

# Mother Tongue Instruction



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# Minister of Rwanda

“The goal is for our children to be proficient readers and writers.”

# Are you good readers?

Let's try, after each sentence I'll ask you a question:

1. Kibet houdt ervan om een boek te lezen.
2. Kichame Kibet kulabat sukuul areet akeenke.

# Reading

- Reading is about being able to **understand and interact** with written text.
- Reading without understanding is decoding. Decoding is a reading skill, but not reading.
- Do you agree with this statement?

# Education is communicating

- Education is about understanding, communicating, and learning.
- The language used in school to communicate knowledge and ideas needs to be understood by the learners.
- For most children who enter school this will be their mother tongue.

# Terminology L1

## **L1 first language**

- mother tongue
- home language
- language of the home
- local language

**The language a child speaks best before she/he comes to school.**

# Terminology L2

- L2 second language
  - a language one learns in addition to the L1.

English as **Second Language**

(it is used in the immediate environment)

English as **Foreign Language**

(it is not a language used in the immediate environment)

# **THE CURRENT SITUATION**



# The reality

- In Africa there are about 2000 languages.
- However, about 217 of them have a writing system (data from 1999).
- And their reach could be near 50 per cent of the African population (many adults are multilingual, and many of these languages are regional or even national lingua francas).

# The reality

- The colonial languages have taken a very high status position.
- However, it is estimated that only between 10 and 15 per cent of the population in most African countries are fluent in the official languages (En/Fr/Port) (Ouane and Glanz 2010).

# The reality

- In many countries in Africa education is delivered in a language children do not understand.
- From the first day in school, the children are exposed to the new language and their mother tongue is not used in school.

# The reality

- The reality is that the children do not understand the teacher until several years into their education.
- Consequently, most children in Africa find themselves having to try to learn through a language they do not understand.
- Many of them fail and drop out before they learn any content. Many are excluded.

# Did you know that

Worldwide, there are more:

- Hausa speakers (25 million) than Dutch speakers (21,7 million)
- Rwanda speakers (7,5 million) than Danish speakers 5,5 million
- Several languages spoken in Africa are larger than some of the languages spoken in Europe, and yet....

From the known to the unknown

**WHY START IN THE L1?**

# **Why start in the L1 of the child?**

A child will

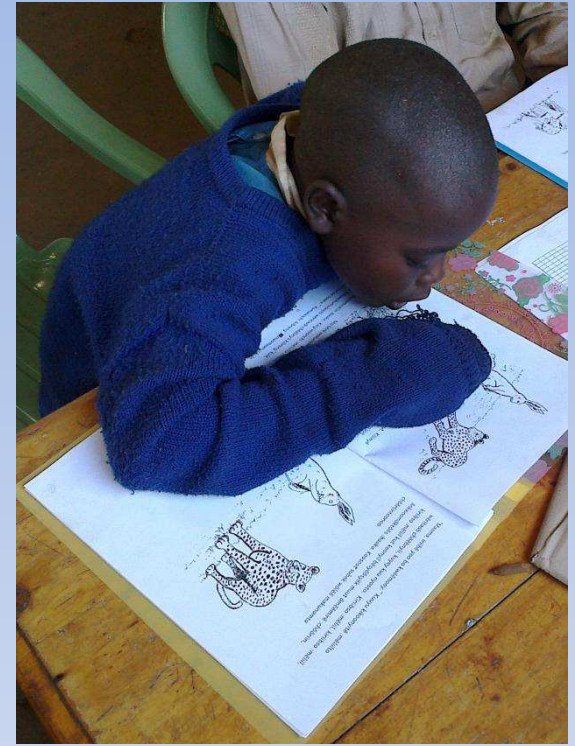
- understand the teacher from day 1
- a smooth transition between home and school
- learn better and faster, and retain the knowledge longer
- learn to read with understanding
- learn the L2 better.

Is that really true?



