

The Scarcity of Literature Written in African Languages in American Libraries

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Abstract

Language scholars agree that including a wide range of literature to teach a foreign language is important. However, limited research exist regarding the availability of literature written in Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTL) to enhance learning and to help Americans learn about other cultures, as well as making such languages more visible in the American public. While highlighting the presence of literature in other LCTL, this research examines the availability of books written in African languages in seven public libraries in addition to three high school, four middle school, and twelve elementary school libraries in North Eastern America. Preliminary findings indicate all public libraries examined do not have books written in any African languages. A discussion on the implications of these findings for teaching and research is presented. Strategies and ideas on ways universities offering LCTL and scholars who speak African languages could begin to address this need are shared.

Keywords: African languages, foreign languages, teaching, books, library

1. Introduction

Many people agree that language is a mirror of the character and growth of its speakers. One language, therefore, cannot represent all people groups around the world. None the less, with a sense of pride, ease and comfort, most people, particularly English speakers refer to English as a global language, based on the notion that it is the preferred communication tool transnationally, as the media puts it (Cogo & Pitzl, 2013). One cannot dispute these claims because they are not completely unfounded. The international power of the United States in the twentieth century has been grounded in its economic strength since the 1920 when it became the supreme financial power in the world after replacing Great Britain during the First World War (Niemi & Jr., 1980). Consequently, economists, historians, language scholars, and politicians, to mentions just a few, show that English is the most vital language of broader communication in the world due to British colonial power in the nineteenth century, as well as the United States of America (USA)' leadership in the twentieth century(Kingsley, 2013). In addition to being the main language of popular culture and globalization, as can be seen in advertising; science and technology have contributed greatly to making English the main language in the world (Sharifian, 2009). Today, English is considered a threat to linguistic diversity, mainly because multilingualism nowadays denotes English and other languages (Stansbury, 2013). Although this is true, America cannot undermine the need for its citizens to become bilingual or multilingual. Considering the focus of our discussion, though multilingualism can be defined in different ways, mainly it refers to the capability to use more than two languages. In regards to the individual and societal level, a basic distinction between multilingualism and bilingualism needs to be noted. At the individual level, bilingualism and multilingualism indicate speaker's competence to use two or more languages. On the other hand, at the societal level, both terms refer to the use of two or more languages in a speech community. This means not all speakers in that community are competent in more than one language. In this article, both uses of the terms: at the individual and societal level are implied.

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1.1 Background

According to the National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages (NCLCTL), only nine percent of Americans who study foreign languages in schools, colleges, and universities choose Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Yoruba, Russian, Swahili and the other languages spoken by the overwhelming majority of people around the world while nearly ninety-one percent choose French, German, Italian, or Spanish (<http://www.nclctl.org/>). In fact, there is a common joke: “What do you call someone who speaks two languages? Bilingual. What do you call someone who speaks one language? American.” The perception that multilingualism is an unnecessary skill has become a generic American mindset because English has become the lingua franca of the business world (Ferguson, 2013). Consequently, when everyone else is learning English, native English speakers, especially Americans, tend to think that it is unnecessary to learn another language, particularly other than the big four aforementioned languages. When organizations, businesses, and others providing a variety of services in the American public hire translators or local native speakers of another language, this worldview is strengthened. As the world becomes more globalized, however, closer amalgamation of countries and peoples of the world through unlimited communication, and transportation to allow free flow of knowledge, goods, capital, and services has contributed greatly to the need for people to learn multiple languages (Bhagwati, 2004; Sherman & Strubell, 2013). Edwards (2012) shows being bilingual or multilingual is not the eccentricity supposed by many (mostly, conceivably, by people in Europe and North America who speak a ‘big’ language); it is rather an ordinary and unremarkable requisite for the majority in the world today. As such, the teaching of foreign languages in America has received considerable attention in the past two decades (Lim, 2014).

