Regimes of literacy as regimes of truth about Africa: language ideologies and southern voices

Ashraf Abdalhay[a], Cristine Severo[b], and Sinfree Makoni[c], [a] Doha Institute for Graduate Studies, School of Social Sciences and Humanities, Doha, Qatar; [b] Department of Portuguese Language, Federal University of Santa Catarina, Campus Universitário Reitor João, Florianópolis, Brazil; and [c] Department of Applied Linguistics, Pennsylvania State University, College of the Liberal Arts, University Park, PA, United States

Introduction

In this chapter we discuss and problematize the colonial and contemporary connections between regimes of literacy—including ideologies of writing—and regimes of truth about Africa. This means considering the process of knowledge production, dissemination and reception as politically and economically controlled, contributing to a continuous remodeling of power relations. In the academic realm such power relations have historically characterized the relation North-South, being the North traditionally seen as the spoken subject and the South the silenced object: "the presumption is that people from the North offer through reason the ideas that make people of the South appear. Those from the South, thus, become passive recipients of such light. This, however, is a distortion of history and reality. It erases facts, and it cultivates dependency" (Gordon, 2021: 128). It overlooks the degree to which insights from the Global Souths have even during the period of imperialism been at the core of knowledge production of the Global North (Connell, 2019).

In this chapter we argue for a shift in a geography of reason (Gordon, 2021) that is able to expand the Western-Northern politics of truth that has characterized the production, validation and circulation of what counts as truth. We construe a "shift in a geography of reason" to be a conceptual framework which has multiple dimensions as we try to capture how knowledge about the Global Souths can be framed from a southern epistemological perspective and how and what the Global Norths look like from a perspective of the Souths. Following Makoni et al. (2022) we identify the following as the critical dimensions of a shift in a geography of reason:

1. Shifting from a closed to an open relational commitment
2. Thinking anew and creatively
3. Working on the basis of transindividual rather than isolated subject positions
4. Shifting the sites of the production of knowledge

By situating our arguments in African colonial contexts, we explore the role played by ideologies of literacy, mainly centered on the alphabetic script, in defining what counts as language—taken as fixed and named codes-, which consequently shaped the ideological beliefs about the nature of knowledge production and knowledge transmission which is carried out via extant codes. In African traditional contexts, if it is true that the elderly and ancestors are "the ones who give the first lessons in life, not only through experience but through the medium of stories, fables, legends, maxims, adages, and so on" (Hampaté Bâ, 1981: 179), we argue that such politics of knowledge transmission has been undermined by existing ideologies of literacy, schooling and truth-telling which are in conflict with long held views and practices of knowledge production and transmission. Our argument goes further and we argue that the shift in ideologies about language and literacy also impacted and changed what was regarded as knowledge and what knowledge was regarded as invalid or illegitimate.

This chapter is on literacy in Africa, colonial regime of literacy, regime of truth, authorship, standpoint, politics of knowledge production, oral tradition, politics of citation and editorial politics. The bigger proposition we are making goes beyond simply identifying insights in Africa; rather, we seek to understand how such insights affected the nature of literacy in the Global Norths as well. The critical point we are making is that we envisage "If African identity used to be constructed on the basis of European fictions, other narrative systems might construct it differently, the essential point being that in the future everyone can imagine and choose what makes him or her an African" (Mbmebe, 2001: 17).

This chapter is structured as follows: first we briefly present a discussion of African precolonial writing practices; second, we analyze the connections between colonial/contemporary regimes of truth with regimes of literacy; finally, we address the politics of citation as part of the development of epistemologies of the South (Santos, 2014).

The African precolonial writing practices

We conceptualize literacy as a form of social practice tied to specific historical contexts in which it is used and valued. This means that literacy events should be studied "in relation to the larger sociocultural patterns which they may exemplify or reflect" (Heath, 1983: 74). Alphabetic literacy which is linked with formal education is just one instance, though the most powerful, of a situated action upon which the modern nation-state is built. Africa had its own list of literacy regimes and writing practices, some of which are among the oldest in the world (for a discussion see Nwosu, 2010; Juffermans et al., 2014). For instance, the list includes, but not restricted to, the forms of scripts associated with the Egyptian language, namely, the hieroglyphic, hieratic or Cursive, Coptic, and Demotic (Baines, 1983; Makar, n.d, see Fig. 1); Nsibidi which is a pictographic mode in Nigeria (Macgregor, 1909; Nwosu, 2010; Carlson, 2003, Ajibade et al., 2012, see Fig. 2); the Bamum syllabary in Cameroon (Kelly, 2018, Fig. 3); the Vai syllabary in Liberia (Dalby, 1967; Tuchscherer and Hair, 2002; Kelly, 2018, Fig. 4); the Kikakui script used by Mende of Sierra Leone (Tuchscherer, 1995, Fig. 5); the Ge'ez or Ethiopic script in Eritrea and Ethiopia (Asfaha et al., 2008, Fig. 7); Tifinagh in North Africa (Cline, 1953; El Aissati, 2014; Ali and Sedrati, 2016, Fig. 8); the Adinkra in Ghana (Temple, 2010, Fig. 9); the Meroitic script associated with the Nubian Kingdom of Kush in the South of Egypt around the 8th century BC (Griffith, 1913, 1916; Voogt, 2010; Nakanishi, 1980, Fig. 10).

