

AFROLINGUALS

M A G A Z I N E

OCTOBER.NOVEMBER.DECEMBER 2024 N°001



AFRICAN LANGUAGE HEROES

IWUALA LUCY CHINYEAKA

"PRESERVING MY
INDIGENOUS IGBO
LANGUAGE IS
PRESERVING MY
IDENTITY..."

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VISIBILITY

With over 2,000 Indigenous languages spoken across its vast expanse, the relevance of language services in Africa cannot be over-emphasized.

As such, shining a spotlight on this dynamic field has become an imperative.

This issue delves into the unique challenges and opportunities faced by Language Service Providers (LSPs), freelancers and language professionals across the continent, illuminating the crucial importance of making our work visible and valued globally.

ABOUT AFROLINGUALS

Afrolinguals, a unique resource for LSPs in Africa and beyond, is more than a quarterly publication. It's a platform that provides the latest industry news, cutting-edge techniques, and professional development opportunities for language professionals (translators, interpreters, language technology and localization specialists, terminologists, editors, proofreaders, etc.). We aim to foster collaboration, knowledge sharing, and growth within the language industry, ensuring African LSPs have the tools and insights they need to thrive in a global marketplace.



ABOUT KABOD



Kabod is a language service provider well-equipped to help you bridge all linguistic and cultural barriers and globalize your content effectively and efficiently while preserving its original meaning. With over 28 years of combined experience in the industry, Kabod is committed to excellence and innovation in language services.

In 2024, Kabod was selected as one of the 34 Influencers in the Global Language industry by MultiLingual Media out of 21,000 public votes by localization, translation and interpretation professionals worldwide. Kabod is the only African company to be featured on this prestigious list, and it's a testament to the excellence of our services, the impact we bring to the language industry, and the value we provide to our clients. Kabod's accomplishments so far are listed below:

1. Co-founded the [Association of Language Companies in Africa](#) (ALCA) to [increase professionalism](#), and accelerate advocacy for excellence and application of global standards by LSPs in Africa. ALCA organizes the Annual Conference for LSPs in Africa which is coming up in August 2024. Register for it [here](#).
2. Founded the first network of African Languages Translators and Teachers (ALATT) with over 1600 language professionals (freelancers, LSPs, interpreters, voice-over etc.). Free to [join here](#).
3. Founded and developed MATI, the Marketplace of African Language Translators and Interpreters, with over 260 members, to ease access to gigs, jobs, and consulting opportunities among language professionals.
4. Hosts the [podcast on African Language Technologies and Tools](#), which celebrates innovators who create practical tools to facilitate the use of African languages, such as creating the Akan dictionary, African keyboards, API etc.
5. Convener of African Language Talks (KLS), where several language professionals discuss trending issues in localization and language matters to come up with solutions and recommendations.
6. Leading global research and [advocacy](#) interventions to integrate African languages in the education system, [publishing](#), [business practices](#) and books.
7. A thought leader on localisation, language policies, Natural language processing, Machine Learning and AI integration in language services in Africa, sharing expertise through [local](#), national and international events.
8. Co-developed localisation guides to facilitate business expansions in African countries. Some of them can be accessed for free [here](#).

'AKWAABA TO AFROLINGUALS, A NEW DAWN IN AFRICAN LANGUAGE SERVICES'

— *Christian Elongué*



Welcome,
language
enthusiasts!

I am Christian Elongué, Managing Director of Kabod Language Services. I am immensely proud and excited to present to you the inaugural issue of *Afrolinguals*, the first magazine dedicated solely to the language service industry in Africa.

Imagine a platform where a seasoned translator in Yaounde can share best practices with a budding interpreter in Accra. *Afrolinguals* will foster that connection, nurturing a network of excellence across Africa.

Our continent, with its rich tapestry of over 2,000 languages, is a place where linguistic diversity is not just a feature but a vibrant essence of our culture and history. From the melodic Swahili spoken across East Africa to the rhythmic Wolof of Senegal, our languages are more than mere tools for communication. They are vessels of our heritage, identities, and stories. A proverb from the Bantu language aptly captures this essence: "If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head.

If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart."

This power of language to connect and touch hearts is what we aim to celebrate and promote through *Afrolinguals*.

Why *Afrolinguals* is needed?

In an increasingly interconnected world, the language industry in Africa is burgeoning. The demand for skilled language professionals in Africa is skyrocketing with a rapidly growing economy and a booming digital landscape. The demand for translation, interpretation, language education, and localisation services is at an all-time high. Yet, there is a gap—a need for a platform that brings together language professionals, shares insights, and fosters a community dedicated to the advancement of our linguistic landscape. Did you know that the language services market in Africa is projected to grow by over 20% annually? Or that multilingual education has been shown to improve cognitive development and academic

performance in children significantly? These are not just statistics but indicators of the transformative power of our work.

Stories of Impact

Languages are more than just words on a page. They are the threads that weave together the intricate tapestry of our communities. Allow me to share a story that highlights the profound impact of language services in Africa. In a remote village in Cameroon, a young girl named Larissa struggled at school. Her native language was Fulfulde, yet her education was delivered in French. This language barrier was a significant hurdle until a local NGO introduced a bilingual education program. Larissa's performance soared within a year, and she began to excel in her studies. This change was about learning a new language, unlocking her potential, and giving her the tools to succeed.



Think about that doctor in a rural Kenyan hospital who desperately needs to communicate vital medical information to a patient who doesn't speak English. Afrolinguals will empower interpreters to bridge that gap, potentially saving lives. Take also, for instance, Aïcha, a young entrepreneur in Senegal whose business flourishes because she can negotiate deals and connect with customers in their native Wolof, fostering trust and understanding. These are just a few glimpses into the transformative power of language in Africa. Afrolinguals will be your window into these inspiring stories, showcasing the impact of your expertise on our continent's progress.

