



Harley Street



Update from Matthew & Rachel Harley in Jos, Nigeria Issue 17: Dec 2011

TCNN

SINCE MID-AUGUST I have been teaching one MA class and two third year BA classes (grammar and semantics). I have particularly enjoyed teaching grammar, since that was the topic of most of my work on Ghanaian languages from years ago. Grammar helps the students to understand the structures and organisational principles behind their own and other languages - skills the students will definitely need if they want to become translators. All sorts of questions come up in class: why is the word 'singer' often pronounced without a 'g' sound whereas 'finger' is always pronounced with a 'g' sound. Or why does 'inflammable' mean the same as 'flammable', when 'intolerant' means the *opposite* of 'tolerant'? Grammar holds the key to puzzles like these. As students apply the principles to their own languages, they start to see patterns they had never noticed before, and begin to understand the apparent randomness in the way their language works.



My third year BA class outside the translation dept.

Dial-a-linguist

ANOTHER OF MY 'HATS' is that of linguistic consultant for our Wycliffe colleagues and partner organisations here in Nigeria. This means that apart from having to check through linguistic write-ups, I am generally on call to try and help sort out various linguistic problems, or come and identify the occasional mysterious sound. Last week was no exception, when a Nigerian colleague called me in to listen to some sounds that he was struggling to represent orthographically in a language called Gworok. It became clear that we needed to distinguish between long and short consonants at the beginning of words, so the word 'swak' would have to be written differently from the word 'sswak', for example. This was not a particularly unusual feature, but twice now since I've been in Nigeria, sounds have turned up that are not known in any other language on earth. (For those suitably inclined, I can send you a paper that I wrote on these if you drop me an email).

Order! Order!

A MORE RECENT ROLE that I have been thrust into is that of 'Chair' of the Advisory Committee to our growing Wycliffe group here in Nigeria. This committee advises the Director on matters of strategy, policy and compliance with goals of the wider organisation, which happens to be going through very significant changes at the moment. Being 'Chair' involves having at least a perfunctory familiarity with a rather ancient, 700 page book about how to run meetings entitled 'Roberts rules of order'. Perhaps it's time for a new slimline edition called 'Matthew's minutes and motions'!

- Matthew

Community-centred projects

ONE OF THE BUZZWORDS

in Wycliffe circles at the moment is 'participatory'. This is intended to reflect the idea of communities actively participating in language projects right from day one, so that in the end they can say '*this is our project and we have done it together*'. Last month, I tried out the latest participatory approach to word collection in a village called Gure about 2½ hours' drive from Jos. Various groups of people wrote down lists of words on different themes (e.g. actions, animals, household objects) which generated a couple of hundred words in about 15 mins. More importantly however, the participants felt that *they* were making a contribution rather than letting the linguist do all the work. Hopefully their enthusiasm will continue as our colleague, Rachelle Wenger, continues to meet with them every weekend.



- Matthew

Dance Club

EVERY TUESDAY afternoon I join a team who travel the long, bumpy road (involving a crazily precarious bridge) to the Gyero orphanage to run various after-school clubs. Last year, as there was just my friend Karis and me, the only club we could offer was music & drama, and choosing 20 children from 150 was hard for those not selected. This year we have enough volunteers to offer art, football, sewing, choir, bead-making and dance, from which the children choose three activities, one for each term. Fortunately we have had electricity to run my CD player every time I've been so far! One of their favourite dances is to a song that Shakira sang for the World Cup: 'This time for Africa'. One of the girls in my class is called 'Thumim' and she has a twin sister named, 'Urim!' (T & U are mentioned in the Bible as a way of casting lots).



- Rachel

Scripture Engagement, Nairobi

IN AUGUST I joined a group of people from all over Africa for a fortnight of training to learn how to help people engage with Scripture in meaningful and culturally appropriate ways. We learnt, for example, that when some people read a holy book then it must have a special decorative border around the script, otherwise it is considered to be secular writing. For others, the book must not have a black cover since that is the colour of death. Those who are illiterate really benefit from audio Bible books, storytelling and Biblical films.

We stayed in a beautiful Catholic guest house in Nairobi just down the road from Karen Blixen's house (of 'Out of Africa'). The grounds were lovely, with ibis strutting along the roof tops. We were fed plenty of hearty soups and stews, which was great since it's cold in Nairobi in August! One challenge for me, however, was that there was a list of rules in each bedroom requesting that guests keep their rooms tidy and quiet! It made me feel a bit rebellious, like Maria in 'The Sound of Music' perhaps; 'She waltzes on the way to church and whistles on the stair, and underneath her wimple she has curlers in her hair!'