Although most of the scripts above are old, other scripts are relatively recent. For example, Oberi Okaime is an indigenous (religious) script invented about 1930 by Akpan Udofia and Michael Ukpan and is used in the old Efik-Ibibio-speaking area in Nigeria (Akinnaso, 1996). Ismaaniya (Osmaniya) (or Somali script) was invented around 1920 by Osman Yusuf Kenadid, brother of Sultan Ali Yusuf Kandid in Somalia, and another non-Arabic script recently invented in Somalia is the Gadabuursi script by Sheikh Abdurahmaan Sheikh Nuur of the Gadabuursi clan (Lewis, 1958, Fig. 6). In addition to the native scripts listed above, there are also adapted scripts such as the Ajami which is a modified version of Arabic script used for writing in North Nigeria (Akinnaso, 1996).

It should be noted here that when we talk about African literacy traditions we are not just talking about other non-western forms of literacy and the local ways of "decoding" the scripts, but also, and most importantly, we are talking about different graphic modes of "reading the world" in Freire's sense (2000). In other words, the focus is not exclusively on the linguistic function of these African

Letter	older Scripts			Coptic	
	Hiero-glyphic	Hieratic	Demotic	Cap	Small
Shai	⚶⚶⚶	⊔⊔	⊔ᶴ	ⲱ	ⲱ
Fai	⟶	∽	⸝	ϥ	ϥ
Khai	⚻	⅃	⌒	ⳑ	ⳑ
Hori	⚌⚻	⊃	⟃	ⳋ	ⳋ
Ganga	⟁	⌐	⌐	𝕏	𝕩
Cheema	⟡	⌐6	6	6	6
Tee	⟡⌐	⌄	⌄	ϯ	†

Fig. 1 Egyptian scripts: hieroglyphic, hieratic, demotic and coptic. Source: Maker (n.d).

Nsibidi	Names	Meaning
	Ekpe (*Usime-Ekpe*)	Indicating the Ekpe's strength and potential for anger and violence against anything when provoked.
	Uden	This is a harmless object of peace. It goes around pecking at food.
	Ubok	This outspread palm is a representation of the pioneers of the Ekpe society, as well as departed prominent members. It is for remembering important personages such as King James Eyo Honesty from Creek Town.

Fig. 2 Some Nsibidi Symbols from the Efik people of Calabar. Adapted from Ajibade et al. (2012: 302).

Fig. 3 Excerpted comparison of Bamum graphemes across five successive phases. Source: Dugast and Jeffreys (1950, 87), cited in Kelly (2018: 195).

writing signs but also on their symbolic sociolinguistic uses (Al-Kahtani, 1996; Suleiman, 2003). For instance, the Adinkra regime of literacy (in Ghana) is not a detached instrument of representing an independent world, it is rather "the rich cultural heritage of using pictorial images to convey the wisdom of Akan life" (Temple, 2010: 127). To take one example from the system, the symbol and meaning of "Sankofa" (going back to roots/the past) in Adinkra (see **Fig. 9**) is associated with or indexical of the Akan's philosophy

Fig. 4 A phonetic chart of some Vai characters. Adapted from Massaquoi (1911: 459).

Fig. 5 Kikakui script. Source: Tuchscherer (1995: 177).

Fig. 6 Somali script. Source: Lewis (1958: 141).
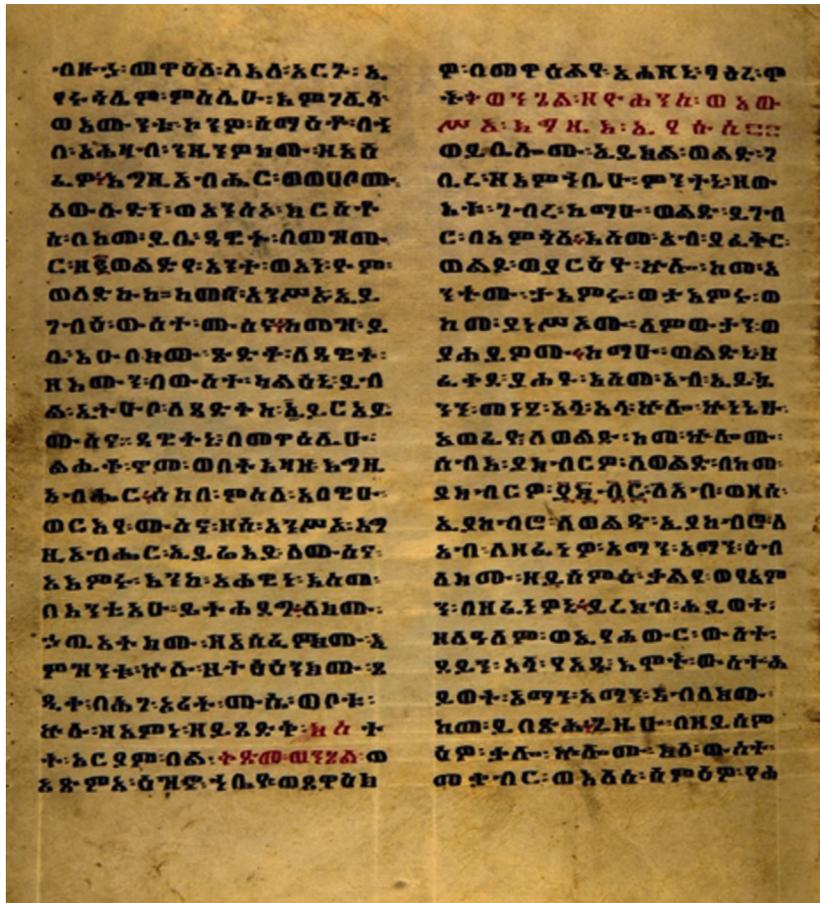
Fig. 7   A page of Ethiopic script from an Ethiopia manuscript containing. Source: DeGregorio Collection, Repository of the Bucknell University, http://www.jstor.org/stable/community.2944750.

