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# Alliance for Vulnerable Mission Bulletin

## March 2024

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Editor: Jim Harries, PhD, Chairman of the AVM.

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The Alliance for Vulnerable Mission encourages some missionaries from the West to engage in their ministries using local languages and resources.



Please suggest contributions to this Bulletin to [jim@vulnerablemission.org](mailto:jim@vulnerablemission.org)

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18<sup>th</sup> April 2024: Tamie Davis



**Truth in contextual ministry**  
Relative, different or expanded?



To register for this event, please click on this image.

..ooOoo..



**Book Launch: 'Seeking Reconciliation in a Context of Coloniality: A Study of White People's Approaches in a Multicultural South African church'**

<https://youtu.be/91qXgTxSPMg>

Dr. Marcus Grohmann, board member of the AVM, recently launched his book at Stellenbosch University entitled Seeking Reconciliation in a Context of Coloniality: A Study of White People's Approaches in a Multicultural South African church. Here is a link to the presentation he gave on the occasion, explaining the motivation behind the study and the focus on white people in a multicultural church. He also homes in on the conclusion he drew from the patterns of Western dominance he observed despite the desire to achieve more of equality - vulnerable, incarnational approaches to ministry that emphasise meeting people where they are. The recording includes short responses by people in the denomination he did research in (the Reformed Evangelical Anglican Church in South Africa).

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**ICLL (International Congress on Language Learning)**

<https://www.icllonline.org/>

Both Marcus Grohmann and Jim Harries presented workshops at this conference. Well over 100 participants focused on helping missionaries around the world to improve their language learning. The main focus was on how to best coach language teachers and learners. Jim's paper looked at the 'necessity' for good language use as the only means towards a vital necessary depth in understanding Majority World people. Marcus' paper, that reflected on his own engagements with learning isiXhosa, drew a lot of interest and resulted in many questions and deep discussion. Natalie Mullen, who chaired the conference, is to share with us for the AVM webinar on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2024 (see below for more details).

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**What "Getting By with English" Costs: Fieldworkers' Language Choices and Organizational Language Policy**

<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/228840166.pdf>

Thor Sawin (who also attended the above congress on language learning) wrote this paper in 2015. The paper points to a cost-benefit analysis means of justifying the use of indigenous languages by NGOs in development work in the Majority World. To do this, he looks at the indexicality and the ecology of language. Indexicality, is ways in which terms get to have socio-cultural meanings and impacts, independent of dictionary definitions. For example, use of the term 'y'all' in the USA is loaded with positive or negative implications associated with southern populations. The ecology of language, explains how languages relate to one another. Thor's strong advocacy for fieldworkers to use the languages of the people they are reaching identifies him closely with the goals of the AVM (Alliance for Vulnerable Mission); that some Western missionaries or development workers

ought to use entirely local languages and resources in their key ministries. (This article is open-access.)

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### Could Kenya really lose its minority languages?

<https://www.dw.com/en/kenya-needs-to-embrace-mother-tongues-at-school-or-lose-them/a-68314958>

“Kikuyu speaker Wambui Mwangi believes that “helping children know their mother tongue” is the key to preserving Indigenous languages in Kenya. In this, Kenya is ahead of many other African nations — on paper at least. To help preserve and promote its diverse cultures, and improve children's learning, Kenya's Ministry of Education has approved the development of learning materials in 18 Indigenous languages from nursery to Grade 3.”

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### Language of Instruction and Education Policies in Kenya

<https://pubs.lib.umn.edu/index.php/reconsidering/article/view/4569/3322>

“We have chosen to focus on LOI following de Galbert’s (2021) idea that emphasizes the impacts caused by lingering linguistic imperialism to highly influence the Global South in educational policies and how the language used in the classrooms might exacerbate inequalities instead of eradicating them. Gilbert (2021) also emphasizes that no single language educational system is beneficial to all students in a classroom, and it also creates disparities in the process of policy formulation decisions. Additionally, according to Milligan et al. (2020), the use of dominant global languages promotes barriers in the educational system, mainly because it sets students from minority language groups apart since their learning subjectivities are not aligned with the language used in the classrooms.”

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### **Editorial comment on the above two articles.**

In the *AVM Bulletin*, we like to report on cutting edge research being engaged in the interests of promoting indigenous languages. As *Bulletin* editor, I find that this kind of research often under-states its case. I believe this is because of taboos under which contemporary researchers operate. They must assume that all languages from around the world comply with supposedly post-religious Western ideologies. They are commonly not permitted to demonstrate anything that could be considered partiality in terms of religion. So called ‘religion’ has to be a no-go area for them. Thus they fail to perceive, or at least fail to communicate, a lot of the more penetrating difficulties arising from ongoing use of European languages for indigenous purposes in much of Africa. This kind of callous damaging effect of today’s global imposition of secular liberalism is rarely taken seriously.

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### **From celebration to utilisation: How linguistic diversity can reduce epistemic inequalities**

<https://verbumeteclesia.org.za/index.php/ve/article/view/2981>

Marcus’ conclusion to the article: “We have highlighted the nature of epistemic inequalities in multicultural churches based on Eurocentric traditions. If equality and equity are indeed the sought-after foundation for togetherness in the post-

segregation era, it was suggested that a mere celebration of cultural and particularly linguistic diversity is not enough. The reliance on a supposedly shared language such as English ignores the ways in which our language use is always shaped by cultural conceptualisations arising from the diversity of our cultural contexts. Equivocality was presented as a way out of the coloniality of knowledge trap, supported by the efforts of some “Westerners” to learn African languages and use the acquired languages in interactions with members of these speech groups. How exactly such a move from the ‘celebration’ to the ‘utilisation’ of African languages would play out in the life of concrete congregations and their relationships outside the church was purposefully left open. We can conclude that despite and partly also *because* of the costs involved for the ‘privileged’, such an approach to intercultural togetherness comes with enormous transformative potential (see also Grohmann 2020:153f.). The paradigm- change I am suggesting is for relationships to be sought on the terms of those who are often marginalised in different ways. It can rectify epistemic inequalities and contribute even to reconciliation in a different and more profound way.”

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To register for this event, please click on the image above.

#### Upcoming webinars in 2024

Next webinar; 18<sup>th</sup> April 2024. Make a note in your diary!

(See below for details of subsequent upcoming webinars this year.)



Details and registration: <https://www.vulnerablemission.org/quarterly-webinar>