Thus, initiatives such as the “Educate America Act” of 1994 urged language scholars to design national standards for instruction at the K–12 level. The Foreign Language Act- (FLA) gave rise to Critical Languages and Area Studies Consortium (CLASC) by encouraging the teaching of Less Commonly Taught Languages (NCLCTL). Another effort through the US Congress, the “Higher Education Act,” also called “title VI” which allows universities to promote less commonly taught languages not only in institutions of higher education but also to reach students in k – 12, offer funding for universities. In a report for the National Project of the USA Education (US/ED) Title VI Programs, for example, David Wiley (2004) reported that 11 Title VI Universities offer African languages, through such programs as African National Resource Center, Foreign Language for Area Studies (FLAS) Centers, the Defense Language Institute (DLI) and the Foreign Service Institute. Such efforts are testament to the emphasis given on this matter by the US government. Drawing from this preamble, the author begins with a review of literature on where America stands on helping its citizens attain bilingualism or multilingualism. Literature on the benefits of learning a foreign language, followed by reasons for using literature for language learning and teaching will follow. The methodologies and findings are discussed thereafter.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Where America Stands on Multilingualism

In spite of being exposed to other languages mainly in the school context, most of the populations in western cultures are monolingual in one of the ‘big’ languages, unlike most of the world’s population who speak more than one language (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). Today, it is hard for Americans to compete globally both linguistically and culturally because of their inability to speak foreign languages (Franklin, 2013). According to a 2006 survey by European commission, 56 percent of Europeans were bilingual, compared to only 15-20 percent of Americans (Franklin, 2013). This problem is evident in many levels including in universities where most students fail to reach high level of language proficiency, which in turn hinders them to reach high education levels. This issue has resulted in the mandate for students to learn foreign languages to be labeled as a threat needing to be quelled in America today. Franklin continues to explain that in the past however, the United States used to embrace bilingualism and multilingualism. For example, in the 19th century, immigrants were encouraged to maintain their native languages. In fact, education policies supported linguistic diversity and even allowed and promoted publications in native languages. Franklin (2013) continues to explain that the change in this ideology happened due to an influx of non-English speaking immigrants wanting to be Americanized; they developed a nationalistic movement in the 1880s which pushed English to become a linguistic identifier of the “American.” Subsequently, support for the U.S during the eruption of World War I became synonymous with speaking English. This resulted in the eventual removal of foreign language instruction from most elementary schools by legislation.

Despite numerous researches underscoring bilingualism helps children academically, among other areas; the deficiency of foreign language education for children in America continues to this day (Skolton & Altschuler, 2012). In 2004, the United States was declared having “language deficit” by The Modern Language Association. The statement was based upon the fact that the rate of students’ language-learning was not supporting the nation’s global interests. Unfortunately, despite efforts by the US Department to highlight and promote the learning of languages labeled as critical languages, the United States is lagging behind on the quest for high quality education and in helping its citizens to learn non-European languages. According to Friedman (2013), less than 10 percent of native-born Americans speak languages other than English. Even more troubling, Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education reported in 2010 that 95% of American college students studying languages other than English were studying a Western language. She underlined that just 18 percent of Americans report speaking a language other than English compared to 53 percent of European citizens who speak more than one language. Of great concern is the fact that a number of researchers predict that China is likely to have the world's largest English-speaking population in the world and this is likely to happen very soon. Instead of making a steady progress, Duncan admits that there is a great decline in America’s Foreign language instruction from one-third 11 years earlier with only a quarter of elementary schools offering language instruction in 2008. The fact that foreign language is required in only 10 states for high school graduation is indicative of how much America lags behind compared to other countries in their knowledge of languages, as well as geography and other cultures. Essentially, most of the American undergraduate population is not ready to engage with non-European cultures within its borders or abroad. Duncan added, for too long, Americans have relied on other countries to speak our language. But we won’t be able to do that in the increasingly complex and interconnected world. To prosper economically and to improve relations with other countries, Americans need to read, speak and understand other languages. Although many people do not associate underrepresented languages as significant, incredible economic opportunity is being missed by not learning them because they represent invisible markets untapped out there. Besides, knowing foreign languages is the foundation to understanding other cultures, and thus, acknowledging the presence and value of others.