At the weekend I had the wonderful opportunity to visit Lake Nakuru National Park, home to thousands of flamingos and other animals: lions, rhinos, zebra, water buffalo, various types of antelope, and all kinds of beautiful birds. It seemed as though all the animals came out to greet us and I felt as though I was taking a walk through the Garden of Eden. What an amazing treat!

- Rachel



Arts in Mission Conference, U.K.

AT THE BEGINNING of September I was invited to attend an Arts in Mission Conference at All Nations Christian College where Matthew & I studied a few years ago. There were over 60 incredibly creative people from around the world, some of whom I had met before at the arts conference in Singapore. We had all been asked to help edit a new arts training manual. Every morning we started with a wonderful time of worship in different styles from around the world. I helped out with the Africa morning along with Rob Baker who was in Nigeria in May for our arts workshop (see below). You can watch a 6-minute video about the conference online at: <http://vimeo.com/30090344>.



After the conference I had a couple of weeks to visit family and friends. I was sorry not to be able to get round to see more people and visit more of our churches but it was really special to see my family after a year away. Some

highlights of this time were walking in the Lake District with my parents, dancing to a song from the film 'Sister Act' for the cafe church in the village of Ireby, Marek & Tracy's house warming party, a Harley family weekend in Liverpool during which we video-skyped with Matthew so that it almost felt as though he was there too! And Christmas shopping with my cousin Stephen in Nottingham (for goodies to take back to Nigeria!).

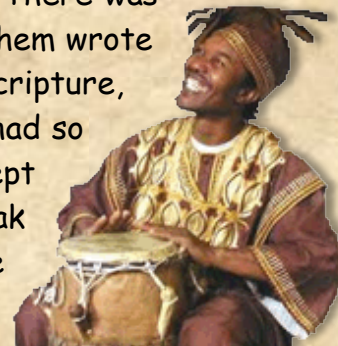


- Rachel

Ethnoarts workshops, Nigeria

BACK IN MAY we invited Rob baker, a talented ethnomusicologist from Mali, to come and lead a two-week arts workshop at the Nigeria Bible Translation Trust (NBTT) here in Jos. It was a really exciting time getting ready for this. Very handily, NBTT had a meeting for all Bible translation coordinators several weeks beforehand and so I was able to do a little dramatic arts presentation for them, explaining about what our training would involve, and the type of people they should invite to take part. I am still having cool arts converstaions and invitations from various projects as a result of this.

Then on 3rd May, 17 musicians and dramatists came to Jos from around the country to learn more about how to express their Christian faith using their cultural art forms. There was a really positive response to this and each of them wrote a new song in their own language, based on Scripture, which we recorded in our outdoor studio. We had so much fun and students from other courses kept popping into our classroom during their break times to join in the jamming sessions. By the end of the workshop, one participant had



“When I go to my room, I feel old and tired, but when I come to class, I even forget that I’m ill”

already planned a workshop with his choir to encourage local music. Another said “I will organise a singing and dancing competition to find the best artists”. The eldest participant, who unfortunately had malaria during the course, commented “When I go to my room, I feel old and tired, but when I come to class, I even forget that I’m ill.”

- Rachel



A partner in crime!

AN EXPERIENCED MUSICIAN and choir director, Peter Nwufo, was among the students who attended the arts course. Then in July, the arts department doubled its numbers when Peter joined us! Thanks so much for your prayers - this is really great news! God has brought along just the right person. Apart from his musical talents Peter brings with him a wide experience of Nigerian cultures.



One of Peter's first assignments was to help with a series of arts presentations at a theological conference at TCNN. I was so grateful that he was able to do this because I was unwell at the time and so he ended up taking most of it! We have also been out and about on the Plateau recording songs and making links between the cultural arts and Bible translation projects. We held a two-day training event in a town called Panyam about 50 miles from Jos which ended with an afternoon of cultural arts presentations. One young man said that our training had given him the confidence to bring along his cultural guitar, the 'deng deng', to play in the church. 'Praise him with the strings and flute'. Psalm 150:4

- Rachel

Prayer points

- that the TCNN students would prepare well for their exams, (8-14 December).

- for our time with Rachel's brother Marek who is planning to visit us over New Year.

- for me in my new role as AC Chair.

- give thanks for providing Peter as a great arts colleague.

- that Rachel will be a good supervisor for Peter.

- for Rachel and Peter as they continue to make artistic links with people groups on the Plateau.

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SUPPORT: If you would like to join our support team, either prayerfully or financially, then please contact us, and we will send you the information you need.

Thanks so much for all your encouragement, prayers and support. With our love,
Matthew and Rachel xxx


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Bible translators

