

## **Local literacies and language support: Writing practices in Bamanan and Bozo (Mali)**

Aissatou Mbodj-Pouyi  
(Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris)

The aim of this talk is to emphasise that studying local literacies, even when they are scarce or emerging, can provide new insights into the role of literacy in language support and revitalisation. This presentation relies on two case studies in Mali, one completed and one at a preliminary stage. My approach draws on linguistic anthropology, literacy studies and sociolinguistics.

Firstly, I will present an assessment of literacy in Bamanan in an area where it is the first language. Bamanan, written in the Latin-based script used in literacy classes, is effectively used, thus countering general views of writing as occurring only in French and Arabic. Though post-literacy materials are neglected, reading and writing are common activities for private needs, producing generically hybrid written pieces that often mix languages and scripts. I will demonstrate that taking a close look at these emerging practices offers a better understanding of the language dynamics.

Extending this approach to a setting involving minority languages, my current project runs on the uses of literacy in Mopti, with a focus on the Bozo-speaking community. First language Bozo speakers are offered literacy trainings in Bamanan or Fula, the two vehicular languages. Islamic education, relying on written Arabic, is also part of their experience, as well as formal schooling in French. It is usually reported that Bozo is not used as a written language. I will scrutinise local practices to explore possibly overlooked writing practices in Bozo, and ask if there is a space for such practices in the local ecology of oral and written languages.