2.2 Benefits of Learning a Foreign Language

This section offers a review of the literature related to the importance of learning a foreign language in order to answer the question, why bother to learn a foreign language? In other words, why should anyone, not just an American bother to learn another language? The disparity between America’s need to educate its citizens to become more understanding of other cultures through foreign language teaching; and the role literature plays in language instruction is made apparent. Parents, policy makers, administrators and even students often want to know research-based benefits of learning a language. I highlight these benefits to build a foundation for the need for reading materials. In other words, if language learning is not important, then why worry about making sure there are sufficient reading materials to support language learning. The following studies show several areas that are positively affected by language learning. On an individual level, being a multilingualism serves as a cognitive reserve which often offers a protection against dementia and other cognitive impairments (Perguin et al., 2013). Multilingual people can perform multiple tasks simultaneously significantly much better than those who are monolingual (Hernandez, Martin, Barcelo, & Costa, 2013). Even more, multilingual people perform cognitive processes of analysis and selective attention better than one language speakers, which in turn allows them to have greater cognitive flexibility (Rooy, 2010). Looking at this from a business perspective or technology point of view, such individuals are capable of quicker processing and understanding along with inventing new approaches and ideas. Academically, those learning a foreign language have high academic achievement on standardized test measures (Turnbull, Lapkin, & Hart, 2003). Pagan (2005) shows students learning a foreign language do better in their English learning as well, while a study by D'Angiulli, Siegel and Serra (2001) indicates such students perform higher in their reading tests than the non-language learners fellows. Steward (2005) reports foreign language learners do well in both math and reading. Even more, there is a correlation between high school foreign language study and higher academic performance at the college level (Wiley, 1985). Cognitively, studies show, just to name a few, early language learning improves cognitive abilities (Bialystok & Poarch, 2014), bilingualism improves attentional control on cognitive tasks (Barac, Bialystok, Castro, & Sanchez, 2014), meter linguistic skills (Astheimer, Janus, Moreno, & Bialystok, 2014), memory skills (Luo, Craik, Moreno, & Bialystok, 2013) as well as problem solving ability (Bialystok, Craik, Binns, Osher, & Freedman, 2014).

Lastly, research shows bilinguals tend to have higher social economic status than their peer monolingual speakers (Calvo & Bialystok, 2014). A national journal reporter and researcher, Stephanie Czekalinski (2012) stated that people who speak more than one language earn more. In a 2005 study reported in *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, a 2.8 percent increase in hourly earnings was indicated for those who speak more than one language, and college admission officers consider bilingualism a great asset for applicants because of the cultural awareness that it signifies (Czekalinski, 2012). Fluency of a second language is a very marketable tool in the job search today, particularly because many governments, companies and nonprofits are looking at markets overseas, thus job seekers with knowledge of another language and the cultures tend to stand out (Quattlebaum, 2013). The New York based nonprofit, Global Language Project, shows that mastery of a foreign language “is what can set a lower-income student who couldn’t afford access to the best education above that of their more schooled peers” (Quattlebaum, 2013). More importantly, those with the knowledge of more than one language and culture, particularly individuals who learn a foreign language attain a more positive attitude towards speakers of other languages; especially towards the speakers of the language they learn (Sharifian & Jamarani, 2014). In other words, those learning foreign languages are more likely to have a positive perspective about the cultures they learn.