Our Vision for the Future

As we embark on this journey with Afrolinguals, our vision is clear. We aim to:

- Share stories, insights, and experiences from language professionals across the continent.
- Create a vibrant network where translators, interpreters, educators, and other language experts can connect and collaborate.
- Highlight cutting-edge developments and innovative practices in the language industry.
- Celebrate Africa's rich linguistic

heritage and advocate for preserving and promoting our languages.

Join Us

This magazine is more than a publication; it is a community, a movement. We will share industry insights, explore the latest trends in translation and localisation, and celebrate the achievements of our fellow language professionals. We invite you to be part of this journey. We encourage you to contribute articles, share your experiences, and engage in discussions at languages@kabodgroup.com. Together, let us weave a narrative that honours our past, enriches our present, and inspires our future.

With Afrolinguals, we are not just turning a page but writing a new chapter in the story of African languages. As we embark on this exciting journey together, let Afrolinguals be your source of inspiration, a springboard for professional

development, and a testament to your vital role in shaping Africa's future. Let the words flow and the stories unfold

Welcome to the conversation!

Christian Elongué
Editor-in-Chief, Afroliguals

Managing Director, Kabod
Language Services

INDUSTRY INSIGHTS &

LANGUAGE TECH INNOVATIONS

1. *Press release* | *Upcoming News*

Theoretical Approaches to Translation and Interpreting Webinar Series

[The Association for Translation Studies in Africa \(ATSA\)](#) is excited to announce a new webinar series for postgraduate students and early career researchers across Africa. The series, titled "Theoretical Approaches to Translation and Interpreting", will run from November 2024 to October 2025. This series offers a unique opportunity to engage with internationally

renowned scholars. Each webinar will explore diverse theoretical concepts in translation and interpreting, providing valuable insights for budding researchers. Should you have any questions, please contact: Dr [Xany Jansen Van Vuuren](#) at jansenvanvuurenx@ufs.ac.za.

2. *Press release* | *News*

Sultan releases Historical Dictionary of the Arabic Language and launches Encyclopedia

His Highness Dr. Sheikh Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qasimi, Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Sharjah, proudly [announces](#) the completion of the "Historical Dictionary of the Arabic Language",

marking a monumental achievement for the Arab and Islamic communities. This significant work, consisting of 127 volumes, preserves the richness of the Arabic language, its history, and

its cultural heritage. He emphasized the importance of language as a pillar of national pride and a bridge to the future for scholars and future generations.

An NLP and speech technology for Ugandan Languages

Sunbird AI is building Natural Language Processing (NLP) technologies to provide language resources for social good. They have built open local language datasets, translation and speech systems with partners, including the Makerere University AI lab.

SUNBIRD TRANSLATE

The Sunbird Translate system can automatically take text from any of the five local languages; Acholi, Ateso, Luganda, Lugbara and Runyankole and translate it to and from English with state-of-the-art accuracy. They are now working on turning these resources into social impact. Visit translate.sunbird.ai and try it out yourself.

As with all Sunbird AI projects, the [data](#), [code](#) and [models](#) are freely and openly available for others to extend and use. In particular, data collection is an important part of developing language technology, and the [Sunbird AI Language Translation \(SALT\) dataset](#) is a multi-way parallel corpus of 25,000 sentences translated across

six languages. Their technical report has the details of collecting text data and training translation models.

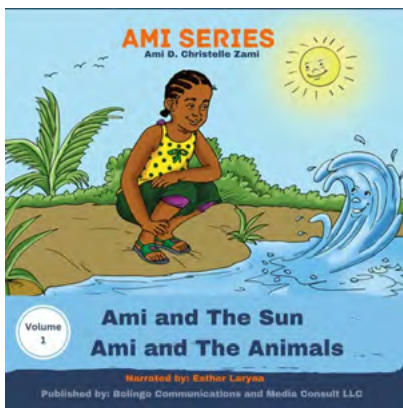
SPEECH TECHNOLOGY

Text-to-speech (TTS) models

are normally trained by having a voice actor record sentences in a studio. Sunbird AI has been able to train Luganda TTS in a new way, using crowdsourced data from Mozilla Common Voice. This is the only existing

TTS system for any Ugandan language and is freely and [openly available](#).

Bolingo Consult's Ami Series Approved as Supplementary Material for Schools in Ghana



The Ami Series, authored by Ami D. Christelle Zami and published by [Bolingo Consult](#), has received endorsement from the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA) as supplementary material for Basic 1-3 levels in Ghanaian schools. The Ami Series stands out for its innovative approach, blending captivating storytelling with vital lessons on environmental conservation and sustainability. NaCCA's endorsement underscores the educational value of the Ami Series. The book is accessible to a diverse audience of learners in seven languages, including English, French, Arabic, Ewe, Twi,

Swahili, and Zulu.

For inquiries or to purchase the Ami Series books: Email: marketing@bolingoconsult.com Phone: +233 24 654 2915 Website: www.bolingoconsult.com

Nigeria Unveils First Multilingual Large Language Model

The Federal Government of Nigeria has announced the [launch of the country's first multilingual large language model \(LLM\)](#), as revealed by Communications Minister Bosun Tijani on X. This advanced AI system is designed to understand, process, and generate text in multiple languages, marking a significant milestone in Nigeria's technological advancements.

According to Tijani, the launch of the AI tool was facilitated by a collaboration involving Nigerian AI company, [Awarritech](#); global technology company [DataDotOrg](#); the National Information Technology Development Agency; and the National Centre for AI and Robotics (NCAIR).

The announcement was

made during a four-day AI workshop in Abuja, which brought together over 120 AI specialists to foster AI growth within the region. Minister Tijani highlighted that the LLM will be trained in five low-resource languages and accented English. This training aims to enhance language representation in existing datasets, thereby improving the development of artificial intelligence solutions. The LLM focuses on enhancing AI capabilities in these underrepresented languages and accented English, aiming to improve the diversity and accuracy of language data used in AI applications.