Fig. 8   Neo-Tifinagh. Source: Ali and Sedrati (2016: 4).

Symbol	Name	Meaning
	Gye Nyame	Except God. A symbol expressing the omnipotence of God. Probably the most popular Adinkra symbol. It is featured on Ghana's largest-denomination banknote, the 200 cedi note.
	Sankofa	Go back and get it. A symbol of the wisdom of learning from the past to build for the future. From the Akan proverb, "Se wo were fi na wosan kofa a yenkyiri," meaning, "It is not taboo to go back for what you forgot (or left behind)."
	Sankofa	Another Sankofa symbol
	Adinkrahene	King of the Adinkra symbols. A symbol for authority, leadership, and charisma. Also a symbol for qualities associated with kings. Adinkrahene is reportedly the inspiration for the design of the other symbols.

**Fig. 9**   Adinkra symbols. Source: https://adinkrasymbols.org/.
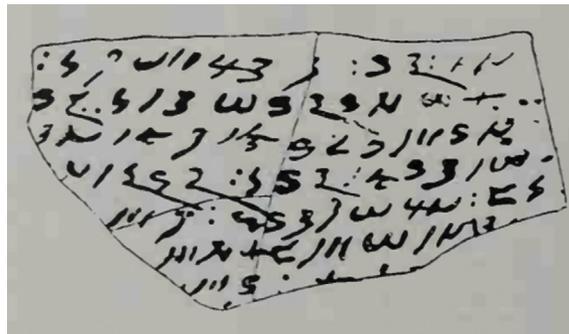
Fig. 10   The Meroitic writing of the Nubian kingdom in the south of Egypt about the 8th century BC. This form is one of teo Meroitic scripts. Source: Nakanishi (1980: 104).

of life (on Sankofa's philosophy see Temple, 2010). It is thus a symbolic way of philosophizing which is historically constituted. Thus, it is by no means an "immobile" resource. Temple (2010) who studies Sankofa as a Diasporan practice in the USA, made the following note which deserves to be cited in full:

> Sankofa practice is influenced by several orientations toward African consciousness: (a) as the legacy of natural cultural behaviors documented in its early usage by enslaved Africans who came to the Americas and in later usage, possibly, through epic memory; (b) as resistance with respect to rejecting Eurocentric language and world views and insisting on the relevance of using African conceptual possibilities to define and characterize African life in the contemporary era; and (c) as the symbolic gestures of Diasporan Africans interested in general forms of "returning to the source," or psychological steps toward Africanness. Beyond its usage by Africans, there is also the aspect of Sankofa appearing in non-African space due to cultural borrowing in an age of popular forms of diversity and multiculturalism.
>
> Temple (2010: 128).

To further stress the issue of mobility, it is worth noting that some modern orthographies are developed from ancient African scripts with the purpose to teach currently used varieties of the ancient African languages to both native and non-native speakers not just in the "original" context of the language but also in the West (see Hashim, 2004). To illustrate, the Nubian Language Society (NLS) developed an Old Nubian-based phonemic orthography called "nobiin agii" for teaching Nobiin language to non-native speakers (Khalil, 2021). The NLS, among others, organizes Nobiin courses for non-native speakers in, among other contexts, Sudan, Egypt, and the USA. This and other orthographies are relatively mobile in the sense that they are largely developed and taught in the diaspora (see also Abdulmannan, 2015; for a detailed authoritative review of competing orthographies for writing Nubian languages see Hashim, 2004).

The above examples show that literacies in Africa cannot be conceptualized in purely instrumental terms. The symbolic dimension is always present. The instrumental function of literacy is generally associated with formal schooling or academic literacy, and it marks the shift from orally situated thinking to abstract, and literate thinking, and this shift is considered a defining feature of (western) modernity, and formal discourses associated with scientific disciplines (Street, 1995; Klein and Olson, 2001; Halliday and Martin, 1993). Meaning is viewed as embedded or contained within the word itself. Street (1984) terms this theoretical position the "autonomous model." The perspective which supports this function is known in the literature as the "Great Divide" and is generally associated with the writings of McLuhan (1962), Goody and Watt (1968), Ong (1982), and Olson (1977) (for a review see Street, 1984; Klein and Olson, 2001). Alphabetic literacy has determined a significant portion of metalanguage which we use to convert language from a situated practice to an object of study; however, the cognitive implications drawn by the theorists of the Great Divide between orality and literacy are not universal. The use of these modes of communication is determined by their roles, goals, and learners' needs in a society, though one mode may historically receive more emphasis than another (Al-Kahtani, 1996). For instance, although standard Arabic is largely associated with writing, it is conventionally used in specific communicative events as the default mode of expression (Ferguson, 1959). So, what determines the use of a highly codified medium is the context of situation and not the nature of the medium itself.