2.3 Literature for Language Learning and Teaching

For a number of years, there has been a divide regarding the role literature plays in language teaching (Sandiago, 2014). The debate has continued to recent years not only for English Language Learners (ELL) classrooms but also those learning foreign languages (Cook, 2001). But since the 1960s and 1970s, incorporating literature in language teaching started to be seen as a resource (Lazar, 1993). Later, scholars such as Brumfit and Benton, Falvey and Kennedy as well as Paran indicate a great positive shift and scholarly support for using literature in language classrooms (Llach, 2007). Most of these scholars acknowledge advantages observed for many years showing: using literature to teach and learn language develops and broadens students' linguistic horizons, gives students variety of language genres, while also stimulating their creative and literary imagination; literature improves their cultural understanding and adds to their knowledge of the world at large (Akyel & Yalcin, 1990). Literature is a motivator and a bridge which provides students with access to cultural background while increasing their interpretation skills (Short, 1996). Parkinson and Reid (2000) assert that while literature offers a good model for good writing, it is also memorable, significant, thought-provoking, and helps integrate the rhythms of a language. Even more, Hall (2005) demonstrates that literature focuses on form and discourse processing skills, which helps to improve vocabulary expansion and reading skills, and in turn improves the psycholinguistic aspect of language learning. Still more, literature gives learners realistic, enjoyable cultural materials. Generally, language scholars agree on the positive relationship between language learning and availability of varied levels and genres of literature in the target language (Paran, 2008).

3 Methodology

3.1 Method

This study was conducted over a one year period: Spring 2013- Spring 2014 in one city, Northeastern USA. The city has a large number of immigrants from different parts of Africa such as Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Burkina farso, to name only a few. Others come from China, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Hungary, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, German, Russia, and many more. The city hosts a university which has one of the largest African languages program in the USA and a strong Comparative Literature Department. As a result, there is evidence to suggest that libraries in this city would have had texts to accommodate speakers of non-western languages. In other words, because the major reason many libraries won’t carry specific books is due to lack of demand, in this case, there was a demand for such texts from local community to warranty the need for them. In addition to the 7 main public libraries in the city, 2 high schools, 4 middle schools, and 12 elementary school libraries were also examined to determine the availability of books written in non-western languages, including African languages. For over a year, the author intentionally sent students taking non-western languages to the examined libraries to ask for books written in specific languages. This was done very consistently. More than 50 students went to each of the examined libraries and asked “do you have books written in Swahili, Yoruba, Zulu, or any African languages? Do you have books written in any non-western language such as Vietnamese, Korean and more?; the students did this on each library at least three times a month in order to explore the possibility that such libraries would decide to make such texts available based on demand- just in case no one ever asked for such books in previous years, even though I had evidence that such books have been inquired in those libraries before.

I was able to confirm the students' visits to the library by asking the librarians to tell me if anyone and specifically how many people asked for books written in the languages under this study's investigation. Because librarians are not supposed to release certain information which pertains to people's privacy, they could not reveal the names of such individuals; however, they disclosed the amount of those who inquired. Data collection involved arranged meetings with library personnel, phone call follow-ups and email correspondence. The author visited each of the libraries at least 5 times throughout the year. The first time to identify the person (s) in charge of book inventory and the one making decisions on which books to be ordered. The second visit focused on identifying foreign languages represented in each library. By the third visit, inquiry about reasons behind not supplying books written in African languages was the main emphasis. Getting answers to the question, "what can be done now that the need is apparent?" was done on the fourth visit; the fifth visit mainly focused on answering the question, "How may I be of help in meeting this need?" To analyze data, libraries were grouped in four categories namely: public, high school, middle school, and elementary schools. For each library listed, a total number of books written in non-western languages were noted. Pseudo names are used in presenting the findings of this study as a way to protect the privacy of those involved. The other data set included the responses regarding reasons for not supplying the needed texts as well as what libraries are able to do, what individuals as well as institutions may do to meet this need.

4 Findings

Data seems to suggest that a small number of libraries carry books written in non-western languages; however, none of the libraries examined carry books written in any African languages. The reasons behind such deficiency are similar and varied at the same time.