DeepL Unveils Groundbreaking AI Glossary Generator for Business Translations

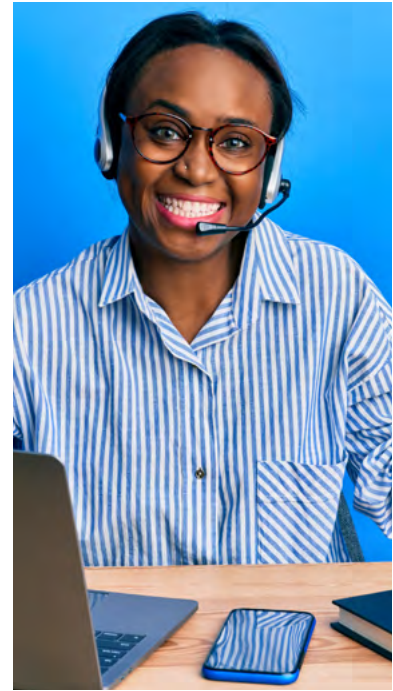
[DeepL](#) has launched a revolutionary AI-powered glossary generator, marking an industry first for business translations. This new feature allows companies to create custom translation glossaries with just a single file upload, streamlining the process for businesses with specialized terminology. The

AI glossary generator builds on DeepL's 2020 Glossary feature, which enables companies to personalize translations with technical terms, product names, and branded language.

DGACM launches the United Nations Speech Bank for interpreters

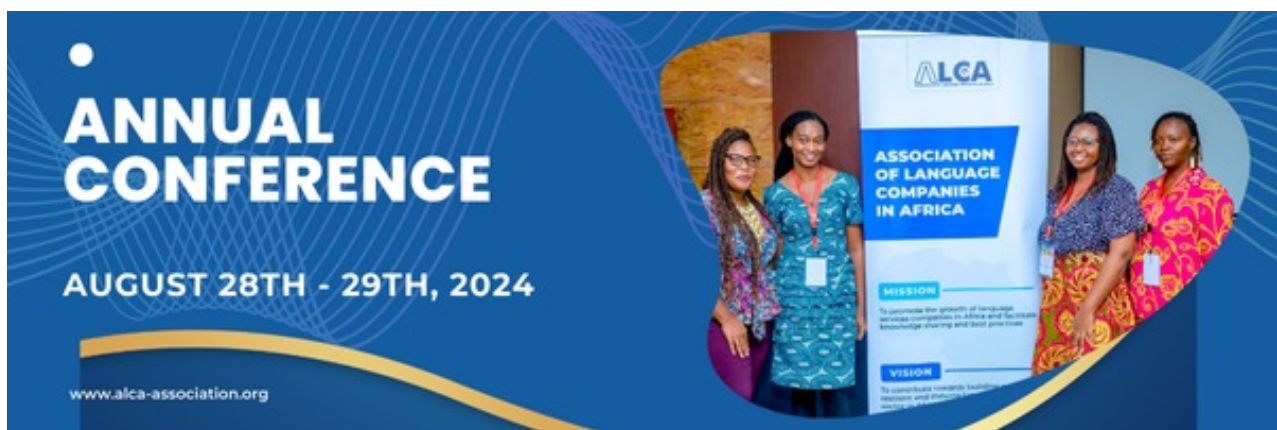
The [United Nations](#) launched the Speech Bank. This online tool, created by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM) in

collaboration with the Office of Information and Communications Technology, is now fully operational. It contains speeches in six official languages covering diverse UN topics. This e-learning resource, created by DGACM and OICT, aids language students, candidates, teachers, and interpreters in practicing interpretation skills, preparing for UN exams, and improving language proficiency. The initial 150 speech collection will continuously expand with transcripts and search filters.



3. Press release | Events recap

Translating for Environmental Advocacy: Insights from Experts



[The Association of Language Companies in Africa \(ALCA\)](#) hosted its inaugural Annual Conference on the first anniversary of its founding. Under the theme “Forging Robust and Thriving Language Services Companies in

Africa,” this event aimed to advance the industry through collaboration and strategic discussions. The conference provided a platform to explore industry trends, opportunities, challenges, strategic partnerships,

innovative technologies, talent development, market expansion, quality assurance, regulations, financial resilience, and social impact within the African language services sector.

Translating for Environmental Advocacy: Insights from Experts



The Bureau of Translation and Interpretation (BTI), in collaboration with Kabod Group and Gazania Amara Montessori School, hosted a thought-provoking webinar titled "The Role of Translation in Environmental Advocacy." The event brought together experts from diverse fields to explore how translation bridges language barriers and amplifies voices in the global environmental movement. English, French, Arabic, Ewe, Twi, Swahili, and Zulu.

For inquiries or to purchase the Ami Series books: Email: marketing@bolingoconsult.com Phone: +233 24 654 2915 Website: www.bolingoconsult.com

A webinar highlight was the insightful perspective shared by Cedric Christian Nganoussi Elongue, Founder of Kabod Group. As an experienced translator, Elongue illuminated the challenges of translating complex environmental terminology

and scientific research. He also provided case studies demonstrating the powerful impact of translation in successful advocacy campaigns. The webinar featured a panel of distinguished speakers, including Lisa Agyemang, Founder of Gazania Amara Montessori School, who discussed integrating environmental education through translation, and Gwendolyn Asiedu, a lawyer specializing in environmental law and policy.

For more information about the Bureau of Translation and Interpretation and its initiatives, please visit www.btighana.com.

Empowering Freelance Language Professionals: GATI and Sopodiva Share Branding and Marketing Strategies



The Ghana Association of Translators and Interpreters (GATI) and Sopodiva Training Centre hosted a successful webinar on June 1, 2024, titled "Empower Your Freelance

Career: Strategies for Branding, Marketing, and Communication." The event aimed to equip freelance language professionals with essential tools to enhance their careers. The webinar focused on:

1. Techniques to develop a solid personal brand.
2. Strategies to market services and expand opportunities.
3. Tips to improve client interactions and negotiations.
4. The importance of continuous learning.
5. Benefits of collaboration and partnerships.