Connecting colonial and contemporary regimes of truth with regimes of literacy

In this section we aim at exploring the interconnection between the colonial regime of literacy and contemporary knowledge control mechanisms. The concept of regime of literacy (Kalantzis and Cope, 2015: 16) includes a political perspective that considers the "roles, rules, structures of governance and disciplinary logics" underlying the idea of literacy taken as a "regime of epistemic discipline, a moral economy." We conjugate such idea with the discussion on how colonial regimes of truth (Foucault, 2003) about Africa contributed to invent an idea of Africa (Mudimbe, 1988). By regimes of truth we consider the types of discourse considered as truth to each society. In other terms, it is related to how each society forges specific ways of saying and validating its truth. Foucault (2003) identifies in Western societies five traits that characterize its regime of truth: (a) its relation with the scientific discourse; (b) its subjection to economic and political interests and forces; (c) its relation to a politics of diffusion and appropriation; (d) its relation with specific politics that regulates the way such discourses are distributed and institutionally validated; and (e) its relation with ideological struggles. In a nutshell, "truth is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements" (Foucault, 2003: 132).

We argue that the regimes of truth about Africa were largely framed by specific discursive genres that also contributed to outline both the idea of what counts as language (Abdelhay et al., 2020; Gilmour, 2007; Makoni and Pennycook, 2006) and the discursive modes of expressing the truth about Africa (Severo and Makoni, 2020). Such discursive genres are based on the written word and its ideological role (Weth and Juffermans, 2018) that contributed to shape the ideas of language, knowledge transmission and truth. We argue that this scriptist logo-centric nature of knowledge has promoted particular types of knowledges and denigrated others. Examples of such ideologies based on the written word are missionary Linguistics and the schooling language ideology. We argue that there is a connection between concepts of language and the way the truth about Africa has been told and legitimated since colonial era until contemporary academic practices.

The tyranny of writing and the hegemonic ideology of alphabetic literacy

The introduction of alphabetic literacy in African contexts contributed to shape not only an ideology of language (Makoni and Meinhof, 2004), but to hierarchize languages and language practices in terms of the notions of prestige, citizenship, development and modes of telling the truth about Africa. We engage with the concept of "tyranny of writing" as a critical framework that contributes to elucidate the emergence and crystallization of "tensions and contradictions between the written and the spoken word, linguistic normativity, creativity and authenticity, and centers and peripheries in language practices" (Weth and Juffermans, 2018: 1). In this chapter we do not discuss the several concepts of literacies that have been under revision and expansion by the so-called New Literacy Studies (Street, 1984); rather, our objective is to elucidate how regimes of truth have contributed to reproduce language ideologies oriented by written scripts:

> [the] ideology of literacy has significantly contributed to the construction of a particular "image" of Africa (imagined by this model of literacy as a bounded continent). By focusing on the cognitive (in)ability of a person to read and write, this ideological scheme of classification constructs what counts as "a normal person" (read: "modern") in the process. The Eurocentric image of Africa is largely constructed through the variants of this technical discourse (i.e., a monolithic discourse on "literacy in Africa").
>
> Abdelhay et al. (2014: 2).

Such language perspective centered on ideologies of literacy has contributed not only to undermine what can be called as oral tradition in African contexts, but also to underestimate the role of African languages—and African discursive genres—in telling the truth about it. By inquiring about colonial and contemporary regimes of truth about Africa we draw attention to the role played by orality in shaping a sense of personhood (Wiredu, 2009: 13): "the influence of orality in philosophy need not be always negative. In

truth, sometimes an oral habit may be loaded with wisdom […] this is so with regard to the African conception of a person." In this line of thought, we also consider that "Where writing does not exist, man is bound to the word he utters. He is committed by it. He is his word and his word bears witness to what he is" (Hampaté Bâ, 1981: 167). By problematizing how colonial and contemporary regimes of truth have been reinforced by specific regimes of literacy and vice versa, we spotlight the ethical and political dimension of such discussion.