4.1 Public Libraries

Among all of the 7 public libraries, only one library had books written in Korean and Vietnamese (see table 1 below). None of them have books written in Swahili, Yoruba, Zulu, and Akan or in any other African languages. Through discussions with librarians, the author learned that public libraries in general are funded from public sources, taxes (usually local) and are administered by a board to serve the community's interests. Unlike school libraries and research libraries which cater to the needs of a specific school, institution, or research population, public libraries' obligation is to serve the general public's information needs. Thus, a library's book collection is supposed to carry a range of "popular" fiction, classics, nonfiction and reference works, books of public interest or under public discussion as well as popular newspapers and magazines.

Table 1: Availability of Books Written in Non-Western Languages in Mamono' Public Libraries

Library Name	Language						
	Kr	Vt	Jp	Sw	Yr	Ak	Zl
Lenono County	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Carnegie	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Morison County	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Ocontee County	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Thorpe County	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Pinewood	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Royston	N	N	N	N	N	N	N

Key: Kr=Korean; Vt=Vietnamese; Jp=Japanese; Sw=Swahili; Yr=Yoruba; Ak=Akan; Zl= Zulu; Y= Yes; N=No

The Lenono library with books written in Korean and Vietnamese focused on these two languages only because they received special funding, in fact, Angaluki, the person in charge of ordering books at the Lenono county library said the grant dictated the exact titles of the books to be ordered. He said the library gets a budget and the board members decide on which books to get by answering the following key questions: 1). Is this book popular? 2). Is this book a classic? 3). Is this book a reference work? 4). Does this book serve the public interest of our entire community? 5). Can we make this book available through other services? 6). Do we have enough funds to make this book available?

The reason Lenono did not carry other books written in non-western languages was because the books in these languages did not get positive responses for questions 1 through 4 and the library could offer such books through inter-library loans. Inadequate funding was also another reason cited. In fact, Angaluki said, “Our public library is supposed to provide the public with access to books and periodicals by making sure that everyone has access to information and that no one is denied information because he or she cannot afford the cost of a book or periodical, or that he or she does not have access to the internet or information in any of its different formats. This is the mandate that our library and I believe all public libraries live by.” Based on this mandate, books written in African languages and other non-western languages deemed not catering to the public interest are supplied through other services mainly inter-library loans. Hence, even when the need for books written in African languages became evident in this library, the chief librarian still needed to get the approval from other committee members that such books cater to the public interest; he could not buy them also because the library can meet this need without actually ordering the books. The rest of the six libraries based their decision to not carry the books in question mainly due to minimal funding. These libraries were not even able to have adequate books that were deemed “popular” in their communities, therefore, books in foreign languages in general were not a priority.

4.2 High School Libraries

This city has three major high schools but the author did not have access to the third school. The data shows that both high schools have a small number of books written in French and Spanish. Both of them do not have books written in Korean, Vietnamese or Japanese. And similar to the public libraries, both libraries do not carry books written in any African language.

Table 2: Foreign Languages Book Availability in Mamonos’ High School Libraries

High School	Language name								
	Sp	Fr	Kr	Vt	JP	Sw	Yr	Ak	Zl
Clarke Central	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Cedar Shoals	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N

Key: Sp=Spanish; Fr=French; Kr=Korean; Vt=Vietnamese; Jp=Japanese; Sw=Swahili; Yr=Yoruba; Ak=Akan; Zl= Zulu; Y= Yes; N=No

Unlike public libraries, school libraries operate by different rules. The schools are given a budget for school materials or resources. Books get a portion of that budget. In addition, books ordered are not solely determined by popular demand but rather, based on books students are required to read. Therefore, each library first orders all books on the “mandate reading list” and if there is money left, classic books and other popular books get the second priority. Annette and Gabriela, both in-charge of their high school library stated that the schools hardly have money left to buy any other reading materials after the “mandate” list is covered. Even if the books ordered are not read, which is often the case for some of the books, the school library is obligated to make sure those texts are available. Based on this criterion, a small amount of books written in French and Spanish are made available in these schools because those are the two foreign languages offered; the rest of the languages have no reason to have books made available.