Attendees praised the valuable insights and practical advice provided. For more information, visit <https://www.gatighana.org>

The Vulavula API is live: explore its capabilities now



On June 29-30, Lelapa AI hosted the Vulavula API Hackathon, where developers created

innovative multilingual solutions using their API, including:

- Insurance Quote Generation Bot
- Mobile Clinic Finder
- Municipal Services Bot
- Sign Language Translation App

The top winners were:

1st Place: UniTech- NLU chatbot for electricity queries in four languages. 2nd Place: InnovAlteers - Qoutelynx insurance bot on WhatsApp in multiple languages. 3rd Place: Hack Squad - Multilingual clinic finder and healthcare tips chatbot..



Product Update:

Vulavula now has a translation feature, to easily translate text between different languages for smoother communication. Check it out [here](#) and share your feedback. To integrate the API into your business, reach out at info@lelapa.ai.

KLS Talk 6TH Edition: Webinar to Showcase Machine Translation Strategies for Africa



On 11 July 2024, Kabod Language Services hosted a webinar titled “How Can We Better Leverage Machine Translation (MT) Strategically in Africa?”

The event brought together academic experts, NLP researchers, translators, and industry leaders to discuss the balance between technological advancement and cultural sensitivity in MT. Experts discussed key issues such as:

- **Algorithmic Challenges:**
 - Highlighting translation errors as indicators of deeper issues in MT technology.
- **Community Involvement:**
 - Stressing the role of local communities in MT development.
- **Contextual Considerations:**
 - Highlighting the need to consider linguistic, cultural, and socio-economic factors.

Dataset Quality:

Noting that MT efficiency depends heavily on high-quality data.

The webinar concluded with a call to action for language professionals, advocating for ethical MT development, community partnerships, and a balance between MT and human expertise.

Interested in contributing or sharing your expertise? Contact us at languages@kabodgroup.com.



PERSPECTIVES

Redefining collaboration between linguists and tech companies for increased visibility and impact

By Olanrewaju Samuel, Graduate Student, University of Toronto



There are many things that linguists¹ can offer in the AI era. the type of input given to machines, suggesting what type could be appropriate for a given task, and showing machine learning metrics. Though there are other services, such as software testing, most of the work of linguists and language specialists is to see that the intended language is representative of and natural to the speech community.

There seems to be an under representation of Africans in developing technological language products. This is basically because there is a mismatch between language service providers and technological companies' requirements/job expectations. This essay aims to analyze existing challenges in what language professionals currently offer

¹ Linguists could be translators, annotators, interpreters, language data engineers, corpus creators, etc.

and suggest ways to improve that offer for a more productive and effective collaboration.

Obstacles Hindering the Integration of Language Service Providers in the Tech Industry

1. Lack of Collaboration and Language Resources

First, there is inadequate collaboration between language specialists and their intended customers. Since many technology companies are interested in the data and never in how the data was acquired, they are not interested in data quality. Most of the time, linguists are always at the low end of the spectrum. They are not always catered to as part of the project but as 'laborers' to work and be dumped at some stages of the projects.

Additionally, there are few collaborations between LSP and tech companies, which leads to a lack of language resources. Though it appears there are some collaborations, it does not have a firm root. Many African languages are under-resourced because there are few resources to enhance their representations in AI-driven product developments (Bird 2020; Dunbar 2020; Nevins 2013). Because there are few real-time collaborations, many things have been done in linguistics that seem to be reinvented in computer science. For example, the approach to semantics from linguistics is different from what is done by computer scientists.

This leads to much unawareness among the tech companies. They do not leverage what linguists provide. Since LSP works are invisible to them, they mostly



reinvent the wheel. Their approach to meaning, for example, is not new because semantics/pragmatics principles have been studied in linguistics, and LSPs are mostly aware of them. No visibility equals a lack of collaboration, which leads to the lack of resources created by LSPs incorporated for the tech companies.

As stated earlier, little to no attention is paid to how data is collected. LSPs are interested in the language while the tech people are interested in the algorithms. Invariably, tech people aim at creating algorithms for what the language represents. Since they do not seem to care as much about the data as they care about the algorithms, they may be creating another type of intelligent system that is not representative of what native speakers are doing. This is a counter-productive effort from both ends.

Language service providers should be at the end of providing input while the tech people seek to understand and incorporate it. To some extent, the tech company cares about “online” rather than “on-land” collaborative efforts. They would instead scrape the web without consulting native language service providers. The variation in the interest fosters inadequate visibility among the LSPs because the readily recruiting companies look at different parts. At the same time, they are interested in the process of data and not only the data itself.

2. Lack of representation

There is a gross lack of representation of linguists in the tech space. Because many people do not know how to transfer what they learn in the language to what is expected as the final product, few competent hands offer quality

services to tech companies. This lack of representation also rests on the fact that few linguists are native speakers of many African languages in the tech space.

Besides, many linguistics departments in African Universities fall within arts and humanities with little to no intersections with other computer science. As a result of this, many linguists are not trained in the intersection between language and computer. This further strengthens the fact that linguists are scarce in the tech space. The lack of readily available tech skills by the LSP makes them invisible to tech companies. Everything is based on marketing strategies, and since anyone without the required skills will not participate, LSPs are not found trading their skills.

Consequently, there are lots of resource shortages on both the part of the language service providers and tech companies. On the part of language providers, there are shortages of payment and involvement. Since many deep projects usually place linguists at the low spectrum, they do not have much budget for them or sometimes even solicit free services. Also, linguistic knowledge is lagging in the mainstream of different tech work and outputs. On the part of the tech companies, there are no competent linguist-tech-driven personnel ready for thorough collaboration. They often have no options other than to do their things themselves and reach approximate assumptions as quickly as possible. Since the visibility of LSP is partly based on their skill set, which is lagging, many tech companies do not place value on what they contribute to their products. This is one of the reasons they are treated as “second-class citizens” in the tech industry. They are not visible to them because the tech companies do not even know how useful they are.

3. Low Self-esteem

There is low self-esteem on the part of the linguists. Though applying a given course of study presumes its importance on the impact of the problem it could solve, many linguists are unaware of the power of linguistics in the AI era. Canonically, **many people confuse linguists for polyglots**. Most times, the low esteem is more on people who studied indigenous African languages than with those who studied foreign languages. Though few opportunities exist for everyone studying languages, those studying African languages do not usually even carry themselves as specialists.