Orality and the testimonial narrative

In the context of literary discursive regime, the testimonial narrative has been aesthetically recognized as a form of report of post-war survivors, whether in Europe, Latin America or Africa. As a discursive genre, "O testemunho, como sabemos, tem uma conotação política muito marcada que se traduz em permitir o uso da palavra por aqueles que tradicionalmente se encontram excluídos" ["The testimony, as we know, carries a marked political connotation by allowing the use of the word by those who are traditionally excluded"] (Reis, 2007: 79). We mention this as an example of discursive memory construction pervaded by the experience of historically invisible and silenced witnesses whose testimony has been transmitted across generations, helping to build a sense of truth. This means recognizing that "não se pode fazer uma história válida dos povos africanos sem a tradição oral" ["one cannot make a valid history of the African peoples without the oral tradition"] (Ki-Zerbo, 1969: 123). The testimonies have been used as central elements in the reconstruction of another history about Africa in which local voices work also as authors of such narratives. In this regard, Hrbek argues in favor of the reconstruction of South African history (1981: 124) from the perspective of "African voices":

> the struggle now going on in South Africa in every field of human activity necessitates also a new approach to the sources; particular attention must be paid to the written evidence of the hard struggle of the Africans for their rights. Only research based on all the evidence and material will allow the writing of a truthful history of South Africa.

By discussing the role of oral tradition, testimony and personhood in the construction of narratives about what counts as Africa we also intend to problematize the Western and Northern regime of knowledge production. Such regimes of truth have been allied to regimes of modes of telling-writing which contributed to largely dictate the rules that determine not only the production of knowledge and its economic and political value, but also the language ideologies that frame the way we (Southern scholars) are supposed to tell-write the truth about Africa. We claim that contemporary scholarship has contributed to perpetuate colonial ideologies of literacy that overlaps ideas of knowledge, knowledge transmission, language and truth mainly centered not only on alphabetic literacy, but also on academic discursive genres broadly regulated by the academic publishing industry.

Authorship: who is authorized to speak?

In this sense, the concept of authorship regarding who is legitimated to tell-write about Africa also matters. Taking into account an ethical approach to this issue, we consider two interconnected elements: the individual and the collective dimensions of authorship, both referring to a given discursive function (Foucault, 1977) or standpoint (Hill, 2000). As a function of discourse, authorship refers to discursive memories and interpretive frameworks; it is concerned with how discourses are controlled, selected, organized and classified, which is strongly influenced by the material and political conditions underlining such discourses: "the function of an author is to characterize the existence, circulation, and operation of certain discourses within a society" (Foucault, 1977: 124). Similarly, the standpoint cannot be reduced to an individual's perspective, but is signals to specific modes of discursive functioning that is strongly connected to collective modes of living and interpreting the world: "Black women intellectuals have laid a vital analytical foundation for a distinctive standpoint on self, community, and society and, in doing so, created a multifaceted, African-American women's intellectual tradition" (Hill, 2000: 2–3).

The academic regime of knowledge reinforces a given authorship functioning based on politics of citation and editorial positions that tend to prioritize certain proper names—generally white men from the Global North—that work within neoliberal statistics of citation in which white men tend to cite other white men, research groups favor their peers, and the references tend to reproduce the same Eurocentric cadre of scholars (B. Makoni, 2021; Mott and Cockayne, 2007). Also noteworthy is the priority given to the English-speaking academic community, or to the translation and proofreading industry for English texts. For example, more than 90% of the information available in international databases, such as the Science Citation Index is in English, which attests that the language policy that guides the scientific and academic truth regime is based on use of the English language, on rhetoric and Anglo-style and on symbolic representations about language (Kirkpatrick, 2009). This fact matters when we think about the importance of the authorship from the Global South in the system of production and dissemination of knowledge to foster anti-racist, anti-sexist and geopolitically plural academic practices. In other words, attention to the citation interferes in the economy and geopolitics of knowledge itself:

> Careful and conscientious citation is important because the choices we make about whom to cite—and who is then left out of the conversation—directly impact the cultivation of a rich and diverse discipline, and the reproduction of geographical knowledge itself.
>
> Mott and Cockayne (2007: 955).

By connecting the discussion on regimes of truth and regimes of literacy, we intended to problematize the political framework that has defined and hierarchized concepts of language, ascribing to alphabetic writing and academic written genres not only social prestige, but also the power to tell-write the truth about the South and Southern people. We will problematize such aspect in the next section.

The African decolonial burden: the politics of citation and the southern voice

On the June 15, 2021 we submitted a manuscript entitled "The Discursive Politics of the Sudanese Revolution of December 19, 2018" for consideration for publication in the *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* (JMMD). On June 17th (after two days from the submission date), we received the following email from the General Editor of the JMMD, Professor Jean-Marc Dewaele:

> Dear Dr. Abdelhay,
> I regret to inform you that we have now considered your paper, but unfortunately feel it unsuitable for publication in Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development. You are now free to submit your manuscript to another journal.
> Thank you for considering Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development. I hope the outcome of this specific submission will not discourage you from the submission of future manuscripts.
> Yours sincerely,
> Professor Jean-Marc Dewaele.
> Editor.