Netherlands, reading in L1





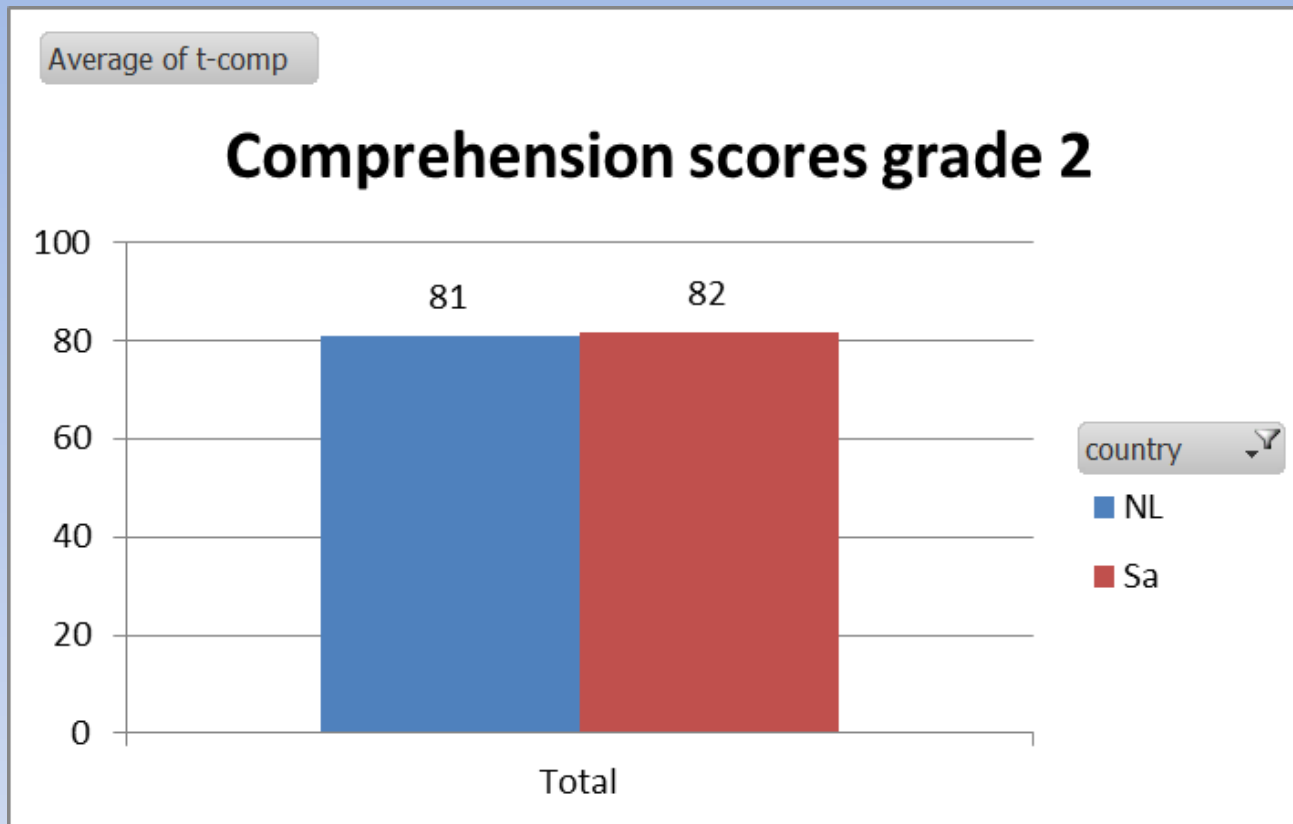
Sabaot (Kenya) reading in L1

# Question

After two years of reading education in their L1 who will comprehend a grade 2 story better in their mother tongue?

1. Dutch children (Europe)
2. Sabaot children (Africa)

# Comprehension scores



Netherlands and Sabaoth in Kenya, (Van Ginkel and Graham, in preparation 2012)

# Why start to learn to read in L1?

Children:

- understand the words they read.
- interact with text.
- discuss the story.
- read with comprehension after two years of primary education!



Approaches

# **WHAT TO DO WITH THE L1 IN MULTILINGUAL COUNTRY?**

# When a child comes to school

- L1 (many words 4000-6000, grammar, syntax, sounds, knowledge of many things).

BUT

- Probably she/he does not speak the language of instruction used at school.
- She/he can hardly participate in the classroom.
- Do you remember how that felt?

# Meertalige burgers

- Om verschillende redenen is het belangrijk dat kinderen in Afrika meertalig zijn.
- De factor taal speelt een hele belangrijke rol in het onderwijs, zowel de moedertaal als de andere talen.

# Multilingual citizens

- For different reasons, it is a necessity for just about all children in Africa to become multilingual citizens of their countries.
- The language factor in education is extremely important, the first and the additional languages.





