

Colloquium Series on Language, Society, and Culture
Lectures and discussion with Prof. John Myhill, University of Haifa

No. 1. Literacy and language development in Africa

17:30-18:45 June 30th (Thursday), 2022

6月30日(木曜日)・午後5:30~6:45

Venue: Zoom

Prof. John Myhill アフリカの言語の文字化と発展

使用言語は英語です。どなたでも歓迎します。積極的な議論を期待します。No.2. Language, religion, and national identity は7月7日の5:50に予定しています。

参加のお申し込みは、下記お問い合わせ先までお知らせください。

受付後、参加方法をご連絡いたします。

Abstract:

Africa is well-known as being the poorest area in the world. What is the reason for this widespread and persistent poverty? The most obvious explanation for this is that African countries have by far the lowest literacy rates in the world—fewer Africans can read and write than anywhere else in the world, and it can only be expected that people who can't read and write will not be economically successful in the modern world. And what is the reason for this widespread illiteracy in Africa? Here too there is an obvious explanation: Africa is the only place in the world where the normal policy is for children to be educated in a foreign language, usually English or French, and these languages are only foreign but also completely unrelated to their own native languages. In fact, not only in education but in African society in general, African languages are essentially not used as written languages—only English, French, and other European languages are used as written languages. It is easy to see that if Japan were to adopt a policy of educating their children in English and not Japanese, and Japan were to use only English as written language and not Japanese, the literacy rate in Japan would drop radically and Japan would soon become a poor country like African countries. Seen in this context, it is important to ask why African countries have adopted such self-destructive linguistic policies which have condemned their citizens to poverty, and this paper will discuss the historical reasons why this has happened and also why this situation is continuing in the present. I will also talk about what can be done to improve this situation, based on the work which I have been doing with NGOs in South Sudan to

develop indigenous languages there as written languages which can be used for all purposes in the modern world.

About Prof. John Myhill

John Myhill got his PhD in linguistics from the University of Pennsylvania in 1984. He taught at SUNNY-Buffalo and the University of Michigan until 1994. He has been teaching in the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of Haifa since 1995. His research specialties include sociolinguistics, semantics, and language planning, focusing on the relationship between language and identity and the development of indigenous languages of East Africa. He is the author of *Language, religion, and national identity in Europe and Middle East: A historical study* (Discourse Approaches to Politics Society and Culture) John Benjamin's Publishing Company (2006), *Language in Jewish Society: Towards a New Understanding*. Multilingual Matters (2004), and *Typological Discourse Analysis*. Blackwell Publishers (1992).

◇お問い合わせ先◇

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