Upon the receipt of this email, we responded with the following email (dated June 20, 2021):

> Dear Professor Jean-Marc Dewaele,
> Thank you for your email. We are disappointed with this editorial decision for two reasons, first because we are not told precisely the reason for not considering the paper for reviewing. It could have been very helpful had you told us about the reason. Second, the document of "Author's Guidelines and General Information" which you attached also left us in the dark about the ground for your editorial decision. As we see it, our paper ticks three boxes: ethnicity and nationalism (the paper is about the December Revolution in Sudan, which it mainly addresses the issue of agency and gender in context of conflict); identity politics (the paper is framed from within the cultural politics to consider how language and identity in the context of the revolution are sites of conflict and struggle in Sudan); popular and folk sociolinguistics and usage (one of the fundamental goals of the paper is to critique the eurocentric discursive construction of the revolutions, and that is why we have used cultural politics as a framework to explore folk socio-linguistic constructions of the 'same' event); collective identity and its markers (to show markers of the different voices or identity we performed micro-analysis not as an isolated activity but as a way of addressing the wider issues referred to above). So we wonder how concretely our paper is "unsuitable for publication" in this journal if it addresses these required conceptual boxes?
> This is not our first submission to the journal on a cultural politics of language in Sudan, we have published at least two papers on Sudan in this journal dealing with the politics of language, and this manuscript is part of our wider project which deals with the cultural politics in Sudan and other contexts. We are mentioning this point as a way of saying we cannot see a reason in the attached document for your editorial decision nor any ground for your statement that the paper is "unsuitable for publication."
> Since the Guidelines advise that if authors are unhappy about an editorial decision they can contact Professor John Edwards, we have cited him in this email.
> Yours,
> Ashraf Abdelhay (for Cristine Severo and Sinfree Makoni).

The Editor Jean-Marc Dewaele returned on 20 June with the following response:

> Dear Ashraf (and co-authors),
> I understand your disappointment about my decision not to send your paper out for review. The fact that your paper ticked the boxes did not auto-matically qualify it for being sent for external review. I noticed that the authors are respected scholars, and that the paper seemed well constructed. Also, I love contributions about Africa. However, I judged that this paper was unlikely to attract a high volume of future citations and my job as editor of JMMD is to boost its impact factor. You may disagree with me, and I fully understand, but in my 6 years as editor of IJBEB, I managed to double its impact factor, and I intend to do the same for JMMD.
> I'm surprised John Edwards is still mentioned in the guidelines, as he is now Reviews Editor rather than General Editor, but I welcome his opinion in this matter!
> Regards,
> Jean-Marc Dewaele.
> Editor Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development.

We responded to the email of Professor Jean-Marc Dewaele on 21 June with the following email:

> Dear Professor Jean-Marc Dewaele,
> We thank you for your transparency. We should let you know upfront that the linguistics we operate with, whether at the level of theory or practice, is precisely a negation of your editorial linguistic ideology. You are right that you might have succeeded in boosting the "impact factor" of the

International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism (IJBEB) and you might achieve the same "success" for the JMMD, but in the process of boosting the journals' statistics and your editorial CV, you have effectively excluded and silenced "less known" scholarship from the Global South including the "voices" of the masses in the Arab world and Africa. If the default definition of sociolinguistics is the study of language as it is used by people on the ground (whether in Liverpool or Dongla in Sudan), the linguistics you are promoting through your editorial practice is Eurocentric to the core because it "erases" from view less known forms of (folk) linguistics outside Europe, let alone works which can be classified as "anti-linguistics." It should have occurred to you that this understanding of the "impact factor" which leads an editor of a multilingual and multicultural journal to pre-determine whose voice should be heard is itself an effect of ideological practices such as yours. And the result is a corpus of monocultural and monolingual voices constructed through epistemological spaces paradoxically intended for the recognition and development of multiculturalism and multilingualism. This is the goal of JMMD as we understand it. Its goal is not to enhance its statistics of the impact factor at the cost of excluding "less known" works about less known sociolinguistic situations and topics. Otherwise, the journal should indicate this condition in the Guidelines which you shared with us, i.e., it should state that "potentially less citable work" will be deemed by the editor as "unsuitable for publication." The process of peer reviewing which is the principle of validating knowledges in journals has now at your editorial hand become redundant for works which you believe (as part of your ideology) is (potentially) less cited. What is striking here is that you have even determined the future trajectory of "less known works" if they are published by the journal. And that is why with "confidence" you disqualify them from the very beginning as "not suitable for publication"! This metaphysical ideology is exclusionist because it effectively silences "less known" voices from the Global South using a politics of citationality to rationalize this symbolic violence. And worse, it reflects a particular (mis)understanding of knowledge as a quantifiably static "thing" whose trajectory can linearly be predetermined and known even before it is circulated or perceived. The question of "how" (how it will be perceived, and the effect it may produce on existing literature, etc.) is effectively erased. "Less known" works are not born "less known"; they are constructed as such through specific discursive planning practices including editorial policies and practices.

We know very well that publishing is a field of power (in Bourdieu's sense). This is understandable, but it becomes an unfair game when a journal is gated by pre-judgmental editors against "less known" works and knowledges from Africa and the Middle East. However, this process becomes fair when editors grant "less known" works or contributions which deal with less "popular" topics, which tick the boxes, the opportunity to be heard (to be reviewed); to be treated objectively equally with other "works" from the Centers. We experienced this fair editorial practice by Professor John Edwards.

We will of course submit our paper to another journal, and we will make sure you are not its editor or "co-editor" simply because we can now expect the fate of our work or the works of colleagues from the Global South if you are the editor. Parallel to this process, we will continue our epistemological and "ethical" struggle against exclusionist practices in academic discourses and institutions, and we intend to take the case to the publishing house (Taylor and Francis). Our objective for pursuing the case further is, as we said, ethically motivated: If such an editorial practice is normalized as a policy, it will certainly have adverse consequences on scholars and scholarship from the Global South and other "less known" sociolinguistic contexts.