4.3 Middle School Libraries

Data indicates that, similar to high schools, all of the four middle schools have books written in French and Spanish but once again, no books written in any African languages (see table 3 below). Through conversations with the four middle school librarians, a mandated “reading list” is also provided which each school is obligated to cover. Somewhat different from high school libraries, the list is different, obviously because of education level. However, if a teacher wishes to suggest a book be included in the list, he or she may do so by making a formal request to the school principle.

Table 3: Availability of Foreign Language Books in Mamono' Middle School Libraries

Middle School	Language name								
	Sp	Fr	Kr	Vt	Jp	Sw	Yr	Ak	Zl
Heckermans	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Clakel	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Burney-Harris-Lyroy	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Coile	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N

Key: Sp=Spanish; Fr=French; Kr=Korean; Vt=Vietnamese; Jp=Japanese; Sw=Swahili;

Yr=Yoruba; Ak=Akan; Zl= Zulu; Y= Yes; N=No

The challenge is that the books suggested must meet State Standards for English language arts and literacy in history, social studies and science as well as technical subjects. If a foreign-language is not part of the foreign languages offered at a school, any books written in that language often do not satisfy the State standards. Therefore, books written in non-western languages including African languages find themselves outside of the permissible parameters.

4.4Elementary School Libraries

All of the 12 elementary school libraries also have books in French and Spanish but none in any other foreign languages not offered in their schools (see table 4 below).

Table 4: Availability of Foreign Language Books in Mamono' Elementary School Libraries

Elementary School	Language name								
	Sp	Fr	Kr	Vt	Jp	Sw	Yr	Ak	Zl
Ape Road	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Barn Shoals	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Darrel	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Nurse Street	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Clementine Road	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Fowler Drive	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Jaines	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
J.J. Hommis	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Othorpe	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Howard B. Stant	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Anthony Road	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Whitmore	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N

Unlike high schools and middle schools however, classroom teachers in elementary schools have their own class libraries and are allowed to include any books they want by giving a reason behind their request. The author learned that although books written in non-western languages were not available in the main school library, often, such books were found in individual classroom libraries. For example, Jaines, Darrel and Whitmore each had 2-5 books written entirely in Swahili or with some sprinkles of Swahili. One of the 3rd grade teachers at Whitmore for instance had a book titled "*We all went on a Safari*" and "*Jambo means Hello.*" From discussions with the school librarians, the classroom teachers made these books available especially during "black history month" as a way to bring an understanding to a "foreign" culture that is "African." Some of the teachers also stated the need for such books as a way to make their classrooms more "multicultural." Although elementary schools also had a "reading list," there were other avenues for them to include other books in their curriculum. The author also learned that in each of the elementary schools' library, there was a digital link to the International Children's Digital Library where books written in various languages were made available. Upon browsing such collection, the author discovered only 17 Swahili books were available and all of them were translated from English titles.

5 Discussion

This study underscores the fact that the American public is yet to see other languages and culture, non-western and African in general as something of great significance. The fact that no books written in African languages were found in any of the public libraries even though the demand could not have been denied shows America still has a long way to go on this matter. The question here is what can be done to change this considering any books that are not yet “popular” are not going to make it to public libraries, at least the ones in Mamono city. For school libraries, given the need for them to abide by the State Standards, it is apparent that our battle is not the libraries themselves, the core of the problem are the standards themselves and the criteria that schools and teachers need to meet. Educators and scholars of less commonly taught languages (LCTL) are therefore faced with a mission to design a plan to change the current system or at least to identify a strategy that will enable schools to include African languages and culture as part of the curriculum. The answer is not to make this mandatory but rather, to allow students with such interest to have the option of taking them. America must not forget that there are numerous students whose parents are of the African descent and many wish for their children to keep their African heritage or to learn it. When children of the African background find no books written in any African languages; they start developing a negative ideology towards their own languages and culture. In fact, they find it a struggle to fight through the education system in order to keep what is theirs. By allowing students and the public the opportunity to choose books written in African languages for example, American citizens will begin to become aware of their presence and perhaps develop a sense of curiosity to learn those languages. It is sad that many college students don't know even the names of any African languages prior to College. Public and school libraries are a good place to start.

