

## AVM (Alliance for Vulnerable Mission) Bulletin September 2009

The main focus in this edition of the Bulletin is on the importance of the use of the language of people being reached in mission.

\* LOITASA (Language of Instruction in Tanzania and South Africa) people may be neither missionaries, nor vulnerable. But they are very interested in and concerned for African languages. They have done a lot of work and a lot of publishing that makes a very clear case in favour of the use of African languages, especially in education. They suggest that African languages should be used throughout the educational system in Sub Saharan Africa. They suggest that unless and until this is done – no way will we be able to find true ‘development’ occurring in Africa!!! *Contact me for a soft copy of a few articles.* For more details of books available see: <http://www.loitasa.org/publications.html>

\* The *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* of July 2009 includes a short editorial piece that I wrote, (pp. 272-274). It indicates that a failure to learn indigenous languages brings inter-missionary conflict, when new missionaries think they understand the English of the ‘nationals’ they meet. They may not realise that English being familiar to them does not mean that they will understand the way it is used by people of a different ‘culture’.

\* This book looks as if it would be of interest to AVMerS: *When Helping Hurts* -- Churches and individual Christians typically have faulty assumptions about the causes of poverty, resulting in the use of strategies that do considerable harm to poor people and themselves. *When Helping Hurts* provides foundational concepts, clearly articulated general principles and relevant applications. The result is an effective and holistic ministry to the poor, not a truncated gospel. For more details see: <http://www.whenhelpinghurts.org>

\* I have found a lot of material in libraries that addresses the role of **English as global or international language**. Some of this is of strong relevance to us in AVM, as it includes scholarly analysis of the situation prevailing where European languages are imposed onto non-Western people. In the course of reading some of this material, I have been surprised to find close parallels to the kinds of issues of the domination of English that we are finding in Africa also to be there in the Far East – e.g. Hong Kong, China, Phillipines, India etc. Janina Brutt-Griffler, Naz Rassool, Braj Kachnu, Alastair Pennycock, Wyatt MacGaffey, Ileri Mbaabu, Francis Owino are authors to look out for. More details below.

\* Howell and Zehner have edited a book entitled *Power and Identity in the global church*. Contributing authors have recognised that context as well as culture needs to be taken into account of in mission. There seems to be a cop-out though. Missionaries are advised not to encourage contextualisation through fear that their ignorance of context and culture would end up clashing with the direction being taken by national churches! In the AVM we would encourage some missionaries to be sufficiently vulnerable as to get to a position where they can participate in the issues pertaining to the contextualisation of non-Western churches. The kind of language issues mentioned above show (in my view) that *vulnerable* Western missionaries can have insights that non-Western churches can benefit from.

\* Some reading on English as a Global language that may be of interest to AVMerS:

Musimbi, Kanyoro, R.A., 1991, 'The Politics of the English Language in Kenya and Tanzania.' 402-419 In: Cheshire, Jenny, (ed.) 1991, *English Around the World: sociolinguistic perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Brutt-Griffler, Janina, 2002. *World English: a study of its development*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters

MacGaffey, Wyatt, 1994. 'Dialogues of the Deaf: Europeans on the Atlantic Coast of Africa.' 249-267 In: Scharz, Stuart B. (ed.) *Implicit Understandings: observing, reporting and reflecting on the encounters between Europeans and other Peoples in the early Modern Era*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

Rassool, Naz, 2007. *Global Issues in Language, Education and Development: perspectives from postcolonial countries*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Pennycook, Alastair, 1994. *The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language*. London: Longman

Pennycook, Alastair, 1998. *English and the Discourses of Colonialism*. London: Routledge.

(Pennycook has published another book in 2009 that looks very interesting, but I could not get hold of a copy to read it.)

Owino, Francis, (ed.), 2002. *Speaking African: African languages for education and development*. Cape Town: the Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society

Best wishes,

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