Yours,

Dr. Ashraf Abdelhay (for Dr. Cristine Severo and Prof Sinfree Makoni).

As an action-oriented step to change this editorial ideology, we filed a formal complaint to the publishing house (Taylor and Francis), and we cited the exchanges above in the light of which we contended that:

In the light of the above editorial justification of Professor Jean-Marc Dewael, we evidently believe that his editorial practice is discriminatory and exclusionist of scholarship from unknown sociolinguistic situations from Africa and the Middle East. The Editor admits that the paper is well constructed and written by established scholars and that its content ticks the boxes indicated in the Guide of the journal; however, he rejects to subject it to reviewing because he believes that it is not potentially citable. This justification is not "scientific" and we have never heard of it as a condition for publishing in a journal. As the Philosopher Karl Popper noted, scholarship proceeds by falsification from the margin, i.e., unknown cases can change the intellectual landscape. Most importantly, our paper is about the Sudanese December Revolution of 2018, which is a very recent development, and having it excluded from consideration for publication because it is relatively unknown context means excluding the contribution of local material-discursive situations to our understanding of mainstream concepts and theories which we use to understand those dynamics. Thus, we have an objective ground to believe that we have been unfairly discriminated against by Professor Jean-Marc Dewaele because the work is from Africa.

We kindly ask that our complaint against this exclusionist and discriminatory editorial practice be given due consideration otherwise scholarship about new or unknown sociolinguistic conditions from Africa and the Middle East will be systematically marginalized and excluded by the journal.

Citation is the textual act of referring to another work as a way of recognizing the contribution of others in the process of knowledge production. And the impact factor is calculated as "the number of citations to papers published in a particular journal over a 2-year period divided by the total number of papers published by the journal in those 2 years," and the purpose is that "this metric provides a standard through which librarians can compare journals to help in making decisions for purchasing subscriptions" (Marks et al., 2013: 611). It was never intended as a measure of the scientific quality of a research paper in a journal.[1] With this very precise scope in background, we can understand the "misuse of journal impact factors in scientific assessment" (to employ Marks et al., 2013 title). The above tabulated transcript is a real case of misuse of the impact factor by an editor of an established journal.

Our aim for citing the above institutional interaction with the editor of the JMMD is to show with concrete example how the issue of the "citation rates" in academic journals, which is the basis of calculating the "impact factor," can be manipulated as a proxy for exercising epistemological racism against scholarship and scholars from the Global South. It is a way of raising the question of how our thinking about language and society has become so colonized by conditions such as the "citation rate" when it is pursued by journals as an end in itself, and the impact of this style of thinking on scholarly debates and on the limits of what Gordon (2021) terms the "geography of reason."

Citation is a key metalinguistic device which forges a sense of collective construction and shared ownership of knowledge. However, it is simultaneously implicated in the cultural politics of stratification particularly when it is (ab)used in the academic discourse as a gatekeeping tool of excluding non-mainstream scholarship or works by writers of color or LGBTQ which deviate

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[1]San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment, https://sfdora.org/read/.

from the established frame of conceptual expectations (Scharrón-Del Río, 2020). Marks et al. (2013), the editors of the *Journal of Traffic*, made the following significant observation:

> Many investigators use the JIF [journal impact factor] in deciding where to submit their work for publication, opting to submit to "high impact" journals over journals, which though more appropriate, have a lower JIF value. More insidiously, many academics, employers, funding agencies and others, across the world have come to use the JIF of journals in which individuals publish to make decisions about hiring, academic promotion, funding, etc. Rather than judging the value of a paper based on its significance and the quality of the work presented, or judging our peers based on the aggregate of their individual merits, we judge them based on the average number of citations received to papers published in journals in which they publish. Publishers and editors of the journals themselves have taken note of this trend, and anxiously await the release of the journal JIF every June; many journals "game" the JIF by opting to favor publishing article types that tend to accumulate citations or by classifying some articles that will be cited by others.
>
> Marks et al. (2013: 611).

Similarly, in the context of the Arab world, Amin (2021) noted that the main objective of research is no longer the production of scientific knowledge and the development of society through participation in policy making, but rather publishing in journals with a high impact factor. He added that researchers from the Arab world were consequently discouraged from working on issues related to their socio-political situations because "those in charge of these journals will most likely reject articles that will not achieve enough citations, thus weakening the impact factor of the journal" (Amin, 2021: 99). They were also enforced to abandon discursive methodologies, since high impact-factor journals favor positivist ones.