6 Implications

6.1 Implications for Teaching

With no books (other than textbooks), language learning is stripped off its beauty and totality while also confined to school walls. As a language instructor, the author acknowledges how limiting textbooks can be to language learners. In fact, when a teacher relies on one or two textbooks for language instruction, teaching different writing genres and levels is limited mainly because authors write differently and bring a rich variety of voices, styles, language modification and expansion. Furthermore, language teaching necessitates building cultural context to make language application practical. With minimal language variety, language teaching is made superficial and narrowly explored. Teachers of African languages find it difficult to raise American community's interest to learn African languages. For instance, it is very easy for children to inquire and get interested on another language and culture if they hear their teachers mention it or even bring books written in that language. However, with no available texts in African languages, school teachers (high, middle or elementary) are not able to introduce their students to other languages and culture through small language-bites.

6.2 Implications for Research

Although the study uncovered the lack of books in African languages (AFLANG), a more comprehensive study needs to be taken to explore availability of AFLANG books statewide, nationwide and internationally. In addition to the reasons uncovered in this study, AFLANG educators need to know other reasons for American libraries not carrying such books. If the reasons are similar across states, then strategies to make changes that will affect not one city but the entire country may be explored.

7 Taking Actions

We live on the age of technology. As a language teacher, the author does not rely on texts available through libraries only, but rather, resources available through the internet such as newspapers, news reports presented in print, audio or visual and others that come in forms of song lyrics, games, and ebooks may be used. Each African language instructor may also explore international projects geared to meet this need. For example, the “box me” project records children's books in Swahili and translates them to English and vice versa. However, even those resources are still of small amount compared to those in Western languages. On a positive note, the author learned that all of the libraries examined in this study were very accepting any book donations. Therefore, it is up to African languages educators and the African diaspora to take it upon ourselves and bring those books to the American public. This can easily be done by buying books either online or getting them from African countries. Another way to grow the children's international digital library collection is to contribute books directly through their website.

Universities also may encourage students taking African languages to create bilingual texts as part of their assignments and share them with school libraries, public libraries and their families. In fact, Maganda (2014) shows that university students can be taught to create bilingual texts tailored towards specific audiences as a way to make African languages visible and to enlighten the American public regarding the varied cultures that exist in Africa.

8 Conclusion

The quest to make books written in African languages available through Public libraries in America is significant not only because African languages need to be made more visible but also because this deficiency signifies a greater problem in the American education system. The findings show that there is a great scarcity of books written in non-western languages in general, a predicament that aligns with the limited offerings of these languages in primary through tertiary levels of school in America. A great responsibility falls in the shoulders of all language scholars of less commonly taught languages in America to take it upon ourselves and start the change we wish to see in America; donating reading materials to various libraries in America is the first step to meeting this need. Those teaching non-western languages in Universities may begin to make a difference by having students create bilingual texts. This study highlights the need for a practical solution not only in schools but more importantly in the American public so that what is considered “not of public interest” still gets a chance to be made available. If more than 200 hundred people asking for books written in African languages throughout an entire year does not amount to anything, how can America motivate its citizens to see that knowledge of other languages and culture needs to be of great interest?. For the children of the African diaspora, the presence of books written in African languages shows them that their identity matters and is worth reading. Besides all the benefits of learning another language, If America is to become competitive in today’s global world, it needs to pay attention to more than western languages.

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