Proposed Solutions to Enhance Language Service Provider Integration in Tech

There are different solutions to the identified problems. The following are a few suggestions:

1. **Change of perspective:** the lack of collaboration should be seen as a blessing, not a curse. Since different fields make up AI, linguists focusing on just the input of the machine should not be a problem. Also, linguists should not see themselves as less contributors because they are not creating algorithms.
2. **Creation of interdepartmental majors and minors:** if linguistics departments could be created with the intersections from computer science as seen at [Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh](#), [Stony Brook University in New York](#) and [University of Arizona](#), then there would be more people within the tech space to understand how these fields interact and to also strengthen creating language product services.
3. **Creation of more resources:** with the creation of interdepartmental

operations between language, linguistics and computer science, then the need for more resources will be a struggle between the departments to appreciate each other's work. When there is appreciation between the two fields, then putting them on them on a quality budget will not be problematic.

4. **Methodology documentations:** apart from documenting theoretical methodologies, linguists should see that they document the process of creating data for their research. The methodology documentation will strengthen and provide insights for technology companies to incorporate in their works.
5. **Linguistics Sensitization:** there should be more awareness among language service providers. They could be sensitized by volunteering on different projects, attending seminars/conferences and reading the intersection of linguistics and AI.

In conclusion, there are different intersections between language service providers, linguists, and AI but it appears there has not been collaborative efforts towards problem solving. This suggests that there might have been some challenges drifting them apart which have been discussed alongside their suggested solutions. With vast languages in Africa, Africa is the future in the AI era!

Are you a language service provider, freelancer, linguist, or language professional with an article or opinion piece on the language industry in Africa? We want to feature your work in our magazine! Contact us now at languages@kabodgroup.com or visit [here](#) for more details.

Johan Botha,
Director of
Folio Online
South Africa

SPOTLIGHT



AN INTERVIEW WITH

JOHAN BOTHA

DIRECTOR OF FOLIO ONLINE, SOUTH AFRICA

A *frolinguals: With your extensive academic background in Afrikaans and Translation Studies, how do you perceive the visibility and representation of African languages in the global language services industry?*

Johan: The lack of visibility and representation of African languages in the global language services industry is indeed a significant challenge. The traditional global industry seems to have limited knowledge and understanding of the linguistic diversity and richness that exists in Africa. With over 2000 languages spoken across the vast African continent, the sheer scale can be overwhelming for clients and industry players unfamiliar with the region.

This ignorance about Africa's linguistic landscape often leads to inaction – a reluctance to invest in or engage with African languages because of uncertainty about where to start.

Consequently, the limited representation of African languages in the industry persists, further reinforcing the knowledge gap and perpetuating a vicious cycle of underrepresentation.

Breaking this cycle requires a concerted effort from within Africa to educate and provide the necessary knowledge to global clients and industry stakeholders.

It is crucial for African language professionals and experts to take the lead in promoting and showcasing the richness and potential of African languages in the global market. It is a challenging task, but one that must be undertaken by those with a deep understanding and expertise in the African linguistic and cultural landscape.

***Afrolinguals:** In your role as Director of Folio Online, a company that works with major multinational brands, what unique challenges have you faced in ensuring visibility and access for African language service providers (LSPs) to these global clients?*

Johan: As mentioned, addressing the unique challenges of ensuring visibility and access for African language service providers (LSPs) to major global clients requires overcoming the knowledge gap and educating clients about the inherent challenges faced by LSPs and freelancers in Africa. These challenges can include issues like internet access, electricity supply, access to education, and even political conflicts that may periodically disrupt work.

By taking the time to educate global clients about these realities and, most importantly, providing solutions to overcome them, it is easier to secure their commitment and investment in African language services. When clients understand the challenges and how to mitigate them, they are more likely to access the services provided by

African LSPs and freelancers.

Afrolinguals: *Could you share a success story or case study highlighting how Folio Online has helped an African LSP or freelancer gain visibility and secure projects with a multinational corporation?*

Johan: One notable success story in this regard has been Folio's focus on freelancer education. By teaching freelancers the essential skills and best practices required to succeed in the industry, such as CV presentation, invoicing, time management, and file organisation, it becomes possible to develop a pool of highly competent and preferred freelancers. The success is evident when these freelancers apply the lessons learned and become successful professionals, sought after by LSPs and international organisations due to their high-quality and reliable service delivery. Receiving feedback from freelancers who have benefited from such education programs and gone on to thrive in the industry is a testament to the impact of these efforts. Their success stories and expressions of gratitude for the knowledge imparted serve as a motivating force to continue empowering and upskilling African language professionals, ultimately enhancing their visibility and access to global clients.

Afrolinguals: *As someone at the forefront of language service development and innovation in Africa, what strategies or best practices would you recommend to African LSPs and freelancers to enhance their visibility in the industry?*

Johan: In the quest to enhance visibility for African LSPs and freelancers, leveraging technology and embracing a continuous learning mindset are paramount, even in the face of limited internet access or resources.

Adopting a principle of constant learning, attending virtual workshops and webinars, and consuming educational content on platforms like YouTube can provide

invaluable knowledge and skills.

Additionally, establishing a solid online presence by marketing oneself on professional networking platforms like LinkedIn or other sites frequented by potential clients can significantly increase visibility within the industry.

Meanwhile, merely consuming knowledge is insufficient; active engagement is the key to standing out. Actively participating in discussions, sharing insights, and contributing to relevant conversations on these platforms is crucial for capturing the attention of potential clients. When language professionals showcase their expertise and actively engage in industry dialogues, they create a lasting impression, positioning themselves at the forefront of consideration when language services are required.

Afrolinguals: *With your pioneering approach to technology, how do you envision technological advancements impacting African language professionals' visibility and growth opportunities in the coming years?*

Johan: When it comes to the impact of technological advancements, specifically AI and neural machine translation (NMT), on the visibility and growth opportunities for African language professionals, there seems to be a misconception that these technologies will have a limited impact on African languages. This is primarily due to the perception that well-known language models and machine translation engines may not be optimised for African languages.

