIEMA: Language-independent literacies for inclusive education in multilingual areas'. In P. Harding-Esch and H. Coleman, eds, *Language and the Sustainable Development Goals*. British Council (Language and Development Series). Available on request. **Peer-reviewed**

3.6. Lüpke, F. and Storch, A. (2013). *Repertoires and Choices in African Languages*. Berlin/New York: De Gruyter Mouton. ISBN: 9781614512516. Available on request.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The project team focused its impact on Southern Senegal's Casamance region, which comprises the 3 provinces of Ziguinchor, Kolda and Sédhiou. Sparsely populated, the region has 1,700,000 inhabitants who speak approximately 30 languages spread out across 29,000 square kilometres. It is geographically, socio-economically and politically isolated from the more prosperous north, with serious consequences for life opportunities and health, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The project team used the LILIEMA approach, which 1) boosted literacy and empowered rural learners and writers in 7 villages and beyond; 2) produced one of Senegal's most effective COVID-19 rural information print campaigns, reaching 10,000 people with life-saving information.

Recognising and boosting rural literacy and empowering learners

In 2017, the project team designed courses at 2 levels and piloted them [5.1a]. From 2018 onwards, the method was consolidated and teaching extended [5.1b]. In total, the team ran 5 workshops, trained 10 teachers and offered courses in 7 locations to 250 learners, with a Senegalese budget of GBP7,000. In December 2019, local team members founded the LILIEMA association in Senegal to meet demand for courses, fundraise and establish local partnerships in order to extend and sustain the model [5.1c, 5.2].

Evaluations were positive throughout. All teachers trained in the LILIEMA method and trained to use LILIEMA to teach others expressed greater confidence in their language ability and their ability to teach. One explained that 'Because of LILIEMA I now don't have a single doubt writing in all of the languages that I can understand and speak. Today, if I want to write something, I do not have to use the French alphabet in a complicated way, like I did it to write my languages before I started to write with LILIEMA' [5.3 p1–2]. One of the teachers also predicted lasting impact, expressing their belief that 'LILIEMA will bring a lot of change in the Senegalese communities who participate in the programme – because of it, they will be able to write what they need, and nobody will need other people for help anymore. They can write SMS, on WhatsApp...they will write LILIEMA and automatically teach their friends' [5.3 p2].

LILIEMA teachers went on to teach and provide completion certificates for 100 learners in early 2020 [5.1d], and this had a transformative effect on people's confidence, interpersonal communications and community life. One learner described how 'Now really, nobody needs to help me. Even if I go to take a Tata (public transport) nobody has to show me how it works, I can see myself' [5.4 p3]. A female participant evoked the transformative effect of LILIEMA: 'Because now sometimes I write down some important phrases that are important to me. I write them, me alone, at home. They [LILIEMA] gave me exercises, I did them and suddenly I was able to write Sose . . . I write something to my mother and father in Sose' [5.4 p1]. Another reported:

There was a time after school when I rarely wrote anything, but after going back to LILIEMA, I started to write and read again, do everything . . . it really impacted my life . . . now I can write all of the languages with LILIEMA. If it is Bainounk, Kreol, Joola, Peul, Wolof, I will write it! . . . I am the responsible for the church here. I am writing everything in Kreol, but now even the French is not confusing me anymore! But before, I did not practice until I really had problems with French, in practicing it. I can read it very slowly, but

practicing [writing and speaking] was really tiring for me. Since I come to LILIEMA courses, even this is getting better again! [5.4, p3–4]

Improving access to crucial life-saving COVID-19 information

By March 2020, after teachers had been trained in the LILIEMA method and had gone on to use the method to teach others in 4 new villages, the COVID-19 pandemic reached Senegal. Official government guidelines on advising people on how to avoid COVID-19 community transmission was issued in French in the media. It was thus only accessible to the minority who reads and understands French. In the resulting vacuum created by the lack of good, understandable or usable guidance, parts of Senegal's social media peddled misinformation and politically motivated lies (e.g. 'COVID-19 is an invention of the media, it doesn't exist', etc.).

Working carefully and focusing on the villages where LILIEMA had been taught, the Senegalese-based project team worked with community members to create a linguistically inclusive COVID-19 health information campaign for the villages and surrounding areas. Each poster contained information in 6 different languages chosen by the team in consultation with village assemblies, using WhatsApp and other tools to maintain social distance. The information was translated into 10 different languages to produce 9 different multilingual linguistic mixes adapted to different local multilingual ecologies. In addition, multilingual brochures were also printed, featuring 3 languages per brochure. All materials contained graphic information to enhance the written messages, based on the official health guidelines issued by the government of Senegal, e.g. to observe social distancing even when seated.

The project team observed that even those who had not attended LILIEMA workshops were able to correctly infer the information because the LILIEMA method was easily comprehensible and underpinned their extant languages. After the first posters had been distributed, one person contacted the project team to say that their particular language had not been included on the poster and had gone on to supply the script, using the LILIEMA method for the coordinators to include in what the participant argued should be the team's next set of posters. The posters were also lauded by local government offices as the best method of getting life-saving information out to people and were put up in these government offices. Because of this popularity and utility, the team produced more and, by the campaign's end in summer 2020, had distributed 1,500 posters and 800 brochures in 16 different villages [5.5].