# Immersion approach

**“No mother tongue in this school”**

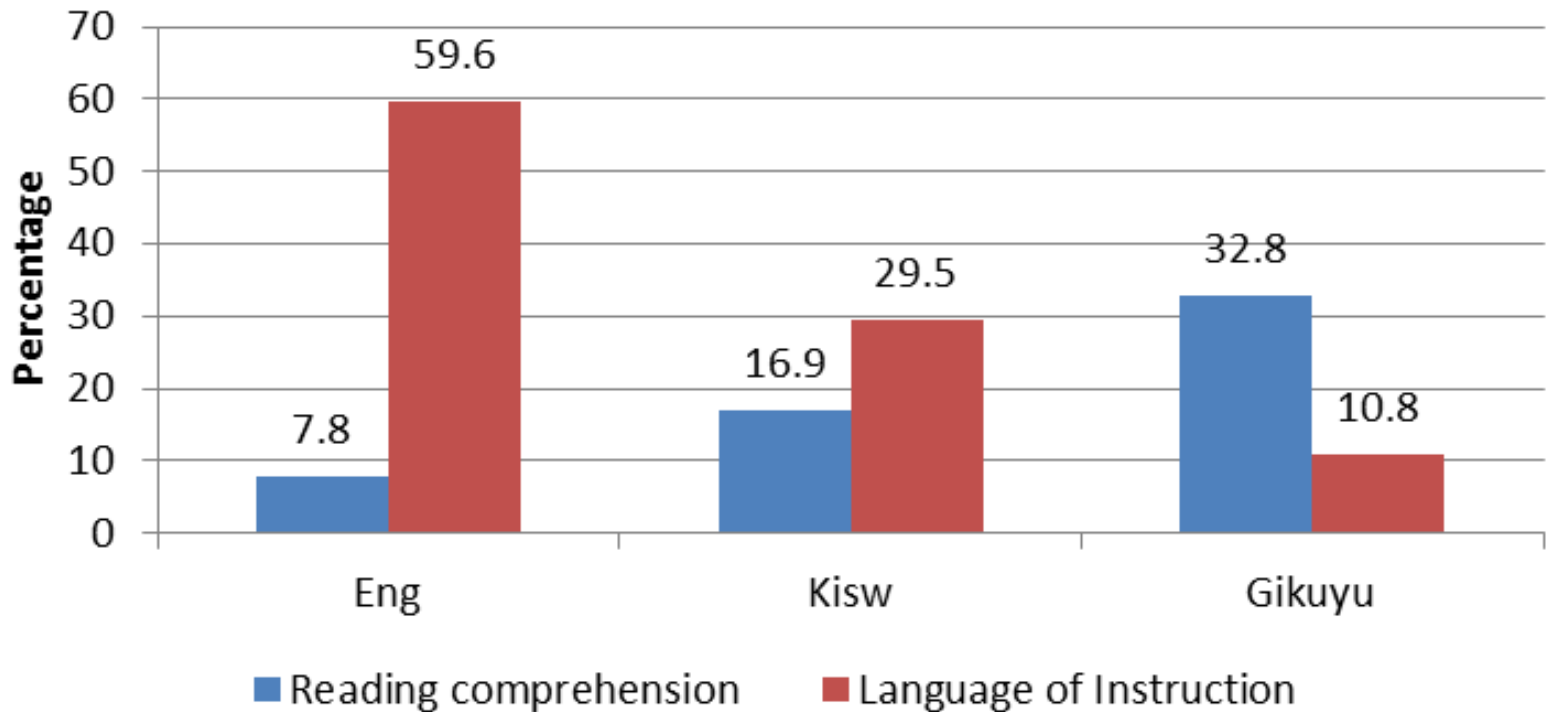
- Reality in many classrooms in Africa.
- From the unknown to unknown
- **Very low learning results in Africa.**

# Transitional approach

- Is policy in several African countries (e.g. Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, Malawi, and Nigeria )
- *Early exit programme (L1 for 2-4 years)*, is seen as a weak bilingual programme.
- *Late exit programme* is seen as a strong bilingual programme and has better results than immersion **if** implemented well.