However, this notion is misguided, as African tech companies are actively developing their own machine translation engines and large language models (LLMs) tailored to African languages. Examples of the ground-breaking work being done can be seen when you look at [Masakhane](#), [Lelapa AI](#), and the recently launched multilingual large language

model (LLM) by the Nigerian government and a variety of other tech companies that created machine translation engines for select African languages.

This means that AI and NMT's disruptive potential is rapidly reaching African shores, and it is crucial for language professionals to take notice and educate themselves on these emerging technologies.

Failing to recognise and adapt to these technological advancements could result in being left behind, hindering visibility and growth opportunities within the rapidly evolving language industry. African LSPs and freelancers must engage with African tech companies, follow their developments online, and explore ways to integrate these technologies into their service offerings.

Afrolinguals: What role can mentorship and professional development initiatives play in empowering African LSPs and freelancers, particularly in increasing their visibility and decision-making power?

Johan: Mentorship and professional development initiatives play a crucial role in empowering African language service providers (LSPs) and freelancers, particularly in increasing their visibility and decision-making power within the industry. Internship programs serve as a bridge between academia and the professional world, providing aspiring language professionals with valuable hands-on experience and exposure to the various facets of the industry. Through internships, individuals can explore different roles, such as translation, editing, interpretation, and voice-over and gain a deeper understanding of their strengths and preferences, enabling them to make informed career decisions.

However, it is important to recognise the challenges African organisations face in facilitating extensive internship programs. While internships in Western countries often span several months,

allowing for comprehensive training and skill development, African LSPs may be constrained by limited resources, resulting in shorter internship durations, sometimes as short as two weeks. Despite these challenges, it is essential to maximise the impact of these internship opportunities by providing a well-structured learning experience.

Mentorship programs, on the other hand, offer a platform for experienced freelancers to share their knowledge and insights with aspiring professionals. Although some freelancers may initially perceive mentoring as a potential source of competition, it is crucial to recognise the mutual benefits of such initiatives. Mentors can gain valuable fresh perspectives and insights from their mentees, while mentees benefit from the guidance and wisdom of seasoned professionals.

Afrolinguals: Are there any specific policy changes or advocacy efforts you believe could help address the barriers African language professionals face in gaining visibility and accessing global opportunities?

Johan: In many African countries, the visibility and recognition of language professionals remain limited, making it challenging for individual freelancers to educate and advocate for their industry's importance to governmental agencies and policymakers. However, **the power of collective advocacy through associations and community-driven efforts cannot be underestimated.**

The success story of the deaf community in South Africa, where their advocacy efforts led to South African Sign Language becoming one of the 12 official languages, demonstrates the transformative impact of such initiatives. This recognition empowered sign language interpreters to professionalise their services and receive fair compensation for their work.

While language associations exist across various African countries, they often operate in silos, limiting the cross-pollination of best practices and shared learning opportunities.

Initiatives like the Association of Language Companies in Africa (ALCA) aim to bridge this gap by fostering a continent-wide network that brings together language professionals and associations from different countries.

Such collective efforts can amplify advocacy power, enabling associations to approach influential bodies like the African Union and raise awareness about the language industry's significance, its multi-billion-dollar potential, and the need for supportive policies and recognition.

To further this momentum, language professionals are encouraged to actively engage with existing associations in their countries or to establish new ones, particularly in emerging verticals like the gaming industry.

By fostering a strong community spirit and harnessing the power of collective advocacy, language professionals can gain visibility, influence policymaking, and unlock global opportunities within the industry.

***Afrolinguals:** How can publications like **Afrolinguals Magazine** contribute to fostering collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and, ultimately, increased visibility for African language professionals within the industry?*

Johan: Publications like **Afrolinguals Magazine** have significant potential in fostering collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and enhancing visibility for African language professionals. It's crucial to recognise that various platforms, whether magazines, associations, websites, podcasts or conferences, each play a vital role in contributing to this cause. For **Afrolinguals Magazine** specifically,

its impact lies in educating its audience about the industry and shedding light on opportunities within the continent. Many are unaware of the diverse opportunities available in Africa. By highlighting these opportunities, the magazine can bridge this knowledge gap within the industry and among potential clients and stakeholders.

Moreover, the magazine can serve as a platform for dialogue, bringing together voices from different backgrounds—industry experts, freelancers, corporate leaders, and community members. By facilitating conversations about industry needs and solutions, **Afrolinguals** can amplify the visibility of African language professionals and their contributions, thereby enriching the industry.

Are you a leading LSP or language professional in Africa with a story to share about your contributions to the language industry? Reach out to us at languages@kabodgroup.com.

African Languages Conference (AFLC) 2024



The **2024 African Languages Conference (AFLC)** was a celebration of the rich language and cultural diversity of Africa,

organized by [Ady Namaran Coulibaly](#) from [Boling Consult](#), [Avishta Seeras](#) from the [Lingua-Cultura Experience](#), and [Christian Elongué](#) from [Kabod Group](#), in collaboration with the [African Academy of Languages \(ACALAN\)](#). Under the theme “African Languages: Challenges and Opportunities,” this gathering turned into a vibrant hub for language lovers—from activists and scholars to educators and linguists—to share, learn, and connect. What set this year’s conference apart was its dedication to hosting sessions in a variety of African languages. Participants had the unique opportunity to engage in discussions in Wolof, Zulu, Twi, Yoruba, Kiswahili, Sheng’, Igbo, and Nigerian Pidgin English, as well as French and English. This approach not only celebrated these languages but also pushed the boundaries on how they are used in academic and professional contexts.

Reflecting on previous years, the AFLC

has grown into a key platform for tackling issues like language preservation, embracing new technologies in translation, and exploring innovative educational techniques. The 2024 conference was no exception. It fostered rich discussions and built lasting connections among those at the forefront of sustaining and invigorating African languages.