The editorial perspective in the example which we cited above shows how a particular editorial regime of textual rationality can render southern scholarship invisible by denying publishing works related to or published by scholars from the Global South. The discursive mechanism for this editorial act of erasure is the ideology of what counts as "a potentially citable work." This institutionally supported Eurocentric and Orientalizing gaze becomes a grid for deciding what is "potentially citable" because it operates from within a monoglossic ideology of knowledge. Crudely, in some academic journals, the "citation rate" is both an effect and a proxy for peripheralizing the southern voice. This cultural politics of citation has serious implications and ramifications for scholars from the Global South including black female scholars (B. Makoni, 2021). For example, it disqualifies other historically situated epistemologies simply because they, as the above editorial position believes, cannot boost the impact factor of the journal and consequently the "CV" of the editor. In a paper entitled "bibliometrics as weapons of mass citation," Molinié and Bodenhausen argued:

> The allocation of resources for research is increasingly based on so-called "bibliometrics." Scientists are now deemed to be successful on the sole condition that their work be abundantly cited. This world-wide trend appears to enjoy support not only by granting agencies (whose task is obviously simplified by extensive recourse to bibliometrics), but also by the scientists themselves (who seem to enjoy their status of celebrities) … the overwhelming fashion of bibliometrics is largely due to the narcissistic mind of the scientists themselves. Their fascination for citation indexes often drives them beyond reason. Their obsession with their egos is much more perverse than the laziness of granting agencies.
>
> Molinié and Bodenhausen (2010: 78).

We argue that although the above communicative process was with an individual scholar invested with editorial power, the encounter reveals structural pattern about what "counts as legitimate knowledge" within the hegemonic western regime of literacy and textuality. In other words, although the epistemic position of the editor is not shared by all western sociolinguistic journals and not even by members in its editorial board (who are normally denied voice), it is still systemic and hegemonic (for a discussion of the technical defects of the impact factor see Ramsden, 2009; Kiesslich et al., 2021). Afful and Janks (2013: 193) rightly argued that there "can be no doubt that citation in the academy is a politicized practice. In acquiring advanced academic literacy, students have to master the art of positioning themselves in relation to the work of others, so that they develop their own 'scholarly identity'". Thus, citation practices enact "in-built hierarchy of privileged academic sources," and they define what counts as "knowledge" in a particular community of practice (Afful and Janks, 2013: 196). Reflecting on the systemic perpetuation of racism and sexism in the process of knowledge construction, B. Makoni (2021) argued that

> gendered racial injustice is seen in publication rates, citation rates, and appointments to editorial boards. The underrepresentation of women in general, and black women in particular, discursively constructs scholarly enquiry as normatively white and masculine. The exclusion of nonwhite scholars partially emanates from a reliance on Euro-American theoretical frameworks that are applied, often uncritically, in other contexts as if the Euro-American experience were universal. The result is scholarship that is incongruous with local experiences and practices.
>
> B. Makoni (2021: 48).

The result of processes of editorial erasure of the southern voice is an institutionalized construction of an "apartheid of knowledge in the academia" (Bernal and Villalpando, 2002). To drive the discussion home, journals which exclude works from/about the

Global South using the "citation rates" as an editorial rationalization, run the risk, in the words of B. Makoni (2021: 50), of "reproducing the power relations it critiques if the racialized relations that impact the global flows of power and knowledge remain unquestioned."

It is worth stressing that some journals and editors have rejected this misuse of the JIF. At the 2012 meeting of the *American Society for Cell Biology* (ASCB), some editors of bioscience journals discussed the misuse of impact factor and suggested a number of recommendations to stem this misuse. The set of recommendations and the concerns became known as the "San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment" (https://sfdora.org/read/accessed March 23, 2022). The "General Recommendation" made by the declaration reads: "Do not use journal-based metrics, such as Journal Impact Factors, as a surrogate measure of the quality of individual research articles, to assess an individual scientist's contributions, or in hiring, promotion, or funding decisions".

Some sociolinguistics-oriented journals and editors also seriously started to widen its geography of reason by diversifying its editorial board and actively supporting and encouraging research from the Global South, and giving visibility to non-western languages. Ernst (2010: 90) suggested the creed of "discrediting 'number games' as incompatible with our goals of objectivity, credibility, fairness, and social responsibility, as researchers," and called for establishing "on the Internet, a generally accessible Webpage to list agencies, journals, and individuals who regularly use and misuse bibliometric measures in their judgements." He further argued that: It is only by this kind of active resistance to the follies of bibliometrics that our scientific self-respect and credibility can be saved. We should liberate our minds again to enable true creativity in view of long-term social benefits: "We certainly do not want to convert our precious universities into bureaucratic training centers for mindless citation hunters! Our institutions shall remain forever unbiased resorts of limitless human dignity and foresight" (Ernst, 2010: 90).

Concluding remarks

This chapter makes a case for the interconnection between the concept of authorship, the politics of knowledge production—which includes the politics of citation and impact factor—with the discussion on (colonial) literacy in African contexts. This means that the rules that dictate the discursive production of truth in Western societies are deeply inscribed into specific ideologies of literacy. From a historical and critical perspective we problematize such regimes of truth (Foucault, 2003) and "geography of reason" (Gordon, 2021) that have framed our understandings of language, writing and truth-telling in the academic field. Finally, concerning the ideologies of literacy and the politics of knowledge production on Africa, we follow Gordon's (2021: 69) challenges regarding a shift in the geography of reason:

> Shifting the geography of reason requires understanding that power should not be reduced to a single element but instead should be explored to its creative potential. If we acknowledge power as the ability to make things happen and securing access to the conditions of doing so, there is much proverbially to be done.

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