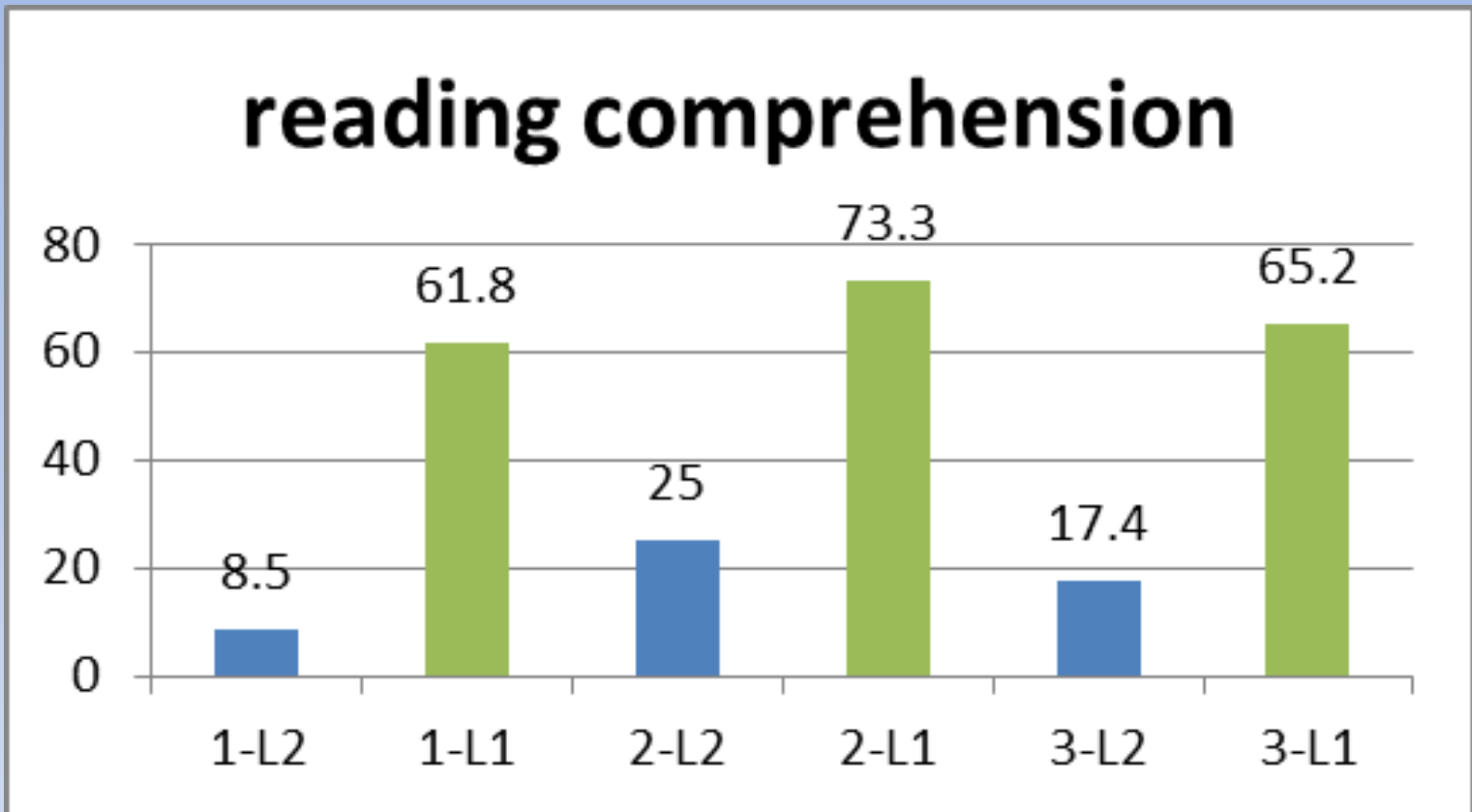
# Early exit not implemented

Year 2 primary school



Data from **Kenya Early Grade Reading Assessment Findings Report (Piper 2010)**

# L1 vs L2 instruction



Cameroon, Kom L1 based bilingual programme  
(Walter and Trammell 2010)

Reading to learn

# **L1 LITERACY**

# Literacy goals in primary school

- Independent reading (read to learn)
- The ability to understand and interact with what is read.
- Discuss what is read in class.
- The ability to produce independent, original writing.
- Student centred learning. Where the students is actively engaged. (Problem!)

# After two years of Primary School

- It is expected that children have learnt the basic skills of reading.
- They read at a fluent pace and comprehend what they are reading.
- The pace (in words per minute) is different for different languages. *(Important to remember)*