The event was hosted online from February 21-28, making it accessible to a global audience eager to be part of these important conversations. For those who missed it or want to revisit some of the sessions, more information and updates on future events can be found on the conference’s [social media platforms](#) and [website](#). This year’s AFLC wasn’t just a conference; it was a collective, heartfelt journey into the languages that shape so much of African culture and daily life.



AFRICAN LANGUAGES HEROES

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Conference 2024



AFRICAN
LANGUAGES
● HEROES

- Coulibaly -

**ADY
NAMARAN
COULIBALY**

Co-organizer of the
African Languages
Conferences (AFLC)
and Operations
Manager at Bolingo
Consult

“

*This column features
some African language
activists and language
professionals who
graced the African
Languages Conference
(AFLC) as speakers to
share their passion for
African languages and
the initiatives they have
spearheaded or contributed
to promote their
mother tongues.*



**BERNARD
OGINI**Playwright
and Translator

“

I took the initiative to translate classic works into Nigerian Pidgin English because I believe every piece of writing should be understandable for most readers, regardless of perceived status or class. Nigerian Pidgin English is the common language for most Nigerians, so translating renowned books into it makes them more accessible.

- Ndungu -

**FAITH
WANGUI
NDUNGU**

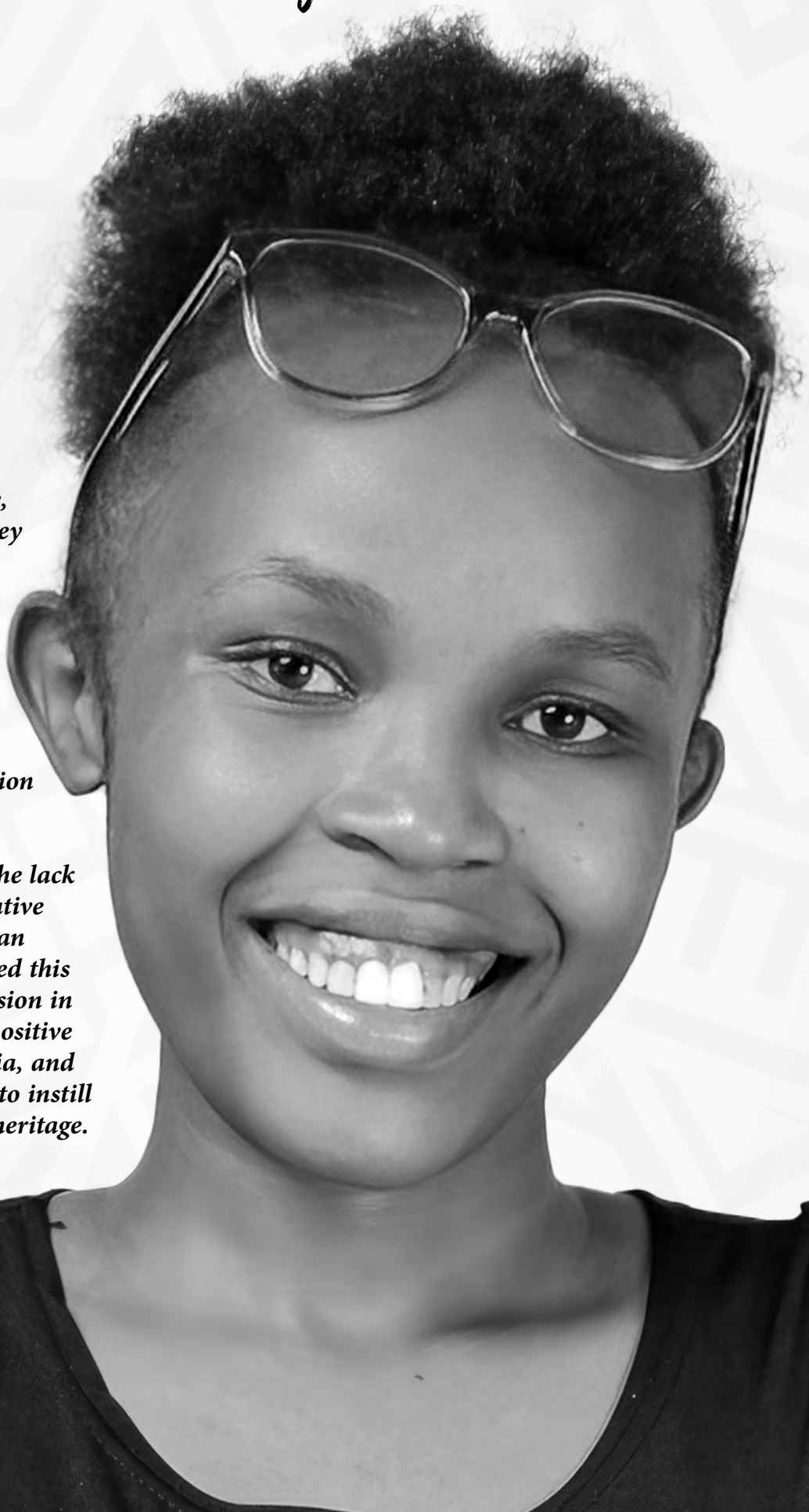
Swahili
and Kikuyu
Language
Professional

“

My motivation comes from cultural pride and preserving African heritage. African languages carry history, traditions, identity - they are not just means of communication.

Through teaching, translation, and outreach, I aim to amplify the voices of African languages and foster greater appreciation for their richness worldwide.»...

«A major challenge is the lack of recognition and negative attitudes towards African languages. I've addressed this by advocating for inclusion in education, promoting positive representations in media, and hosting cultural events to instill pride in our linguistic heritage.



- Abundance -

**OKAFOR
NKECHI
ABUNDANCE**

Igbo
Interpreter
and Translator

“

I chose Igbo because I believe in inclusivity and cultural diversity. Every language has a unique cultural heritage. By prioritising African languages in my interpretation and translation work, I ensure all voices are heard and understood, especially in digital spaces.