Quantitative and qualitative surveys measured the campaign's impact. Responses to a quantitative questionnaire were obtained from 770 participants in 8 villages using telephones. 50.8% of respondents were female and 49.2% male; 8 participants took part in semi-structured interviews. The main findings of the quantitative survey were as follows:

82.1% accessed the information. Projected on the number of inhabitants of the area included, it reached approximately 10,000 people [5.6 p15].

99.7% of readers stated that the LILIEMA COVID-19 campaign definitely increased their knowledge of COVID-19 prevention measures. 93.4% fully understood the information. 97.4% were favourable to obtaining multilingual information [5.6 p34].

Of all COVID-19 information sources, radio was rated as the most trustworthy medium (72.2%), followed by TV (46.6%) and the LILIEMA campaign (35.1%). TV and radio only offer sporadic broadcasts in languages other than French. LILIEMA information occupied the first position when written information was considered, and LILIEMA posters were often the only official source of official COVID-19 information locally available [5.6 p11].

In villages without electricity where TV is inaccessible, LILIEMA came in second position, immediately after the radio, as a source of health information.

None of the participants read the information in one language only – all read at least 2 languages. The languages most read overall were national and regional languages of wider communication, followed closely by the nominal languages of the villages covered. These are languages with very low speaker numbers (around 1,000-5,000), but of great importance for readers' identity and trust in the message [5.6 p29].

The qualitative data underpinned the above and provided more detail of impact. Respondents highlighted the permanence and visibility of the messages and their local origin: 'I trust [the information on the materials] on TV because that's where I first learnt about it, but I also trust the posters, because they have taught people a lot. In LILIEMA, there are some of relatives, I trust them' [5.7ai p2]. Another added: 'The behaviours have changed, have really changed . . . Sometimes when you arrive people will say: "Hey, have you not seen the poster that has been put up over there? Have a look at how the people [on the poster] are seated." It's become a reference, people will tell you in Manding 'Taa affichoo juube' [Go and look at the poster], it attracts attention because everybody who passes will look at it' [5.7av, p5]. One respondent stressed the trustworthiness of LILIEMA as opposed to social media: 'These posters really help us take preventive measures . . . The posters say we should protect ourselves, that's what we should take from them and that's what I've shared with my family. All the things said on WhatsApp and all the others, I don't take that into consideration, and neither does my family' [5.7aiv, p2-3]. The materials were also noticed by readers who had not taken part in LILIEMA classes: 'We didn't really know what LILIEMA is, we saw people come and go and then they came up with posters to raise awareness. Others wonder: how long have these people been around? . . . well congratulations to this program in relation to the disease and the awareness that has been created, because there isn't really any other organisation or group that has done what LILIEMA has done with the posters and raising awareness door-to-door' [5.7av, p4, 6].

Ansou Diendiamé, a nationally known journalist who advocates for the visibility of small, local languages, covered LILIEMA's impact in his radio show. Recognising the importance of the project, Diendiamé, who normally broadcasts in Baïnounk, switched to Wolof, Joola and French and repeated his questions to project team members in each language to reach as many people as possible with his programme [5.8]. Endorsement by local authorities and positive media reports confirmed the importance and positive impact of the LILIEMA COVID-19 information campaign, which also consolidated the role of Senegalese LILIEMA activists as local experts driving development. An academic at King's College London Faculty of Social Science & Public Policy's School of Education, Communication & Society expressed her belief that 'the resources developed by the LILIEMA project to raise awareness of what the risks of COVID-19 are in a range of West African languages are crucial because they allow local communities to access important health messages more easily.' She added that 'LILIEMA is therefore having a potential role in preventing the spread of the virus [and] also shows that West African languages can be used in high social domains, just like the former colonial languages are' [5.9].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

5.1. LILIEMA approach

- a) LILIEMA Pilot Phase webpage: <https://liliema.com/pilot-phase/>
- b) LILIEMA Courses 2018-2019 webpage: <https://liliema.com/courses-2018-2019/>
- c) LILIEMA Workshops webpage: <https://liliema.com/workshops/>
- d) Teaching the LILIEMA method in 2020 webpage: <https://liliema.com/liliema-courses-2020/>

5.2. LILIEMA Association registration documents: a) Association LILIEMA lettre gouverneur; b) Association LILIEMA statuts; c) LILIEMA info francais; d) LILIEMA liste des membres (all French)

5.3. Feedback from teachers: a) Qualitative feedback from LILIEMA teachers (English translation); b) Qualitative feedback from LILIEMA teachers - original forms (French)

5.4. Translated transcripts of interviews with five LILIEMA learners

5.5. COVID-19 campaign and research outcomes webpage: <https://liliema.com/liliema-covid-19-campaign/>

5.6. Quantitative survey results on the LILIEMA COVID-19 campaign

5.7. Transcripts of qualitative interviews on the LILIEMA COVID-19 campaign with eight people: a) original local languages and French - ai) SMm; aii) JdF; aiii) Bf; aiv) CBGm; av) INm; avi) YMn; avii) CBm; aviii) LBf, and b) with English translations

5.8. In the media webpage <https://liliema.com/media-reports/>

5.9. Letter from academic at Faculty of Social Science & Public Policy's School of Education, Communication & Society King's College London