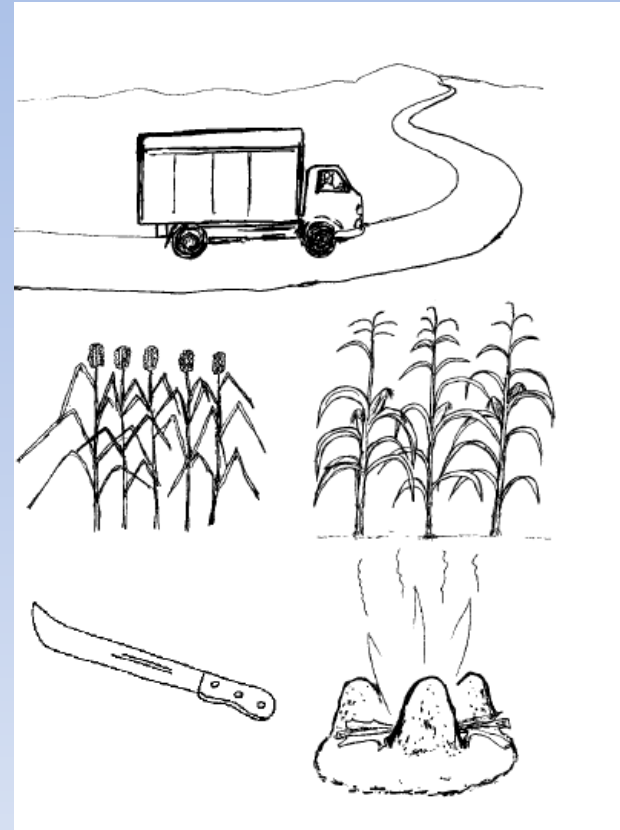


# Five important components

1. Recognise sounds in words
  2. Connect sounds and letters
  3. Read at a good pace
  4. Understand what is read
  5. Have sufficient vocabulary
1. Phonological awareness
  2. Alphabetic principle
  3. Fluency
  4. Comprehension
  5. Vocabulary

# Key components L1 literacy

## Recognising sounds in words




# Key components L1 literacy

## Connect sounds and letters

2

b




baaba

12	2	
baaba ba a	a ba	ee bee
3	4	
ba bee	ba ta	bee tee
5		
ba baaba		

Mii :baaba akoo Kimutaay  
mbareen.

**M**



**m**

**muhi**

muhi	moho	muke
mu	mo	mu

# Order of teaching letters

- ABCDEF?
- ***underlying principle: a child must be able to decode all the letters in words they see***
- ***Start with letters that occur most frequently in that language***
- Kiswahili: m, a, u, k, t, l, n, o, w, e, l, h, s, b, y, z, g, d, j, r, p, f, v, sh, ny, dh, th, ch, gh, ng, ng'

# Linguistic issues

- African languages: one letter = one sound
- English and French: one letter = several options

English	Kiswahili
People	Watu
know	Kujua

# Key components in L1 Literacy

## Recognising words and/or word parts

tena mkate mkekani mwewe	
lo la ni lolani ka li kali ki ti ni kitini li ma u limau	ne li ma nelima le te a letea u ki uki m ka te mkate
a ka m letea akamletea a ka li tema akalitema a ki li tema akilitema	

# Linguistic issues

- Word length which influences word recognition strategies
- For example:

He is searching for his pen.

Keecheeng'oote kalamuunyii.

# Key components L1 Literacy

## Reading at a good pace (fluency)

- Lots of reading
- Reading being modelled
- Repeated reading (reading the same story a few times)
- Independent reading
- Peer reading





# Key components in L1 Literacy

## Comprehension

- Understanding the facts of the text
- Understanding the meaning of the text
- Summarising what was read
- Retell what was read



# Key Components in L1 literacy

## Language development

New words and concepts

More complex sentence structures

Awareness of how words are used in text (oral and written)

Hailu cried **because** he burnt his finger.