- Omuholo -

**OMUSULA
WINFRED
OMUHOLO**Intercultural
Communications
Scientist

“

My research examines audience evaluation of how African cultural identities are framed in films produced in Indigenous languages versus non-African languages. This contributes to academic discourse preserving African languages for future generations. Finding books originally written in African languages is difficult compared to translated works. Documenting the work of authors like Ngugi wa Thiong'o who writes primarily in Indigenous languages, is my way of promoting them.”



- Chinyeka -

**Iwuala
Lucy
Chinyeaka**

Igbo
Wikimedians
User Group

“

Preserving my Indigenous Igbo language is preserving my identity. I co-founded an Igbo Wiki Fan Club to inspire students to take African language studies seriously. I challenged the belief that European languages are more important than African ones - a stereotype we must rewrite.

- Ndungu -

**IBRAHIMA
FAYE**

Wolof
Language
Lecturer

“

I've demonstrated the possibility of teaching subjects like poetry using African languages like Wolof through my research and publications. To boost confidence, we need African language centres, and to utilise books written by African authors in local languages, for educational [purposes].

OPPORTUNITY

CORNER

ELDP Grant Round 2025 Is Now Open

ELDP GRANT ROUND 2025 IS NOW OPEN

ELDP is excited to announce the call for applications for the 2025 grant round.

Here are the key dates to remember:



October 1st, 2024
deadline for submission of applications

October 15th, 2024
deadline for submission of supporting statements

April 15th, 2025
notification of results



More Information



grants.eldp.net



eldp@eldp.net

The Endangered Language Documentation Programme (ELDP) is now accepting grant applications to support work that documents endangered languages.

Key Dates:

October 1, 2024: Deadline for submission of applications

October 15, 2024: Deadline for submission of supporting statements

April 15, 2025: Notification of results

ELDP provides grants across several categories to document endangered languages before they fall into disuse. Visit grants.eldp.net to learn more.

Call for Applications: University of Ibadan

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**DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS
AND AFRICAN LANGUAGES**

Call for Applications

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AVAILABLE NEW PROGRAMS	Features
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Postgraduate Diploma in Natural Language Processing (2 semesters) Postgraduate Diploma in Computational Linguistics (2 semesters) Master of Arts in Computational Linguistics (3 semesters) PhD, in Computational Linguistics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hybrid mode (Virtual+Physical) Practical based Industry oriented Flexible

For enquiries:

- Department of Linguistics and African Languages, Faculty of Arts, University of Ibadan.
- linguistics@ui.edu.ng
- +234 8060397 6042

The Department of Linguistics and African Languages at the University of Ibadan is now accepting applications for the 2023/24 session into several new postgraduate programs. These programs feature a hybrid mode of delivery, combining virtual and physical classes. They are designed to be practical-based and industry-oriented, offering flexibility to accommodate different schedules. For inquiries, please email the Department of Linguistics and African Languages at linguistics@ui.edu.ng or call +234 8060397 6042.



AITCO 2025

The Fifth Africa International Translation Conference (AITCO 2025) will take place at Hotel Verde, Zanzibar, on February 7-8, 2025. This eco-friendly venue near Stone Town and pristine beaches offers a perfect backdrop for insightful sessions and networking. Don't miss this premier event in the African language industry!

LEARNING

CORNER

Techniques for Post-Editing and Improving Machine Translation (MT) Output Quality

Machine Translation (MT) has become an invaluable tool in the language services industry, particularly in Africa, where linguistic diversity is immense. However, to ensure the highest quality, MT outputs often require post-editing. Here are some effective techniques and tips for post-editing and improving MT output quality:

1. Understand the Context

- Before starting, ensure you understand the subject matter and the context of the content. This will help you make informed corrections.
- Pay attention to cultural references and idiomatic expressions that may not translate directly.

2. Correct Terminology and Consistency

- Ensure consistent use of terminology by referring to client-approved glossaries and term bases.

3. Focus on Syntax and Grammar

- Look out for and correct syntax errors, such as incorrect word order or sentence structure.
- Ensure proper grammar including subject-verb agreement, tense consistency, and correct use of articles and prepositions.

4. Enhance Readability and Flow

- Break down long and complex sentences into shorter, more readable ones.
- Make sure the text reads naturally and flows smoothly, as if it was written by a native speaker.

5. Check for Accuracy and Completeness

- Ensure that all information, numbers, dates, and names are accurate.
- Make sure no part of the original content is omitted or mistranslated.

6. Use Quality Assurance Tools

- Utilize Computer-Assisted Translation (CAT) tools that offer quality assurance features to catch errors and inconsistencies.
- Use automated tools to catch spelling and basic grammar mistakes.

7. Adapt to Style Guides

- Adhere to any specific style guides provided by the client.
- Follow standard style guides relevant to the target language and industry.

8. Maintain Formatting

- Ensure that the formatting of the translated text matches the source text, including bullet points, numbering, and headings.
- Pay close attention to the placement of tags and formatting codes, especially in software or technical translations.

9. Feedback Loop

- Regularly seek feedback from clients and peers to understand areas of improvement.
- Stay updated with the latest MT advancements and best practices in post-editing.

10. Time Management

- Tackle major issues first, such as mistranslations and terminology errors, before focusing on minor stylistic changes.
- Allocate specific time limits for each section to ensure efficient time use.

Post-editing MT output is essential for LSPs aiming to deliver high-quality translations. Translators can significantly improve the quality of MT outputs by understanding the context, maintaining consistency, enhancing readability, and leveraging technology. These tips and tricks not only ensure accuracy but also help produce translations that resonate with the target audience, thereby enhancing the visibility and reputation of African LSPs in the global market.

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MARKETPLACE OF AFRICAN

TRANSLATORS AND INTERPRETERS (MATI)



Names: Labake ISHOLA

Profession: Interpreter, Translator and Teacher

Language combination: Chinese and English

Country: Nigeria



Names: Yvette IRADUKUNDA

Profession: Translator
(English-French-Swahili-Kinyarwanda)

County: Rwanda



AfroLinguals Magazine

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