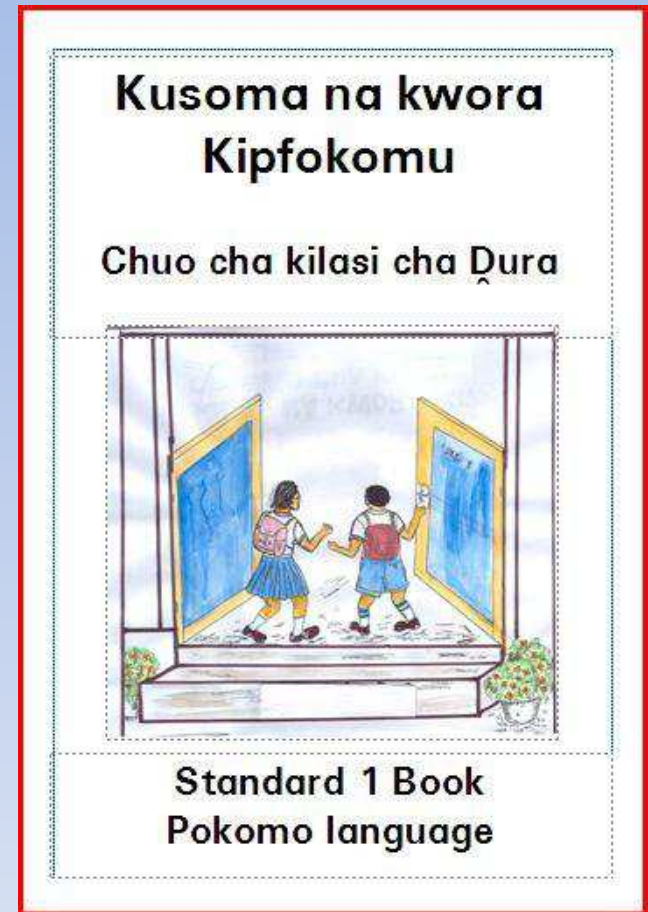


Fire

# What literacy method is good?

One that includes:

- the five components of reading
- writing – correct and creative
- lots of practise with reading



# What literacy method is good?

One that takes into account:

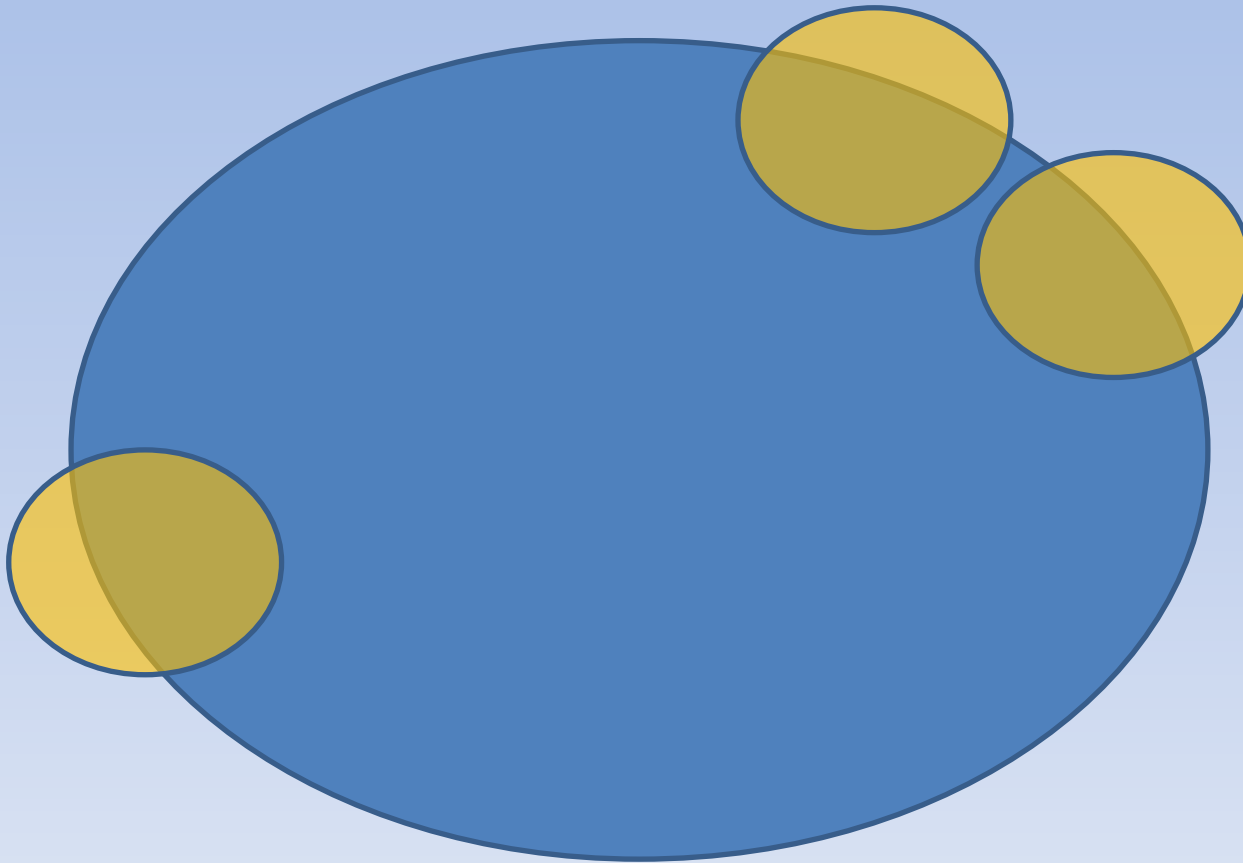
- Context factors
  - Training of teachers
  - Class room context
- Is appropriate for that specific language
- Appropriate for the culture of the children
- Involves the children during the learning

**FAQ**

# Three FAQ

1. What to do when more than one L1 is being spoken by the children?
2. We have too many L1s in my country. The task is too huge!
3. Isn't it too expensive? (add answer)

# A few children with a different L1 in a monolingual community

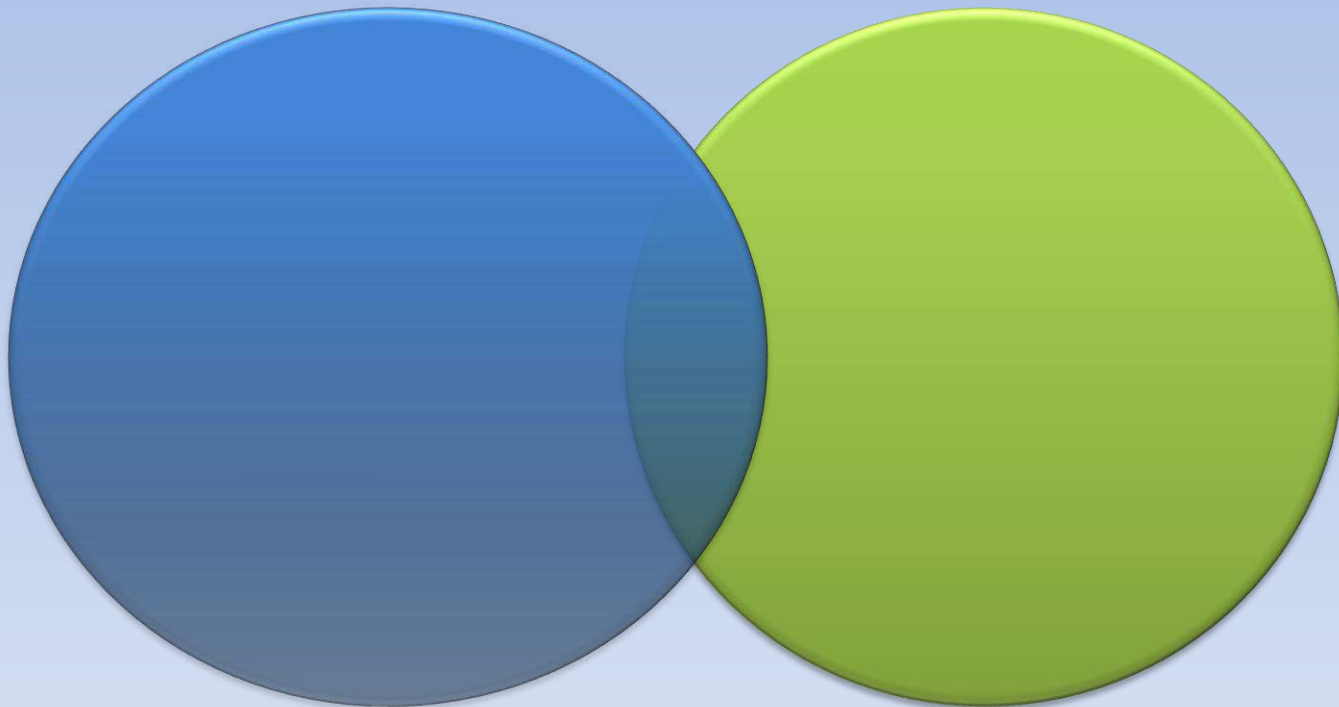


	<b>Kom- medium program</b>	<b>English- medium program</b>
<b>Fulfulde- speakers</b>	<b>73.8</b>	<b>42.8</b>
<b>Non-Fulfulde speakers</b>	<b>60.7</b>	<b>37.3</b>

Cameroon, Kom L1 based bilingual programme  
(Walter and Trammell 2010)



**Two communities living together, but  
having distinct cultures and languages**



# Urban settings: many L1 in a class

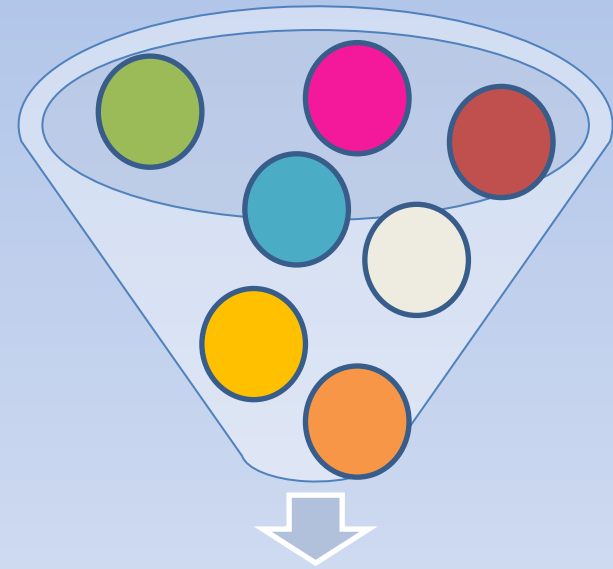
## Common L2

- Use common L2



- Teach L1 after school

## No common language



Learn L2  
(regional)

# There are too many L1s

In some countries there are many L1s.

Nigeria is winning!

1. What happens if you ignore the languages?
  1. Drop out, low success in school (high economic cost).
  2. Loss of African language/culture/knowledge.

# There are too many L1s

In some situations children are bilingual and are able to speak a neighbouring language well.

- Investigate this, do not assume! Speaking a few sentences in the other language does not make a child bilingual.

# There are too many L1s

- Plan for it. Be strategic about it.
- Think outside the box (community teaching, pre-school)
- How many languages are there?
- What has been done in the different languages?
- Where can you get help?
  - Universities can train linguist to do language analysis and develop writing systems.

# It is too expensive!

- Well, make sure you do the maths well.
  1. How much does it cost for a child who needs to repeat a class (or 2, or 3)?
  2. How much do drop outs cost?
- **Calculation from Mali**
- The total cost French only programme is about 27% more than the L1 programme.
- It was more expensive largely because of the difference in repetition and dropout rates. (**Worldbank 2005**)

**WHAT NEXT?**

# Know your context

- Understand the language policy.
  - What is the policy?
  - (Is it implemented? Why not? Or why not successfully?)
- Understand people's attitudes towards the L1
  - Organise campaigns?



# Know your context

- Teacher training (in-service/pre-service)
  - Do they learn to teach the L1?
- Teacher placement
  - Are they placed in an language that they speak?

# Materials development

Identify if there are materials in the L1 of the children.

- Instructional materials
- Stories to read (fiction/non-fiction)
- Teaching aids
- Other reading materials (are there posters in the language, a newspaper, letters, sms?)

# Materials development

**Analyse the materials** according to principles of teaching L1 reading.

1. Do they teach:

- Phonemic awareness
- Letter-sound recognition
- Word recognition
- Vocabulary development
- Fluency in reading
- Different comprehension skills

# Materials development

2. Are the materials appropriate for the language?

- Sequence of the letters being introduced.
- Word recognition skills.
- Are language specific things such as tone taught?

# Materials development

If no materials are available or revision is necessary:  
(get a publisher on board?)

- Identify writers in the L1
- Identify story tellers in the community.
- Ensure that illustrations are culturally appropriate.
- Develop text book for the lessons.
- Develop lots of reading materials for the children to practise reading.

# Materials development

- Get a publisher on board, there might be more money to earn than the publishers think.
- Remember some of the languages in Africa are larger than the European ones.

# How long does it take?

- Scope and Sequence: 2 weeks
- Text book (about 4 weeks gives a good draft when working with a experienced consultant)
- Teacher training (initially)
  - 1 week to help the teachers to use the materials.
  - 1 week to help the teachers to read and write in their own language.
  - Refresher training after about 3 months.

# Technical expertise

- Reading specialist who know about African languages (or are willing to be open minded about it)
- Many national NGOs such as Mango tree (Uganda), IEP (Mali), PRAESA (SA), SIL country offices/regional offices

International NGOs such as Save the children, Room to Read, RTI



# Technical expertise-Tools

- Story books: Little hands books from Praesa (<http://www.littlehandstrust.com/books.html>)
- International digital children library (<http://www.worldreader.org/books.php>)
- MLE networks (<http://www.mlenetwork.org>)
- Software PrimerPro<sup>©</sup> (Owned by SIL) helps you with determining teaching order of lessons, checking controlled vocabulary stories)
- CD with illustrations: SIL International

# L1 based education

- Children understand the teacher from the first day of school.
- They have a good understanding of the content of what they read.
- They can interact with the teacher.
- They enjoy school
- They have (much) higher learning outcomes.
- They learn the L2 better.....

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